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THE ANARCHIST CINEMA

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ABSTRACT

There has been only a minimal amount written in academic circles on the connections between political anarchism and cinema. Alan Lovell focuses on allegorical readings of films by Jean Vigo, Luis Bunuel, and Georges Franju. Richard Porton examines the historical representation of anarchists and their ideas. More recently, Nathan Jun lays out ideas for a proposed 'cinema of liberation'. Yet these three writers, who provide the most notable attempts at wrestling with the subject, barely refer to one another. This means that there are disconnections in the areas of existing scholarly research, and it fails to fully analyse the complex series of relationships that exist between anarchism and film.

My thesis attempts to address these gaps, and suggests ways in which anarchist theory can be used as a framework to inform our understanding of cinema as a cultural and industrial institution, and also provide an alternative process of reading and interpreting films. In analysing the dynamics between anarchist theory and film, it focuses on three key areas. Firstly, it considers the notion that cinema is an inherently anarchic space, based around fears of unruly (predominantly working class) audiences. Secondly, it attempts to delineate what the criteria for an anarchist film could be, by looking at a range of formal characteristics and content featured in a number of popular movies. And thirdly, it examines the place of grassroots and DIY filmmaking in the wider context of an anarchist cinema. My thesis finds the continuities that exist between radical film culture of the present and the past, and I propose that there is an innately anarchic undercurrent to several key aspects of cinematic culture.

The thesis concludes by stressing the distinction that exists between film as a text, and cinema as a range of cultural activities. I propose that the ultimate embodiment of a study of an anarchist cinema should combine film analysis with that of an examination of cinema as a social and physical space. In turn, this can help us to consider the ways in which film and cinema may form part of a culture of resistance – one which fully articulates the concerns and questions surrounding anarchist political theory.

Introduction: Anarchy, Anarchism, and Cinematic Contexts

> *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? (Whitehall, 1962)

Richard Whitehall's review for the first James Bond movie, *Dr No* (Terence Young, 1962),
indicates a misunderstanding of the term 'anarchist' and a great level of derision toward it as
a theoretical concept. It is a misapprehension which reflects a response to the word
'anarchist' itself, and also to its wider ideology. The terms 'fascist' and 'anarchist' are not
being juxtaposed by Whitehall, they are being used interchangeably so that the ideas behind
them become conflated. One could swap each word around and the emotional and damning
effects of the sentences would remain. That anarchism could be confused with fascism
appears remarkable given that the two ideologies are utterly opposed to one another.
Fascism's association with nationalism, tradition, and corporatism, as well as its links with
totalitarianism, make it the political opposite to anarchism's anti-Statism and its desire to
eradicate hierarchical social structures.

What Whitehall is doing here is bringing together two political ideologies that he
considers to be illegitimate. He is linking fascism and anarchism by the disrepute and fear
they inspire. They are being used as loaded and emotive terms to increase the damning
impact of his review. Neither description accurately applies to an interpretation of *Dr No*, but
the illicit content that so irritates Whitehall, the amoral attitude towards sex and violence, is
what encourages his association of the film to these powerful political concepts. By claiming
that 'morally the film is indefensible with its lovingly detailed excesses, the contemporary
equivalent of watching Christians being fed to the lions' (ibid), Whitehall places it, and by
extension anarchism, firmly outside of a mainstream of moral thought. And the mainstream
Whitehall establishes in his review is conservative, and built on a traditional Christian
morality.

The critic in this instance is acting as a moral authority, as a policeman of taste and of
value. The anarchist cinema, in keeping with political anarchism, should by necessity bristle
against this form of authority and attitude. The anarchist cinema should be a ceaseless
irritation to the mainstream by presenting ideas that continually threaten it. An anarchist
study of cinema should attempt the same. Of course, Whitehall is not making a case for the

delineation of an anarchist or fascist cinema. He is writing a film review, and so one should not treat his words as a serious dissection of political philosophy. No doubt a researcher studying a fascist cinema might find the quote equally difficult or inappropriate. But the review signals the power with which the word 'anarchist' can be received, and is an example of its pejorative use.

Peter Marshall, in *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (1993), finds in the 1965 edition of *Roget's Thesaurus* the word 'anarchist' synonymous with 'the vandal, iconoclast, savage, brute, hornet, viper, ogre, ghoul, wild beast, fiend, harpy and siren' (1993: *v*). The origin of these descriptions stems from the association of anarchism to the method of 'propaganda by the deed', the violent terrorist action of certain anarchists in the 1890s, based on the belief that such deeds would encourage the oppressed masses to rise up against the oppressors. Roderick Kedward, in *The Anarchists*, describes this period of violence as 'the most spontaneous and dramatic of the anarchists' answers' (1971: 13). This very short epoch in the history of anarchist thought and action nailed a perception of the movement and its followers which still reverberates. The clearest and most visible aspect of the relationship between anarchism and cinema is one of such misrepresentation. On screen, the anarchist is an agent of uninformed, random chaos or terror. Anarchy is frequently used as a synonym for that which is aimless and lacking a moral or ethical base.

The tendency to refer to anarchism in critical terms is not just a historical one. Richard Porton points out that 'many reviews of Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* (2009) referred to Heath Ledger's Joker as an "anarchist", even though this character, who blithely threatens large swaths of the population with annihilation, is merely branded an "agent of chaos" within the film' (Porton, 2009). Recently *The Purge: Anarchy* (James DeMonaco, 2014), the sequel to the 2013 science fiction/horror film *The Purge*, uses the word as its sub-title to refer to a government initiated absence of law and order – where citizens are allowed to unleash their most criminal urges for one night of the year only. Here, the word 'anarchist' is used to refer to an undesirable state of violence and terror.

This type of understanding of anarchism extends even to films which have a closer relationship to its theories. One film that attempts an examination of anarchist politics and lifestyle, but ultimately takes a critical stance against both, is *The Anarchist Cookbook* (Jordan Susman, 2002). Its narrative arc reveals that its depiction of anarchism is both confused and scornful. The film follows a young man called Puck who lives in a squat with a

selection of anarchists and assorted radical drop outs. Members of the squat are influenced by a charismatic nihilist to join forces with other extremist groups who in reality would stand in opposition to much of anarchist thought, neo-Nazis included. Ultimately, Puck not only betrays the group to the FBI, for which he receives a life changing amount of money as a reward, but also falls in love with a young Republican woman and ends up denouncing his previous lifestyle. The representations in the film are repeatedly anti-anarchist. One of the group is exposed as a pederast, and they are shown to have a muddled focus and inconsistent ideas, as demonstrated by their readiness to join forces with nihilists and nazis. That the group in the squat refer to themselves as 'The Family' alludes to Charles Manson's murderous followers, themselves a real life mix of peaceful rhetoric and extreme violence.

Despite its depiction of an anarchist lifestyle, which includes on screen discourse about radical politics, the ideological stance of *The Anarchist Cookbook* means it cannot be considered an anarchist film. It may have other merits, but it ultimately becomes part of the range of misrepresentations of anarchism that have littered popular culture since the 19th Century. Richard Porton's *Film and the Anarchist Imagination* (1999) discusses these representations in cinema and draws a comparison with how the formation of stereotypes of ethnic groups focuses on 'a "binarism" that thinks only in terms of positive and negative images' (1999: 10). This imagery, 'associated with irrationality and violence' (1999: 11), can be found, according to Porton, in films ranging from those of 'Edwin S. Porter and D.W. Griffith to the apparently more sophisticated films of European cineastes such as Claude Chabrol and Bernard Tavernier' (1999: 13).

The connection between anarchism and the arts is more complex than issues over the representation of individual anarchists and their ideas. Kedward speculates that there is a natural affinity between anarchism and the art world that originates in the mutual aspiration for individual freedom (1971: 108). This connection was also found in the influence anarchist theory would have on art movements such as surrealism and Dada (Marshall, 1993: 252).

But where is the anarchism in cinema beyond distorted and misguided depictions of its ideology? Is it found in the intellectual avant-garde, or in art films which undertake a serious examination of anarchist theory? Or should any prospective anarchist cinema embrace some of the negative criticisms of anarchism, such as the suggestion that it is 'puerile and absurd' (Marshall, 1993: *xiv*), two qualities the surrealist and Dadaist movements would celebrate? By understanding films in relation to their anarchic aspects, the processes of film

interpretation are brought into question. The role of the critic, academia, and the discipline of film studies can also be interrogated through anarchist theory. These queries suggest a study of anarchism and cinema should spread beyond focusing solely on films and move also into discussions on wider cinematic culture.

This thesis explores the complex relationship that exists between anarchism and cinema. Within this context it examines three main areas; films containing anarchist content; anarchist approaches to film analysis and interpretation; and the consideration for the potential of a cinema which combines anarchist theory and practice. I propose that there are inherent problems with the notion of an 'anarchist film' because of the tensions that exist between cinema's predominantly capitalist production context and the anti-capitalism of anarchist theory. Therefore, while it is hard to declare unequivocally what an anarchist *film* might be, there is such a thing as an anarchist *cinema*. This cinema, I postulate, would consist of films, of course, but also take into account their wider culture. This includes the physical space in which films are exhibited and the surrounding cultural activities; such as writing on film, production contexts, festivals, film societies, etc. The anarchist cinema, if it is to be recognised, should be composed of not just a body of films but as a combination of all aspects of cinematic culture: films, industrial practices, exhibition and distribution, artists, audiences, and also critics and academics.

In a comparable way to how Marxism and feminism have been used to analyse film and its place in culture, and how cinema might help us to understand power relations in Marxist or feminist interpretations of society, anarchist theory can be used to establish how film and cinema might be understood politically. Within Marxist theory, for example, the concept of the base and superstructure model is used to help interpret the undercurrents in the relationships between the production and consumption of different media. Anarchist theory is primarily concerned with a more equal and just society through the formation of a non-governmental and non-hierarchical order. These theories can help us to understand the dynamics of film production, exhibition, and consumption.

My thesis proposes three things; firstly, that there is indeed a relationship between anarchism and cinema. But it is an often hidden relationship because the anarchist content of a film may not always be revealed through easily interpreted signifiers. My methodology aims to lay bare any underlying anarchist content and the ways in which anarchism has been present in cinematic culture. It considers films which are formally anarchic, and where a

description as anarchist is the most appropriate way in which to understand a specific film's codes or contexts. One aim is to look to establish a set of filmic characteristics which can be considered anarchist, and to where we might find a range of films to which they can be applied.

The second aim of the thesis is to examine ways film studies can be anarchist. To do this, attention is turned to films containing 'a profound anarchist sensibility', a phrase borrowed from Marshall's historical analysis (1993: xi). I look to how their anarchy, their representations, visual style, and underlying ideology, can be enhanced and uncovered by an anarchistic approach to analysis, where one is fluid, using an array of interpretive methods. This work builds on the first aim of the thesis by looking at a wider selection of films, but also broadens the scope to include where anarchism has filtered through into the study of cinema. This demonstrates where anarchism has been enacted in cinema history, and where its theories have been expressed. It displays the ways art and film can take anarchic forms, both within the text itself, and the cultures surrounding it.

The third aim of the thesis is to examine the ways anarchism has influenced, altered, and politicised the organisation of cinema in terms of production, exhibition, and distribution. This moves away from the first two objectives and extends beyond textual film analysis and onto an examination of the anarchic forms cinema, as a cultural space, can take. I discuss how anarchism and anarchic approaches have informed the processes of production and exhibition, with a particular emphasis on the recent developments in digital film culture which have led to an increase in inflections of an anarchist cinema at a grassroots level.

Working through these aims reveals how anarchism has often been a veiled trend in cinema, where specific references to it as a concept are frequently absent. Anarchism is therefore lurking in the margins of film culture. It is hidden in the shadows, and in the separation between films, filmmakers, and audiences. It uncovers itself to protest and organise against dominant, repressive norms in cinema. By doing this, I draw an analogy with political anarchism – the rebellious, anti-authoritarian trend of politics, concerned with social justice, egalitarianism, and fighting hierarchy and authority. The films and the cinematic practises discussed in this thesis are concerned with the same.

Analysis of the anarchism in cinema demonstrates the forms oppressive forces can take, and looks at methods of resistance contained in the films I select. It also demonstrates ways film as an art form can be considered resistant, subversive, anarchic, and political. An

analysis of the organisational models of cinema reveals practical ways this political resistance can be enacted in the real world. I look at the processes of film interpretation, along with analysis of production contexts; and how anarchic practices can be resistant to hierarchical forms and authoritarian oppression. This is bringing together film, cinema, and film studies in a politicised way; inspired by the ethos and methods of political anarchism.

Anarchy and Anarchism.

Peter Marshall's *Demanding the Impossible* is a valuable history of the development of anarchist theory. His comprehensive account of the subject traces the strands of anarchism and left wing libertarianism from its ancient origins, such as the beliefs of certain sects of Christianity or among the ancient Greeks, up to the late 20th century. He also discusses the theorists and figures whose philosophies have proved vital to its development, including not only the 'classical anarchist thinkers' such as Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, or Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, but also modern anarchists such as Paul Goodman, or the 'left wing Marxism' (1993: 579) of Noam Chomsky. Importantly, he exposes the contradictions between the various traditions and theorists, while not seeing any resulting incongruities as an obstruction for defining them under the umbrella of anarchism.

Despite some contradictions there are core principles which form a basis for most anarchist theory. The fundamental tenet is an opposition to the twin bodies of State and government. This includes resistance to institutions which are in service to them, such as the police, the military, and other bureaucratic entities which organise on their behalf. Included in this is also hostility to authority and, in particular, hierarchical power.

Springing from these core principles are different varieties and schools of thought. These include anarchism communism, described by Alexander Berkman as 'voluntary communism' (1973, in Marshall 1993: 395), which stands in contrast to the State supported version in places like the Soviet Union; anarcho-feminism, which proposes that patriarchy as well as the State should be dismantled; and anarcho-syndicalism, which focuses on political action through organisation by workers in industrial places. Alongside these varieties, which emphasise collective action, there are individualist anarchists who derive their theories from the writings of Max Stirner. Despite the contradictions that exist between the needs and desires of the individual and those of the collective, there is still a connection to be found between the two strands. For example, Porton writes that 'it is difficult to deny that the anti-clericalism and disdain for conventional moral strictures' to be found in Stirner's *Der Einzige*

und sein Eigentbum 'has certain affinities with the polemical wrath of Bakunin's *God and State* or [Emma] Goldman's assault on hidebound sexual morality' (1999: 4-5).

The films discussed in this thesis reflect the importance and the power of collective activity. It is principally concerned with films which emphasise the anarchic potential of groups of people, rather than the concerns of the individual anarchist. They also articulate in some way, either through their content or through formal methods, a manner of critique or resistance to those things which anarchism organises against.

Marshall refers to the idea of an 'anarchist sensibility' (1993: xi), and notes that this can be found in other seemingly separate movements, such as the sixties counter-culture, even if they display little 'self-conscious knowledge' (ibid) of the anarchism contained within them. Marshall's introduction lays out his definition of an anarchist;

> In general, I define an anarchist as one who rejects all forms of external government and the State and believes that society and individuals would function well without them. A libertarian on the other hand is one who takes liberty to be a supreme value and would like to limit the powers of government to a minimum compatible with security. The line between anarchist and libertarian is thin, and in the past the terms have been used interchangeably. But while all anarchists are libertarian, not all libertarians are anarchists. Even so, they are members of the same clan, share the same ancestors and bear resemblances. They also sometimes form creative unions. (1993: xiii)

His definition provides a very simple and clearly stated explanation of the terms anarchist and libertarian. It also effectively describes their differences and, importantly, their similarities. My research is based on films that display a line of thinking that is common with these ideas. It needs to be stated here that when referring to a libertarian idea, sensibility, or person, I am referring to opposition to government and the promotion of the concept of liberty. I am not using the term as a definition of conservative or capitalist libertarianism, where the powers of government might be restricted but only to allow laissez-faire market forces to flourish in its place. This tendency of thought, sometimes described as anarcho-capitalism, is present among American Republican politicians, especially those who base policies on the writings of Ayn Rand, and also amongst Thatcherite politicians in the United Kingdom. Marshall isolates them from the mainstream of anarchist ideas by describing them as right-wing libertarians, as opposed to the left-wing libertarians whose egalitarian philosophy flies closest to anarchism, and whose ideas form the basis of my research.

Peter Marshall explains that 'it would be misleading to give a neat definition of anarchism, since by its very nature it is anti-dogmatic' (1993: 3). Anarchism is in a state of flux,

combined of varying thoughts and strands which nevertheless have the same end goal. George Woodcock poetically compares it to 'water percolating through porous ground – here forming for a time a strong underground current, there gathering into a swirling pool, trickling through crevices, disappearing from sight, and then re-emerging where the cracks in the social structure may offer it a course to run' (1962: 15). Marshall writes that 'from the beginning, anarchy has denoted both the negative sense of unruliness which leads to disorder and chaos, and the positive sense of a free society in which rule is no longer necessary' (ibid). This dichotomy; the negative association of disorder, and the utopian association of freedom, gives us an indication of anarchist content in films and cinema. The anarchic in films would indicate an opposition to capitalism, the State, and hierarchy in their expression of a chaotic threat to this hegemonic order, while at the same time presenting visions of, or the potential for, a free society. Some films analysed here present both of these ideas. Some only express one aspect. But all retain the 'anarchic sensibility' Marshall refers to.

Cinema and Radical Politics.

Because the anarchism in cinema is a mostly hidden trend, it is unsurprising that it is also only very rarely referenced in critical literature on political film. It is necessary, therefore, to look to where anarchist ideas are present, but concealed, in writing on films and filmmaking, and other moments where discussions around radical politics and cinema have taken place.

Sylvia Harvey's *May '68 and Film Culture* (1978) is an account of the circumstances that led to the radicalisation and politicisation of film studies in the wake of the student riots and general strikes in France of May 1968. It is also a detailed examination of how cinema as an institution, film as a material practice, and film studies as a discipline responded to the upheavals of the time. She charts how in some instances they became united to reflect and record changes in society, and re-thought how cinema sits in relation to the societal structures. Harvey's historical analysis lays bare the complex thought processes which began to question the role of cinema, and how these thoughts were put into practice. Her work lays some of the groundwork for how the framing of a study of anarchism's relationship to cinema can take place.

The founding of the Estates General of the French Cinema on May 17th of that year (1978: 6) by film professionals, critics, and students demonstrates a re-ordering of the hierarchy of cinematic culture. The division and distance between producers and consumers was called into question and dismantled. The re-housing of films from cinemas and into places of work

or study also facilitated this re-ordering of the hierarchy. Harvey explains; 'the searching out of such non-traditional projection sites […]could also be seen as an aspect of the desire to produce a new kind of context for the reception of a particular film, and thereby also a new sort of relationship between audience and spectacle' (1978: 25). This re-organisation of the cinematic space, the re-interpretation of what is meant by the term 'cinema', is the natural extension of examining the politics of the traditional production and consumption model. She continues; 'it was not enough simply to change the content of films, but that the whole socio-economic structure in which they operated had also to be changed' (1978: 28).

Harvey's focus is on the way this upheaval produced a re-examination of film as a cultural product and she details how this fitted into existing Marxist theories of cultural production, and specifically the developments of Marxist theories progressed by Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser. She is keen to address the divorce between the post '68 developments in film, cinema, and film studies, and from their historical context, arguing that 'the content of these discussions cannot simply be imported' (1978: 117). For Harvey, in relation to the transposing of some of these developments and theories out of France, she writes that 'at the point at which theory transforms itself into practice it must be aware of its specific economic, political and ideological context' (ibid). She describes how 'the landscape of film studies in Britain and in the United States has been transformed by post-'68 developments in French film theory' (1978: 1), yet notes that many of the ideas that sprang up in English and American film studies in the wake of 1968 were 'neatly cut free from that theory of complex unity of the social formation and that mood of political militancy which engendered them in France' (1978: 2).

In film criticism much of the application and discussions of Marxism are in relation to examination of Marx's base and superstructure model. Harvey describes this as the 'central problem' (1978: 87) for Marxist cultural theorists, with the discussion based around 'the relationship between cultural productions and a society's mode of material production' (ibid). The question develops into 'what is the relationship between cultural production and that system of class relations which derives from a particular mode of material production?' (ibid). It asks how are audiences addressed, what ideology is propagated, and how do the methods and materials of production affect this ideology?

Marx's (and Engels) view that the material base affects the superstructure of society was re-thought during 20th Century cultural studies because it suggested a 'too simple and direct

correspondence' (1978: 88) between them. Led chiefly by the work of Gramsci and more specifically Althusser, analysis of the model is described by Harvey as 'rather more comprehensive and complex' than those found in Marx's original writing.

For Althusser, the ideology of a society (found in the superstructure) is not a reflection of the base in simple terms, but 'has to be understood as a system in its own right, not as merely homologous with or reflexive of the base' (1978: 100). Only when this is noticed can ideology be used to consciously lie about or cover the base conditions, or conversely, be used to expose the reality of the material base of society. It is this, the possibility of using ideology 'for changing society', which, states Harvey, is 'of particular interest to radical film theorists' (1978: 101).

Two main positions developed in Marxism regarding the relationship between ideology in cultural production which reflects the dominant classes, and the 'subordinate class';

> The first assumes that the dominant ideology is completely in control of the subordinate class, and the mechanism of control is guaranteed by the mode of production, by the economic base. The second suggests that the subordinate class 'escapes' the control of the dominant ideology by virtue of its own specific life experience. (1978: 97)

By clarifying what she calls these 'extreme' positions Harvey exposes the shortcomings of both ways of thinking. The first assumes all cultural production is inherently imbued with a capitalist ethos, and therefore true resistance or opposition is impossible, while the second takes the position that all forms of cultural practice emanating from the working classes is necessarily in opposition to ruling class ideology. The middle ground between the two arguments is that 'cultural forms are *potentially* (original author's italics) in a relationship of resistance to those of the ruling class' (ibid), but that the possibilities for resistance can only spring up at specific moments in history and in conjunction with broader forms of opposition and struggle amongst the classes. It is in politicised film and cultural studies that these moments (springing up in films, genres, movements, and other cultural forms) are analysed.

The Marxist emphasis of these developments indicates a marginalisation of anarchism in film studies, despite the 'anarchist sensibility' of the Situationist groups which inspired the rebellion of 1968. Peter Marshall calls the entire episode the 'greatest outburst in libertarian energy since the Second World War' (1993: 445) and notes how the slogans scrawled and sprayed on public walls during the period retained an anarchist flavour, with the most obvious being the use of Bakunin's phrase 'the urge to destroy is a creative urge' (1993:

307). Harvey does recognise this libertarian influence, but describes the sloganeering as reflecting 'both the strengths and weaknesses of the May movement' (1978: 12); the strengths being the sincere attempt to provide a 'radical analysis' of capitalist society, and the weakness lying in 'its idealistic, often anarchistic, utopianism' (ibid). What exactly the flaws are remains unclear, unless it is Harvey's assumption that they are inherent and that a description of something as 'anarchistic' is sufficient enough to explain its faults.

Instead, her focus highlights how it is Marxism as an ideology which dominates radical film studies, rather than any other form of political criticism, including anarchism. This mirrors the Marxist domination of the radical left wing in politics more generally. Political anarchism is distinct from Marxism because of its critique of hierarchies and institutional power. The dissection of authority, particularly of the State, is at the forefront of anarchist political analysis. An anarchist analysis of cinema would distinguish itself from any Marxist cultural analysis by focusing on that which critiques State sponsored hierarchies. Marxist film analysis may interrogate the problems of existing authorities and states, but is not necessarily critical of the idea of the State itself.

Beyond outlining the context and development of political film studies in which this thesis works, Harvey's study also points towards methods of analysis. My research attempts a re-examination and reinterpretation of certain films, looking for their 'anarchist sensibility'. Part of this process is one of categorisation, and if we revisit the post '68 developments in film culture we find the origin of the categorisation of political films in the Jean-Louis Comolli and Paul Narboni article, 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism', from *Cahiers de Cinema* in autumn 1969. In *May '68 and Film Culture* Harvey lays bare their argument in detail, pointing to seven different categories identified by Comolli and Narboni.

> The crucial point which is introduced in relation to the seven categories is the notion that a film's capacity either to reproduce or call into question dominant ideology is related to the formal devices adopted by that film. Certain formal devices, certain means of representation, facilitate a more thorough-going critique of dominant ideology than others. (1978: 36)

This thesis examines the use of these formal devices and types of representations, and how they consistently express ideas relating to anarchism and anarchy across my chosen films, and by extension forms a critique of dominant ideology. Category (e) identified by Harvey (1978: 35) relates to films which emerge from mainstream contexts and are seemingly infused with dominant ideology, but which contain material which criticises or attacks this

ideology. This involves analysing the film 'obliquely, looking for symptoms, if one looks beyond its apparent narrative coherence, one can see that it is riddled with cracks: it is splitting under an internal tension which is simply not there in an ideologically innocuous film' (Comolli, 1969, cited in Harvey 1978: 35). The use of 'cracks' in this instance sees a recurrence of the same metaphor Woodcock uses to describe how anarchism manifests itself in mainstream culture and politics – as fractures in society by which its ideas can seep through. It is through the filmic 'cracks' described by Comolli and Narboni that an anarchist cinema emerges.

The Beginnings of an Anarchist Cinema.

Alan Lovell's *Anarchist Cinema* (1962), the first major work attempting to define the concept, provides a study of three filmmakers, Jean Vigo, Georges Franju, and Luis Bunuel. Lovell's interpretive study covers three strands of analysis; with Vigo he looks at films made by a self-declared anarchist, the analysis of Franju's work mostly involves allegorical readings, and with Bunuel he considers the surrealist attacks on some of anarchism's chief targets. Lovell also assesses how the thematic links between them can be considered a starting point for building a canon of films and filmmakers that are anarchist in form and content. It also provides a distinction between establishing an anarchist sensibility from a Marxist one. He describes their films as being centred around 'classical anarchist situations; the boys rebel against the school authorities; a mental patient tries to escape from an asylum; a priest has his convictions destroyed' (1962: 39). It is this critique of institutions, hierarchy, and systems of power that differentiates an anarchist from a Marxist and an anarchist film from one which espouses a leftist, 'progressive', or Marxist standpoint.

The initial common ground that enables Lovell to link the three directors is that they were all 'formed in the climate of surrealism' (1962: 1). However, Lovell sees a distinction between Vigo and Franju, whose work depends on contrasting opposites and dividing characters into binary divisions of ruled/ruler, weak/strong, or innocent/corrupt, and the work of Bunuel, who he describes as offering an image of 'established society' as one that is both 'pompous' and 'stupid', and whose many later films 'centre on a conflict between one man, an idealist of some kind, and reality' (1962: 28). Not only is Lovell mapping out the divergences and the links between them and how they relate to some of the core issues at the heart of anarchist philosophy, he is also identifying an anarchist sensibility in the world view expressed across their films.

Lovell's conclusion describes the circumstance at the centre of the work of all three, 'the conflict between the values of the established forces of society […] and individual human values like freedom, love, spontaneity and growth' (1962: 38). In his notes from a National Film Theatre booklet (1962 b) Lovell describes their films as having 'a sense of what life, at its best, is like', crystallising a part of what the anarchist sensibility might be – a utopian view of humanity unencumbered by state interference.

His work is an avenue and entry point into anarchist cinema due to the vital distinctions and boundaries he lays out, but also because he is very direct on what the value of a study of it might be. He writes that 'it is immediately relevant to our world of power states, mass murder, torture, protests and revolts' (1962 a: 40). While the films themselves depict the enemies of 'freedom, love, spontaneity and growth' and provide visions of alternative ways of being, a study of anarchism and cinema can expose where these expressions of an anarchist sensibility exist and how they can help form part of a study of cinema that has political relevance. An ability to work from the margins to unsettle and disturb the centre is where an anarchist engagement with cinema will find its relevance. The non-mainstream films of Vigo, Franju, and Bunuel provide us with just one set of examples.

Richard Porton provides the most comprehensive assessment yet of anarchism and its place in cinema in *Film and the Anarchist Imagination*. He identifies the key drive of his study as being 'chiefly concerned with films that explore and promote anarchist self-activity' (1999: 9). Porton derives his definition of the term 'anarchism' from some of the keynote anarchist theorists, such as Stirner, Proudhon, Kropotkin and Bakunin, while also acknowledging the contradictions between them and the various developments of the discourse in early anarchist theory. By recognising that 'traces of these anarchist sub-varieties can be located in mainstream, documentary and avant-garde films' (ibid) he leaves himself a very broad landscape of cinematic work from which to select his examples. The lack of tight boundaries is a recognition that neat categories of anarchist cinema do not exist. For Porton, the process of identifying an anarchist cinema is not 'a clear cut task; occasional references in the critical literature to a vague rubric called 'anarchist cinema' only underlie the nature of the definitional morass that confronts, and occasionally ensnares, critics and film historians' (1999: 2). To circumvent this, Porton looks at the misrepresentation of anarchists in both Hollywood and European films, and moves to analysing films 'which not only reflect, but actively promote, workplace resistance, anarchist pedagogy, and anti-statist insurrections' (1999: 2). Nevertheless, in locating his study on those which reflect and celebrate anarchist

practice, a body of films that could be said to define anarchist cinema is constructed. Also, Porton allows his study to leave room for films not made by anarchists, reflecting that 'well intentioned films made by devoted anarchists are sometimes of less interest than non-anarchist works which, perhaps unwittingly, brilliantly encapsulate the anarchist amalgamation of antinomian individualism and collective direct action' (1999: 2). Porton refers to *Tout va bein* (Jean Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, 1972), and the way it presents 'the unpalatable choices between an inflexible capitalist state and the pretentions of official communism' (1999: 144), while positively presenting a wildcat strike and workers' control of production, as a prime example of a film made by non-anarchists (in this case Maoists) which captures the spirit and politics of anarchism.

Despite this, Porton steers clear of providing the type of anarchist interpretations that Alan Lovell provides. His analysis is instead mostly a historical account, concerned with the representation of anarchist thought and deed. He is rigorous in assessing and arranging the correct historical context in relation to anarchism for each film he discusses. He provides an analysis of political films (or those which explicitly engage in political issues in their narratives), but does not analyse them politically. Because of this there is a total absence of genre movies. Almost exclusively his selected films would be categorised as art movies, which is wholly understandable given the remit he allows himself. This, however, leaves room for a more political film analysis, where anarchist interpretation can be made of movies that do not solely exist in art house cinemas.

Film and the Anarchist Imagination is the current basis for future studies of anarchist cinema, despite the disparate sources that emerge from the subject's 'definitional morass' (1999: 2). Porton identifies and expresses issues of representation and misrepresentation in the cinema of the 20th century. But he leaves the road clear to update the subjects he addresses, and to provide a more political approach to film analysis which identifies the spirit of anarchism in more unlikely, more hidden places across film culture.

One such place would be how Henry Jenkins uses a different filmic definition of the term, and places it within the context of a genre**.** In *What Made Pistachio Nuts: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic* (1992), he identifies a tradition which he terms 'anarchistic comedy'. The word anarchy in this case is specifically described by Jenkins as a 'metaphor'. In the primary case of the Marx Brothers (though other performer based comedies of the period, which emerged from the vaudeville tradition, are discussed in

relation to the term) this is based around the seeming destruction of established plot conventions and their comedy's focus on the disruption of social conventions. In summing up the critic's and film scholar's reaction to the Marx Brothers, Jenkins finds limitations in the use of the metaphor of anarchism; primarily that of the studio/industrial context of their work, where the disruptive nature of their comedy is constructed by the studios for that very purpose, and where the performers themselves 'had little or no say over their screen vehicles' (1992: 9).

Jenkins identifies a romanticism to the critics' and academics' association for this type of comedy as anarchic, where there is a claim for a vision of the Marx Brothers as reflecting a subversive reaction to the economic depression of the 1930s. He writes that;

> We must not become seduced, however, by the power of our own metaphors. Inviting as it is to imagine an American comedy of radical discontent, it is not clear in what meaningful sense the Marx Brothers films may be read as a political reaction against any particular social system or as reflecting any coherent ideological position (anarchistic or otherwise). (1992: 10)

Jenkins use of the anarchistic metaphor in relation to comedy is absent from the work of Porton and Lovell. While they have distinct concerns which are separate from Jenkins', he makes a succinct and relevant claim for an anarchistic tradition in at least one part of cinema, a claim which must be addressed.

Jenkins uses the metaphor to identify films which are anarchistic in both form and content. This is divided into two strands. First, anarchistic comedies are inclined to be 'fragmented and episodic (1992: 22), which welcomes the potential for narrative disruption or disjointedness, and second, 'they often celebrate the collapse of the social order and the liberation of the creativity and impulsiveness of their protagonist' (ibid). However, this is not an interpretive approach for Jenkins; instead it is an issue of categorisation. He writes that anarchistic comedy is 'one of several different categories of comedian comedies produced in the early sound era' (1992: 23) and describes it as a 'generic tradition' (ibid) rather than a method of interpretation. His scepticism for the association of anarchism remains a metaphor because he questions (if not actually denies) a link between the films and the social conditions which might connect the anarchy of screen practice with anarchist political theory. This is chiefly due to the Hollywood context which allowed the films to exist. Jenkins' analysis of the films as anarchistic is not, therefore, an example of a political interpretation. Instead his analysis is apolitical, explicitly divorced from actual anarchist theory.

Nevertheless, his work on the subject points to ways in which an anarchist interpretation (one which is politicised) can be mounted. Alongside the analysis of its disruptive form and content, he writes that 'anarchistic comedy explores the relationship of the "natural", uninhibited individual to the rigidifying social order, of creative impulses to encrusted habit and conventional modes of thought' (1992: 221). Where Jenkins depoliticises this process, both Alan Lovell and Richard Porton are quicker to associate these tendencies (in the work of Jean Vigo for example) with anarchist political theory. Somewhere between Jenkins' analysis of the Marx Brothers, and the aforementioned analysis of Vigo, there is the stumbling block of a film's industrial context.

Jenkins warns against taking films out of this historical and industrial context, but this is something that must be done to create political value in examining historical work in the present. My task is to acknowledge the historical context but also describe how an anarchist interpretation can aid us now, and move beyond the notions of authorship (brought into question by Jenkins) to discuss the radical meanings which can be attributed to older texts. This can demonstrate methods of resistance in film (and other art-forms), even if the work in question has inconsistencies and shortcomings in style, formal construction, and the presentation of its themes.

Jenkins' demarcation of anarchistic comedy as a generic category suggests the possibility that the anarchist cinema could be studied as a genre or a cycle of films. Such a categorisation would not useful for this thesis, however. The anarchist cinema I describe is certainly not a cycle, because it is not a selection of 'films made within a specific and limited time span' (Neale, 2000: 9). I also do not consider genre as an appropriate framework because I am not looking at a set of shared iconography and conventions. Tom Ryall suggests 'genres are simply groups of films linked by common characteristics' (in Neale, 2000: 17), but which also rely upon 'audience knowledge and audience expectation on the one hand, and of the industry and film reviewers on the other' (ibid). I identify anarchist films in my analysis, but they cannot be considered a genre in the wider world of film studies because pre-existing expectations of them as a category among audiences, industry, and reviewers does not exist. Lovell may consider them a distinct grouping, but the anarchist cinema encompasses more than just films. An anarchist film, according to my definitions towards the end of chapter two, might belong to any other genre, such as the high school comedy (or even a western or horror film - a line I do not pursue in this thesis). A genre of anarchist films cannot be made distinct from other categories; instead an anarchist cinema incorporates films from other genres.

Andrew Tudor writes that by identifying a film as part of a genre 'the critic…is suggesting that such a film would be universally recognised as such in our culture' (Tudor, in Neale 2000: 18). This suggestion deviates from one of the central themes explored in this thesis; that some examples of the anarchist cinema are from corners of cinematic culture where anarchism has not been 'self-declared'. I have identified and labelled these moments of cinema history as 'anarchist', but there is no (as yet) convergence between audiences and film reviewers which Ryall considers vital to an understanding of a generic category. While I am making a case during chapters two and three that there is such a thing as an anarchist film, I also have to acknowledge that many of these films have been categorised by critics and audiences as primarily belonging to other genres. Therefore, the purpose of claiming them for anarchist cinema is limited. It would merely entail a process of (re)labelling. This process is not as useful or as important to me as the issue of how anarchists might use film for political, social, or entertainment purposes. The films I choose to analyse, those that I proclaim have a relationship to anarchism, might not be considered 'anarchist' by their producers or by most audiences. These films lack shared iconography, images, and conventions, but instead demonstrate an attitude towards authority that can be entertaining or even useful to those interested in anarchist theory and history.

In addition to a lack of widespread recognition of it as a category, anarchist cinema lacks the industrial level of production associated with a genre, where 'which material flows from producers to directors and from the industry to distributors, exhibitors, audiences and their friends' (Altman, 1999: 15). Instead, many films I select come from these production practices – the anarchist cinema as I define it *co-opts* these industrial items.

Altman writes that 'all films belong to some genre(s)…but only certain films are self-consciously produced and consumed according to (or against) a specific genre model' (Altman, in Neale 2000: 27). A film that is made specifically to be an 'anarchist film' cannot readily and self-consciously imitate or conform to a set of already standing genre traditions because these do not yet exist. If a film repeated industrial conditions or scenes from anarchist films of the past they could also find that they are described variously as being surrealist (like the Bunuel and Franju films Lovell writes about), comedy (by Jenkins), and horror (*Eyes without a Face*). All of these examples have been described in some way as 'anarchist', but they are all more readily accepted as belonging to other genres.

The very 'messiness' of all this is part of the reason for this thesis. There are contradictions, but this is why the anarchist cinema has to be analysed through a broader approach than by just undertaking film analysis.

It is easy to see the attraction to the academic of using genre study to try to solve a 'problem' in film studies. Altman writes that it is genre study's 'ability to serve multiple functions that gives genre the power to secure privileged relations among cinema's various components' (1999: 14), where 'it is even easier to appreciate how a concept of such versatility should capture the imagination of film critics (leading some to mistake the concept of genre for a critical panacea)' (1999: 15). I am resistant to the idea of falling into the comfort of genre study, where I could simply detect anarchist films and label them as a genre, using it as a 'critical panacea'. I cannot ignore that the anarchist cinema is as much defined by readings and interpretations and uses, as by the films themselves or industrial practices. Anarchist cinema is best understood as an approach; one which is fluid and incorporates both the films and the culture(s) that surround them. It includes analysis of films, but also uses anarchism as a way to understand certain artistic, generic, and industrial traditions of cinema.

Nathan Jun also understands it as an approach or as a philosophy. His article, 'Towards an Anarchist Film Theory: Reflections on the Politics of Cinema' (2010), is an attempt to lay foundations on which a coherent anarchist cinema can be built. He takes a broad cultural studies approach to the subject and outlines the foundations of cinema as an industrial and cultural entity. He acknowledges cinema's connection with capitalism via its historical links; such as the expanse of capitalism leading to the conditions for both the technological advancement of cinema and its role in modern mass communication. Indeed, he claims that 'the emergence of the culture industry is coextensive with the emergence of cinema and other modern artforms/ media' (2010: 149).

Jun presents a summary of Horkheimer and Adorno's view that 'films not only satisfy but *produce* (Jun's emphasis) various consumer desires' (2010: 152), and that the role of mainstream cinema is therefore to follow a select set of conventions which avoid threatening the capitalist hegemony while working to strengthen it. Jun claims that films do this by presenting simple narratives in an easily understandable way, and avoid tackling issues which question entrenched beliefs or provoke complicated philosophical arguments. But as demonstrated by the arguments put forward by Althusser, Comolli and Narboni, this theory is open to questioning, and Jun also highlights the range of complications that arise from

studying cinema with this simplistic model. His two strongest arguments that challenge these assumptions are that the avant-garde of cinema is not always as distinct from mainstream cinema as is first apparent (through either crossover successes, or appropriation of particular experimental techniques into the mainstream), and from the Derridean concept of the absence of a fixed meaning.

He concludes however, that the institutional and industrial power is simply too much for any form of resistance to make an impact. He continues; 'It also reinforces the naivety of cultural studies, whose valorization of consumer subcultures appears totally impotent in the face of such enormous power' (2010: 156).

Jun's proposal to counteract the dominance of the capitalist mainstream is to create 'a cinema of liberation' (2010: 157). This would necessitate that the boundaries between producer and audience disappear, and that 'films would be financed, produced, distributed, and displayed by and for their intended audiences' (ibid). Finally, he calls for an anarchist cinema which is 'self-consciously political at the level of form and content; its medium and message would be unambiguously anti-authoritarian, unequivocally opposed to all forms of repressive power' (ibid).

Jun's article has gaps. He does not discuss previous research in the area of anarchism and cinema. The theorists he uses, including Horkhemier and Adorno, Deleuze, Derrida and Foucault, have relevance to the debate, but they do not address the concept of anarchism and film in their writing. While it would be reductive to only look at anarchist thinkers, or at previous research on anarchist cinema, that Jun does not mention Porton or Lovell reveals a level of disconnection that exists between the theorists working in the subject.

Jun mentions no films at all in his article, raising the implication that no anarchist films have ever been made. This is something that theorists like Alan Lovell or Richard Porton, as well as myself, would obviously disagree with. Furthermore, Jun's final conclusions close down the possibility that this could ever be the case. By raising Horkheimer's and Adorno's view that nothing in mass culture can be considered beyond the realm of capitalism, he implies that everything up to this point in cinema cannot be considered anarchist. Jun is claiming that an anarchist cinema cannot exist in a society which is dominated by a capitalist economy. Presumably, it would also be unable to exist in an authoritarian Communist society, in that every cultural artefact would be imbued with support for the ideals of the party.

Jun's argument is earnest and straightforward, but what it is saying is that capitalism (or its invisible hand) has negated all previous efforts to illustrate anarchism on film, despite each filmmaker's best intentions. This resembles, ultimately, a Marxist analysis, rather than an anarchist one, even if he is calling for there to be an anarchist cinema. Jun provides no indication of how his 'cinema of liberation' might be achieved beyond the destruction of capitalism and the foundations of an anarchist society replacing it. Nevertheless, Jun's 'cinema of liberation' does illuminate what an anarchist cinema could look like. In this sense, his proposal is a utopian one. He is not concerned with what anarchist cinema is but with what it could and should be, and what an anarchist approach to the study of it might be.

The Anarchist Cinema of the Spanish Civil War.

The concept of an anarchist cinema is not entirely theoretical. In Spain during the Civil War between 1936 and 1939 there was an attempt to re-conceptualise cinema implementing some of the ideas later put forward by Jun. Richard Porton summarises it as 'a seminal utopian moment in the history of the anarchist movement' (2009: iii). His focus is on analysing the enduring impact of the efforts of anarchists in Spain during the period on the perception of anarchism more broadly. He writes that 'even if fascism eventually proved victorious, the war of words and images appeared to be won by the left' (Porton, 1999: 77). This victory, if it exists, is reflected in the films made during the conflict, and the documentaries and fictional accounts of anarchist activity that were made from the end of the war until the later part of the 20th Century in film such as *Land and Freedom* (Ken Loach, 1995) and *Libertarias* (Vicente Aranda, 1996).

The conflict is a vital moment in the development of anarchism and its place in history, because, as Peter Marshall writes, 'to date, Spain is the only country in the modern era where anarchism can credibly be said to have developed into a major social movement and to have seriously threatened the State' (1993: 453). The anarchism that developed in Spain during the Civil War was a continuation and culmination of tendencies distinctive to the region. Marshall identifies 1868 as the moment 'the message of anarchism first arrived in Spain' (ibid), when Mikhail Bakunin attempted to win support for the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy – 'a secret society within the First International' (ibid). But there were also deeper roots to the structure of societies associated with anarchism, that 'the anarchist principles of autonomy, association and federation are peculiarly suited to the independent cast of the Spanish social temperament. There was also a long tradition of independent

communes which stretched back to the Middle Ages; these communes had their own public charters and made their own fueros or local laws' (ibid). Marshall is uncovering that essence of an 'anarchic sensibility', ready to be reawakened by the later anarchist theories that spread throughout the region towards the end of the 19th century. He writes that in Spain 'the peasants dreamed of the day *el reparto*, the redistribution of land, when authority in the form of the landowner, priest and police would come to an end' (1993: 454).

There are two particular aspects of Spanish anarchism identified by Marshall that might explain why the cinema became such an important area of struggle during the Civil War. He claims that it 'was rooted in popular culture and expressed in a new form ancient aspirations for land and liberty, bread and justice, education and freedom' (ibid). The cinema would grow to be one of the most visible and notable expressions of popular culture by the time of the conflict, and would be seen as a place where these 'ancient aspirations' could be expressed in a powerful art form. In an analysis of film and its relationship with urban spaces, Allan Siegel identifies the cinema building as 'one of three poles of social activity: the church, the civic, and the social' (Siegel, 2003: 158n), with the movie theatre as a 'symbol of popular culture and mass entertainment' (ibid). Marshall writes that 'Spanish anarchism placed a great stress on culture and lifestyle and sought to free everyday life from the traditional bonds of Church and State' (ibid); so cinema demonstrates the potential to challenge the church as a space for community congregation, for socialising, and as a place for education.

To date, the anarchist involvement in film production during the conflict is the only significant and concentrated period of anarchist influence on the film industry that is measurable by statistics. Emeterio Diez, in his account of the subject (2009), provides a highly detailed history of the anarchist film practice during these years, and provides some idea of the scale into which it developed for a short period. The work undertaken by anarchists in the Spanish film industry in this period incorporated all stages of production from funding to exhibition. This reorganisation of cinema resembles Nathan Jun's description for a cinema of liberation; that is, a cinema 'financed, produced, distributed, and displayed by and for their intended audiences' (2010: 157).

Diez writes that 'during the civil war Spanish anarchism set in motion a film production system, socialisation, that generated a new, alternative cinema on such a scale as to appear capable of replacement of the production generated under the free market arrangement'

(2009: 80). He cites 'the shooting of over a hundred anarchist films' (2009: 34), as an indication of the scope of the anarchist organisation of production. The description of the 'socialisation' of cinema he refers to 'introduced a novel way of producing, using, and thinking about films' (2009: 35), demonstrating how it was not just production and consumption that was important, but also education; a new way of thinking about film and its place in society. These ways of approaching a different understanding of film are repeated and revised in the later post 1968 period and the recent digital age, and are vital to my concept of anarchist cinema; that is to say it is not just the films which are important, but how they are used, where they are screened, and how their place in society is understood.

The ways in which the organisation and 'socialisation' of cinema took place was complex and varied according to the regions and cities in which it took place.

> As is common knowledge, the Uprising of 18 July (1936) destroyed the capitalist system of production by which the film industry had hitherto been governed. The end of the market economy came about in the midst of a swirl of revolutionary proposals. Each side, party, faction, region and indeed each city plumped for a different solution. Moreover, whereas in Barcelona and Madrid this revolutionary change affected the studios where films were shot and copied and also affected the laboratories, movie-halls or other sorts of movie-making firms, elsewhere the revolution only had an impact upon screening premises, that being the business with a presence throughout the length and breadth of the nation. Specifically, the revolutionary change consisted of a few cases in which the entertainments union (or, where none existed, the workforce) took control of the means of production and took charge of film companies, thereby imposing an arrangement known as socialisation (trade union control) or collectivisation (workers' control). (2009: 35-36)

Two aspects of this spread of socialisation are significant. First, Diez writes that socialisation was 'enforced by anarchists in the geographical areas where they held sway', which meant that it was implemented in mostly urban areas which were larger and where the influence of the CNT, the alliance of anarcho syndicalist unions, was more significant. The idea of 'enforcement' of anarchist principles implies a level of violence, revolution, and aggression, and indicates the success of anarchist theory in terms of sufficient numbers of people who believed in it to be able to work together to make it happen. The second aspect is that collectivisation took place in areas with a significantly smaller workforce, where it 'was applied to a town centre's economy' (2009: 39). The cinemas of the town would be 'yet another community amenity' (ibid), where admission for residents would occasionally be free. This notion of the cinema as a social right for residents, much like a community centre, is reflected in recent developments in political cinema cultures with far left and anarchist

affiliations, such as the Bristol Radical Film Festival. These issues are discussed in greater depth in chapter four, *Anarchism and the Cinema Space*.

Many of the films produced during the conflict were simple propaganda. The CNT organised SIE films, created to signpost films that were anarchist in intention, and to establish 'anarchist output' with its 'own brand name' (2009: 52). SIE would produce and distribute films that were industrial, were propaganda, and also films whose purpose was 'a form of entertainment that might be considered a genuine alternative to bourgeois movies' (2009: 55). From the later National Production Company – formed out of a consolidation of the differing, and local, entertainment unions – Diez identifies their intention for the production of three types of film; educational films, formed by propaganda or having a pedagogic role; entertainments, but ones which did not exploit base emotions or desires; and a hybrid of the two, where the viewer would be 'improved' by watching the film, but not in a way that was made obvious to them, thus avoiding the obviousness of propaganda (2009: 60).

Part of the motivation for socialisation was the belief that Hollywood, and other commercial cinemas, failed to provide adequate entertainment according to anarchist beliefs. According to Diez the view was that 'Capital investment nurtured the spectator's craving for pleasure, hedonism, vice, violence, and a penchant for pornography' (2009: 41). This viewpoint may also be the one assumed by Jun; that commercial cinema's predilection for low taste and values undermines the concept of a libertarian, progressive, or anarchist cinema. It also brings to mind the criticism of anarchism as 'puerile and absurd', which Peter Marshall draws attention to, and Whitehall's scathing review of *Dr No* as a film which appeals to an audience's lack of morals. However, I argue that there is a strain of anarchism in such spectacles. There is a politically subversive aspect to cinema which embraces low values, as is evident in the exploitation film (see chapter three, *The Women in Prison Film and Anarchist Analysis*). While acknowledging the contradictions in such imagery and narratives, there is a type of anarchy in taking joy in the violence and representations of sexuality, especially when they are supported by unruly formal properties. This is also a view supported by Lovell's classification of Bunuel and Franju as anarchist filmmakers due to their shocking, violent, and surreal imagery. Therefore, rather than being a finished entity, it is best to understand the anarchist cinema of the Spanish Civil War as an exploratory one. Ideas were being tested in terms of the films being produced and their effect on the viewer. It was also a period where the organisation of cinema as an industrial model, and a physical space, was explored along the lines of a fundamentally anarchist theory.

However, some of the limitations of the films themselves, and the stark economic realities the anarchists had to deal with in producing and exhibiting them, meant that the period fell short of Jun's utopian call for a cinema that would be 'self-consciously political at the level of form and content; its medium and message….unambiguously anti-authoritarian, unequivocally opposed to all forms of repressive power' (ibid). In contrast to this style of filmmaking, which would be in full control of its own capabilities and intentions, Diez describes how some of the films made by the anarchists of the time had 'formal shortcomings' (2009: 82), implying that their filmmaking ability was exceeded by their ambitions. In addition, he identifies that despite the high number of anarchist films made and exhibited, this was only possible due to the financial success of Hollywood films being screened in the cinemas which the anarchists had assumed control of; raising a tension between art and commerce.

Alongside the many documentaries and newsreels, the production of fiction films via the anarchist methods, both shorts and features, was unique among left wing filmmaking during the period. Again, according to Diez, the problem was the standard of the work being produced. He writes that 'formal shortcomings and lack of professionalism cropped up again and again throughout the entire artistic and literary output of the anarchists' (2009: 82). While this is clearly an issue that might account for the lack of fiction film in recent radical and anarchist circles, one must ask why 'formal shortcomings, and lack of professionalism' would be a problem for anarchist film and filmmakers. Professionalism is only measurable by the standards of the mainstream, and in the case of anarchist and radical film, these standards are those of Hollywood, which embodies the beliefs, ideology, and aesthetic standards which the anarchist cinema of the Spanish Civil War was set up to counter. There is clearly a division between work which intends to break with hegemonic ideas of quality, and disregards any attempt at reproducing those same notions, and films which attempt to tell a narrative according to Hollywood principles and fail. The films I discuss in later chapters, such as the *St Trinian's* series, those of Jean Vigo, and certain exploitation cycles, fall somewhere between these two strands.

The efforts of the Spanish anarchist cinema during this period are the closest (large scale) tangible realisation of Jun's utopian vision of a cinema of liberation. But it was one which was conceived during a time of such immense external pressures (in a time of war) it was unlikely to ever endure, and which was beset by its own internal contradictions. But this does

not mean that the attempts are worthless or completely futile. Instead, in the face of the problems of anarchism and cinema unearthed by the experiments in Spain, I would return to the concept of the cracks of cinema, and the fluency of anarchism as an idea as a way to assuage the contradictions. A single approach, especially one working so rigidly within the structure of mainstream cinema, or one which attempts to reconstruct the model of cinema during a time of severe social and economic strain (as in the Spanish Civil War) is bound to have only fleeting or temporary successes. Instead, anarchist cinema has to be a concept which continually evolves, and maintains its fluidity so that it can return to influence and critique dominant, hierarchical, and mainstream constructs of cinema.

Subversive Films and Subversive Viewers – Ways of Understanding Film.

The anarchist cinema defies characterisation as a trend, a cycle, or a genre. There is divergence in the understanding of what exactly it constitutes in the existing literature and discussions on the subject. What connects the analysis of an anarchist cinema so far is the belief that it somehow subverts what is understood as mainstream cinema, culture, and politics – either through the content, industrial context, or formal aspects of individual films. Anarchism and the anarchist are inherently subversive. But the subversive does not automatically imply anarchistic.

Subversion, as referred to in film criticism, often refers to works which contain a message which appears to parody or critique certain established social conventions. Amos Vogel in *Film as a Subversive Art* (1974) unpicks the term thoroughly to describe how film can challenge such values or traditions. Vogel divides the strategies for this process into four categories; subversion of form, subversion of content, forbidden subjects, and 'towards a new consciousness'. The latter category includes examples of films that emerge out of the late 1960s counter-cultural movement. Vogel's work is imbued with the kind of post '68 film study as discussed by Harvey, and one can see in his chosen categories the correspondence with the relaxation of censorship and the experimentation with cinema's formal characteristics that are associated with 1960s cinema.

In describing his subversive cinema in broader terms, Vogel addresses a key issue central to my thesis;

> If the definition of subversion is the attempt to undermine existing institutions or value systems, the operative word is 'existing'; the subversive attacks something 'in control' and wishes to replace it by what does not yet exist and has as yet no power. With the

growth of the technological state, society's methods for protecting itself against 'disruption' and 'anarchy' have become increasingly effective. The means of production, communication, and distribution are firmly in the state's hands and without them, the opposition cannot reach the masses with its subversive message. This is a particularly serious problem for film, a technological art requiring costly, complex tools and special facilities for exhibition. (1974: 318)

Sylvia Harvey's analysis makes clear how this was a critical question in the post '68 developments of film studies, and attempts were made to appropriate the methods of production and exhibition previously held by either the State or private capital. An anarchist attempt to produce film must continue some of these practises, and the anarchist study of cinema should assess examples of how and where this has happened.

Vogel further hints at the direction an anarchist interjection in film studies should take when he writes that 'every work of art, to the extent that it is original and breaks with the past instead of repeating it, is subversive. By using new form and content, it opposes the old, if only by implication, serves as an eternally dynamic force for change, and is in a permanent state of "becoming"' (1974: 323). Similarly, an anarchist study of cinema must work towards the same ends. It is not enough to describe anarchist content, the process itself must therefore retain the anarchic sensibility.

Vogel's cautious conclusion to his study that 'even a post-revolutionary society, based on the ideals the subversives hold dear, will carry within itself new potentials of corruption, new bureaucracies, and new institutions which, at first progressive, will degenerate into ossified structures to be overcome in turn' (1974: 325), opens the door for the anarchist interpretation of cinema and film. The post-revolutionary society he describes here is based on Marxist, socialist, and communist revolutionary concepts, and of van-guardist parties and groups who would assume control of previous power structures. The anarchist would reject this kind of revolution. Therefore, an anarchist interjection in film studies is not about fixing new conditions of analysis and locking down new methods of interpretation, but about opening up the spaces in film studies which have previously been closed down.

Subversion from an anarchist perspective hints at a perpetual struggle against any rule or doctrine that is passed down from institution or authority to the individual. Anarchist subversion is one that undermines hierarchies. Without this approach the door is open for Vogel (in correctly applying a consistent criteria) to include Nazi propaganda films such as *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935), where the 'masterful orchestration of filmic and

psychological components' make it such 'a profoundly subversive' (1974: 178) example of cinema.

Vogel's book positions himself as the arbiter of the subversive within film. But this ignores elements of subversion in wider cinema culture, such as audience behaviour or processes of understanding film. Greg Taylor addresses some of the complexities of film interpretation, audiences, and the idea of what subversion in cinema might be, in *Artists in the Audience: Cults, Camp, and American Film Criticism* (1999). He outlines what happens when the individual ascribes certain value to a text which fails to attain immediate cultural significance, those films which may not garner critical plaudits or box office success. He writes that 'movies are the perfect site for this sort of power game, in that they exist on the border between art and consumer culture' (1999: 5). The use of the phrase 'power game' is telling because it implies there is a battleground of claims and counter claims, and indicates that there is a revolutionary aspect to the power of the spectator. It also takes the process of interpretation away from the critic, academic, or other film professional, and into the hands of the 'ordinary' viewer.

The idea that movies can act as a sort of Rorschach blot leads him to dividing those who reclaim the films as reappraised cultural products into two groups. Firstly, there are the 'cult' critics/audiences, who 'refuse mass taste' (1999: 15), and remain resistant to being sold to and to being told what is culturally vital work, and claim a power in discerning the quality of films for themselves. The second group are the 'camp' critics/audiences where, instead of re-establishing certain films as having qualities despite a lack of success or mainstream acceptance, they reject the process of discernment and discrimination, and instead claim that any film or product is open to re-interpretation. Taylor notes how this shift in audience reaction has led to 'less of a desire amongst highbrows to make art out of the people's culture...because they are more inclined to believe in the ability of people to create their own resistant art (meaningful culture) out of the materials at hand' (1999: 153).

Ultimately, Taylor accepts the advantages of the process of the spectator creating the meaning, whilst also outlining the limitations of that very practice; that it reduces the possibility for defining and discussing film as art and restricts what he calls the 'obligations' of film criticism. This may be true in the case of some texts, but what matters is that the process takes place at all, and what the effects are of a film being understood in a particular way.

These processes are subversive. To snub enforced popular culture and rebuff attempts at being told what to like (and by extension what to do) is not inherently anarchistic, or even inherently left wing. But an act of refusing or reclaiming an object, and refusing the dominant modes of interpretation or understanding, is oppositional. And this oppositional and subversive stance is an important aspect of anarchist culture. Taylor recognises the possibility of the subversive elements, and how this form of film criticism are 'models through which the disempowered might be emancipated from the tyranny of commercial and establishment aesthetics' (1999: 153). He claims that the 'quality' of the film is an important factor in attempts to re-evaluate them, that the less 'artistic' the product the easier it is to apply a different cultural interpretation. Part of this debate addresses the crossing of the boundaries between what is traditionally considered high art and what is often classified as low art. My anarchist engagement with cinema looks to examine ways in which high and low culture mix, and what political relevance there is to be found in doing so. The anarchic presence in cinema should not settle for being confined to one predetermined space, and nor should it be restricted by aesthetic or moral boundaries.

The natural clashing and mixing of the high and low art is at the forefront of Joan Hawkins' *Cutting Edge* (2000), which focuses on the links between the horror film and the avant-garde. The political interpretations she applies to a number of films, and the consideration of their industrial context both progresses and exemplifies some of the ideas worked through by Taylor. Importantly, she extends the possibilities for reappraisal of movies by observing that 'one set of cultural uses...does not necessarily preclude the other' (2000: 6). Whilst discussing the way paracinema mail order catalogues would not advertise the distinction between films from either high or low genres, and would list them alongside each other without any indication of perceived cultural significance, Hawkins states that it 'encourages a kind of dialectical cultural reading'. By doing so, she is claiming that by merely placing different films alongside each other by virtue of nothing other than content (in Hawkins' analysis paracinema and the avant-garde are linked by 'forbidden' content) a process of cultural analysis is taking place.

Like Alan Lovell, she provides an extended analysis of Franju's *Eyes without a Face* (1960). While avoiding a specifically anarchist interpretation, Hawkins sees the film as a 'socio political allegory' which explicitly references World War Two, and in particular functions as a critique of French nationalism and the concept of French racial purity that sprang up among Nazi sympathisers during occupation. Like Lovell, Hawkins sees an

inherently rebellious aspect to surrealist cinema, especially in the use of violent and sexual imagery. She connects the films of Jess Franco to those of Bunuel and Pedro Almodovar in that they share a surrealist approach and 'came of filmmaking age in a political and social climate in which explicit depictions of sex and violence really were transgressive, revolutionary and often illegal' (2000: 91). Franco is a figure who has managed to avoid critical and cultural significance. Yet the rebellious nature of much of Franco's work, made all the more 'extraordinary, given the nature of the social and political climate of the time' (2000: 93), is what makes Hawkins mark him out as a figure of note, in alignment with the 'cult criticism' model that Taylor describes. The industrial context of the majority of Jess Franco's films is what makes the content all the more ripe for reappraisal and strengthens the films' ability to stand up to more overt subversive political interpretations. In Amando de Ossorio's *Blind Dead* series (1971, 1973, 1974, 1975), again it is the content, the 'anticlerical, sacrilegious tone', that allows the films to be positioned as being in opposition to General Franco's fascist government and to the role of Catholicism in Spanish life.

Hawkins also understands that a reading of a film's content cannot just consist of the mere assumption of a left wing political stance based on a simple analysis of content. Whereas Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932), with its narrative of exploited freak show exhibits turning on some of their able bodied abusers, could on one level easily conform to a reading that claims it is an allegory for the rise of the underclass, Hawkins instead exposes a 'misogyny and gynophobia' (2000: 162) which undercuts whatever transgressive or revolutionary ideas it may contain. The infamous ending to the film is read by Hawkins to be reactionary in the way the villainous character of Cleo is the recipient of both the 'Freaks' and the audience's rage. She points out how the character of Hercules, as equally villainous and worthy of punishment as Cleo herself, avoids retribution as he is killed during a violent struggle rather than in an act of cold blooded revenge. That Cleo is punished for not respecting her sexual and gender limits, and 'cut down to size' by being transformed into one of the gruesome exhibits, highlights a reactionary streak which contrasts with the film's attempt to, superficially at least, humanise the 'freaks' of the title.

This possibility for a dual interpretation – of one understanding not precluding the other – has ramifications when attempting politically subversive or anarchistic readings of certain films. Hawkins confronts this difficulty in an extended analysis of *The People vs. Larry Flint* (Milos Forman, 1997), a film about the real life censorship and legal problems encountered by the founder of *Hustler* magazine. The inconsistency, contradictions and paradox at the

heart of *Hustler* (outside of the world of the film) is effectively laid out by Hawkins. On one hand the magazine takes a libertarian stance (in common with much pornography) in that it claims to be anti-censorship, is aimed at the working class and promotes a certain (albeit, arguably limited) type of sexual liberation. However, the idea of the commercialisation of sex, criticised by certain feminists in their opposition to pornography, makes it a problematic cultural artefact to examine from a radical perspective. It is, then, simultaneously libertarian and oppressive. Hawkins concludes that it is possible for 'film representations [to be] both subversive and hegemonically contained' (2000: 215). Some films can have a use value for anarchism while they also contain material that is not consistent with anarchist values.

Cutting Edge illuminates where some of the subversive elements of cinema emerge, often in marginal and disreputable genres such as horror as much as they do in the culturally acceptable or 'progressive' avant-garde and art scenes. Hawkins' quantifying of the dual meaning also allows for interpretation of anarchism in films not made by anarchists, or which are restricted by their mainstream industrial context.

This emphasis on the marginal is given an allegorical interpretation by Robin Wood in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (1986). Wood demonstrates how the fears and anxieties surrounding certain marginalised social groups stands as a metaphor for the source of horror or the Other in a number of American horror films from the 1970s. He identifies the Other as that which is oppressed and repressed, and for the horror to emerge from its reappearance into mainstream, civilised locales (either through a literal invasion of a civilised space or as a metaphoric outburst among a group of people who do not represent the Other). His list of examples of the marginalised is as follows; Other people; Women; The Proletariat; Other cultures; Ethnic groups within the culture; Alternative ideologies or political systems; Deviations from ideological sexual norms; and Children (Wood, 1986: 66-67). Film such as *Night of the Living Dead* (George Romero, 1968), and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1973), for example, make symbolic the clash between marginalised groups and more dominant elements of society. Romero's film articulates (amongst other things) anxieties around the destruction of the nuclear family, and of race relations. Hooper's film, with its 'monstrous family of retired, but still practicing, slaughterhouse workers' (1986: 68) dramatizes a clash between these dispossessed proletariat and the civilised middle classes.

Wood's analysis of such films works to politicise the horror film, and demonstrates how radical ideas can be found in cinema through methods of interpretation. This is similar to how

Alan Lovell works in *Anarchist Cinema*, where he sees anarchism as a political ideology and a repressed tendency which is worked through in his selected films. But the methods of Wood and Lovell reflect only an analysis of content. Evan Calder Williams progresses from this to show how the marginal in horror can also relate to a film's formal aspects, looking beyond the depiction of marginalised groups towards the literal margins of the screen – the edges of the frame. His *Combined and Uneven Apocalypse* (2011) is an account of the narrative and visual tendencies that emerge across a range of post-apocalyptic and dystopian works (chiefly films) from the latter part of the 20th century onwards. His focus is on providing explicitly political interpretations of his chosen films, forming 'unabashedly a work of communist theory' (2011: 9). This emphasis on communism (with a small 'c', not aligned to party Communism) is a response to capitalism's dominance, and the 'apocalypse' of the book's title calls for a return to the origins of the word, of apocalypse as 'an end with a revelation' (2011: 4). The apocalypse in Calder Williams' context refers to late capitalism and its current (2009 onwards) 'crisis'. His study therefore attempts to draw real world relevancy from the texts he studies.

> Out of an apocalypse comes the hard work of the post-apocalyptic. This is perhaps the main theme of the book: the pitched effort to prevent falling back into either the expected passing of crisis or the historical stalemate of catastrophe, to not let the crisis pass or the catastrophe bleed out (2011: 8).

Calder Williams outlines the limitations in the way films are frequently discussed in relation to politics, how the emphasis on narrative and content, in particular of horror films, precludes radical and politicised readings.

> To say that the ending of *Night of the Living Dead*, with the "accidental" murder of an African-American man by the white redneck zombie hunting mob, is largely about race relations is just to say that you've watched the movie all the way through. To say that *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), with its hordes of blank eyed shopping mall zombies, is a critique of consumerism is just to describe the surface texture of the film. As with other films and cultural objects that upfront their political/social critique, that very critique often becomes an obstacle to better critical thinking. (2011: 78)

What Calder Williams is indicating is that the mere description of what is already at the forefront of a film is frequently the extent of politicised film studies. To do so barely counts as film analysis, it is description. Simplistic conclusions are reached which close down the possibility of more radical readings. Instead of outlining or pointing out the 'political' moments of a film, Calder Williams looks beyond the surface to refocus interpretation on what the films reveal, via close analysis of not only content but also form.

In his article *Sunset with Chainsaw* (2011) he extends this approach to look at the way background or peripheral detail in the horror genre can sometimes force its way to the fore and lead to fresh political interpretations. The transferral of emphasis from content and back onto form epitomises the shift from the allegorical margins to the literal margins of the screen. For Calder Williams, background detail in his chosen examples is not the innocuous or even accidental elements of the frame, but deliberately chosen material which 'always threaten to burst to the fore' (2011 b: 30). His extremely close readings of *Night of the Hunter* (Charles Laughton, 1955), *House* (Nobuhiko Obayashi, 1977) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974) opposes the 'horrible content' readings of Carol Clover, Kendall Phillips and Robin Wood because it limits the 'more provocative possibilities of interpretation, and edges out stranger, more aberrant horror movies that exploit and twist genre conventions' (2011 b: 28). A move away from the 'horrible content' model of allegorical interpretation brings the question back to formal analysis. Williams equates what he calls 'secondary material', background detail that cannot be ignored due to its insistence, to the underclass or proletariat threatening social relationships and structures. He describes this as 'the insurrectionary prospect of the back ground coming monstrously into its denied prominence' (2011 b: 33).

Calder Williams' methods of analysis provide a model for re-interpretation, divorced from a mere understanding of a film's content (where 'interpretation' can often be said to have barely taken place). His analysis minimises authorial intent, instead the viewer or audience brings meaning to a text, thereby crossing over into ground initially covered by Hawkins and Taylor. By looking at the edges, including literally at the margins or the background of the screen, Calder Williams identifies ways in which his chosen films articulate ideas about capitalism's dominance and draws links between horror and other genre films and communist theory. While the communist theory he proposes, that of the non-aligned, non-state version of communism, veers close to anarchism as a philosophy, what is most important is that it is presented as an alternative to the norms of late capitalism.

His studies attempt to reveal limiting tendencies that are present in film and cultural studies, and provide fresh ways of analysing content politically, finding the politics in unlikely or hidden places. These methods are valuable to my analysis, enabling me to identify anarchist theory or anarchic tendencies that emerge across my range of films, frequently by looking at the margins (of the screen) and the marginal (specific films or genres that exist amongst the margins of film culture).

Roger Cardinal's essay *Pausing over Peripheral Detail* (1986) attempts to assess what can happen when the spectator resists the obvious in an image, and instead prioritises seemingly non-essential, or even accidental, fragments within a film frame. The act of rejecting what the filmmaker emphasises is, like Taylor and Hawkins' position, perceived to have some subversive potential. Cardinal writes that 'when peripheralized attention is so wilful, it can have the character of a psychological or even political act: through it, I affirm my right to individual vision, my dissent from the collective' (1986: 114). Cardinal's implication is that by interpreting all aspects contained within the frame, by reading all the signs that it may include, the 'dominant rhetorical codes' of the image are refused or ignored. This way of looking, or seeing, is obviously dependent on the taste of the individual viewer and there is both enormous potential for revolutionary interpretations of an image, and obvious limitations and questionable value of such highly personalised subjective musings on what an image may mean. Furthermore, Cardinal speculates that some filmmakers may attempt to push 'the viewer into a fresh relationship to the image, one in which the whole screen is acknowledged as a surface which is, so to speak, detailed all over, like a mosaic' (1986: 126), whether as conscious practice or not. Regardless of the limitations of subjectivity, applying equal value to each element of the frame does have the effect of breaking down the dominant, conventional manner in which meaning is encoded in the image. The hierarchy, that could be said to exist between image maker and spectator, one traditionally active and one traditionally passive, breaks down. This process, threatening the hierarchical process of conventional spectatorship, is an anarchic one. Combined with the process of analysing narrative tendencies and formal aspects, we begin to form the basis of what an anarchist interpretation of a film, or the cultures surrounding it, might be.

My thesis attempts to bring these strands and approaches together to consider the anarchist cinema as a range of films and cultural moments. It begins with the chapter *Unruly Cinema and the Anarchic Space*, which charts how the cinema has been subject to heavy restrictions and regulations on the basis that it is inherently unruly and anarchic. I look at how the early cinema period was often accompanied by a distrust and fear of audiences, and how this was mirrored by onscreen narratives of rebellion and chaos designed to appeal to the predominantly working class cinema-goers. In combining the unruly audience with on screen portrayals of disorder, the cinema, unconsciously or not, associated itself with the marginalised and those outside of bourgeois circles. I examine key moments in the history of the cinema and its regulation, where vociferous attempts have been made to control the habits

of both filmmakers and audiences. This collision between those wishing for the freedom to be able to act in a particular way, watch what they desire, or creatively produce what they want, and the regulators and law makers who attempt to curtail these freedoms, provides not only a metaphor for the struggle of anarchists, but also reveals an anarchic struggle in itself. This history of regulation demonstrates the anarchic tendency inherent in the history of cinema, and indicates that an anarchist cinema can only exist in relationship to attempted controls imposed upon it.

Chapter one begins to consider some of the spatial aspects of cinema and how it relates to anarchism. In film studies, how space and place (particularly that of the urban city) relates to cinema is a substantial field of study and research. Mark Shiel links the two due to their importance as an expression of both culture and of social organisation. He writes that 'thematically, the cinema has, since its inception, been constantly fascinated with the representation of the distinctive spaces, lifestyles, and human conditions of the city' (2001: 1). This relationship is reflected in film's capacity to represent city spaces on screen and how the cinema is vital to the 'cultural economy' (ibid) of cities, particularly those whose identity is partly conceived in its liaison to the film industry (he cites LA, Paris, and Bombay [sic]).

Shiel calls cinema the 'ideal cultural form through which to examine spatialization…because of [its] status as a peculiarly spatial form of culture' (2000: 5). He is referring to the use of space in films - as in the spaces opened up on screen, and in the concept of films in space – where cinema is organised spatially as a cultural entity and an industry. Cinematic space studies is fundamentally concerned with exploring the social and political relationships engendered by film culture, in what Shiel describes as a 'sociology of the cinema' (2000: 3) In doing so, spatial studies considers cinema beyond textual analysis. This provides appropriate continuity with one of the key themes of this thesis, that the anarchist cinema is encompassed by more than just films.

The study of space, place, and the city is important to film studies and cultural studies, as well as other disciplines such as architecture and urban studies (the edited collection *Urban Cinematics* by Francois Penz and Andong Lu combines both of these disciplines), and geography. Within critical theory, Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place* (1977) argues that the former is a more undefined term than the latter, and that 'space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value' (1977: 6). Place is somewhere we feel is secure, while space alludes to that which is freer, open, and which retains the presence of threat

(Tuan, 1977). In *Postmodern Geographics*, Edward Soja identifies how 'space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, [and] how human geographies become filled with politics and biology' (1989: 6). Space and place are vital to how people acknowledge and interact with the world around them, and there are inherently political considerations in how we understand the terms. Soja considers this study of geography a progression from the Marxist tendency of studying history, and that it is the examination of the spatial that 'provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world' (1989: 1). Soja's study of space and place exposes the structures governing the organisation of society in the way that undertaking a political analysis of film does the same.

I am not making any significant intervention into these fields of spatial studies. When referring to the traditional exhibition sites I am using the term 'cinema' to refer to the building. However, the idea that the cinema space as something that could be threatening – associated with 'openness' and 'freedom' as Tuan suggests (1977: 6), is certainly pertinent to my thesis. In chapters one and four I expand on these ideas in greater detail, where I also call for the cinema to retain its freedom and openness, not just in terms of the way audiences use the place (that community building that they are familiar and comfortable in), but how it can be thought of artistically, as a space for expression and the testing of radical ideas. As regards Soja's observation that hierarchies and powers systems are embedded into the 'spatiality of social life', space has an important connection to film and cinema. This thesis is concerned with using aspects of anarchist theory to provide a fresh perspective in how these spatial considerations can be understood, and how anarchism can influence the social conditions of cinema.

In chapter two, *Jean Vigo, St Trinian's and the Anarchist Film*, there is a close analysis of Vigo's work, in particular *Zero de Conduite* (1933). This film is the one most frequently cited as an 'anarchist film', but the term is rarely investigated thoroughly. I look to the problems of the term and its usage, and discuss the reasons for Vigo's 'anarchism' on screen. The first half of this chapter examines the term 'anarchist cinema', and by what criteria it should be judged. I postulate that Vigo's work is referred to as anarchist for two reasons; firstly because of his background as the son of an anarchist, and his own allusions and empathy towards this philosophy; and second, because his film(s) are anti-establishment and 'disorderly' in form and content.

The second part of the chapter looks at the British *St Trinian's* film series (1954, 1957, 1960, 1966, 1980, 2007, 2009). These comedies are set in a high school for girls where the pupils are rebellious and uncontrollable. The films, the characters, and the cartoons on which they are based, are often described as 'anarchic' in popular reviews. As with the first part of the chapter, I examine the use of the term in relation to the *St Trinian's* films. If one were to take the criteria for the onscreen evaluation of Vigo's film as being anarchist (rather than the biographical background), it is equally possible to describe certain aspects of the *St Trinian's* series as part of an anarchist cinema, due in part to formal aspects which emphasise a disorder in some of the ways Vigo's film also does. This goes beyond superficial similarities in setting and scenario. The films target comic attacks on a number of institutions which are the enemies of anarchism; the military, government, the police, etc. By the criteria set out by Alan Lovell, where he includes *Zero de Conduite* as part of a definition of anarchist cinema due to its attacks on establishment figures, *St Trinian's* also fits. The analysis used to describe them as anarchist is interpretive and thus open to contradiction and alternative readings, so the possibility for other films to be labelled under anarchist cinema is opened up.

The chapter entitled *The Women in Prison Film and Anarchist Analysis* takes some of the processes of interpretation and applies them to exploitation cinema. The focus is the American Women in Prison cycle from the early part of the 1970s. This area of exploitation cinema sits at the margins of film culture, and I make the analogy with anarchism's position as being at the fringes of political culture. Many exploitation films explicitly engage with politics and political issues, and because they reside outside of mainstream cinema the range of issues they explore are frequently outside of the mainstream too. Finally, the Women in Prison film, like the *St Trinian's* series, fits the criteria of an anarchist cinema according to their formal aspects and anti-establishment content.

One of the aims of the chapter is to test the processes of interpretation to see if there can be an 'anarchic' approach to analysis; one which uses different interpretive models from film studies, but which is not tied to any one particular method. This involves close textual analysis of the selected films. As a starting point for this analysis I assess how the Women in Prison film, and the exploitation film more broadly, has been discussed in relation to feminism (by writers such as Pam Cook and Henry Jenkins). This reveals how the cycle has already been politicised by academics working in film studies. My analysis seeks to consider how this critical engagement might be realigned to examine the possibilities for an anarchist analysis. I demonstrate that the Women in Prison cycle is founded on an anarchic spirit,

within the films themselves and in the broader cinematic contexts in which they are produced.

The fourth chapter, *Anarchism and Cinema Space*, examines methods through which anarchists have re-configured the cinematic space, and assesses the ways in which anarchist theory has influenced non-mainstream, political organisations concerned with both the production and exhibition of film and video. I propose that an anarchist intervention into cinema should combine both production and exhibition. This would take the form of programming and curating a range of films, incorporating a broader selection than is typical in anarchist or radical film festivals, and including relevant material from diverse production contexts; involving amateur video making, political work, and even mainstream movies. This manner of curating would set up clashes between the films, mix low and high art, and provoke discussions and debates among the audience, which I argue can assuage any contradictions inherent in the texts themselves. The chapter brings together the different strands of the thesis – the issues surrounding anarchic form and content, the problems of contradictions (in subject and production context), and the specific anarchist practice of organising film exhibitions and the importance of the cinematic space.

My study takes as its examples moments from the history of primarily Western cinema. There are, of course, numerous other histories of cinema from diverse cultures and contexts around the world. The ideas contained in this thesis may or may not apply to these other cases. I have chosen the examples I have as models for how an anarchist inspired cinema either has existed or could exist. These examples flow from what I believe is the natural starting point of the anarchy of the early cinema period. From there I map an idiosyncratic route through cinema history and culture. Also, when referring to the term 'cinema culture' I mean the practices surrounding how film is used and consumed. While there would undoubtedly be differences in looking at alternative examples from other contexts, they would still be composed of inflections of production, exhibition, distribution, and consumption.

In the ensuing thesis I consider the dynamic between anarchism and film more widely than it has been understood previously. If there is to be an anarchist cinema, it is in how the films interact with the broader cultures surrounding them. The anarchist cinema resides in how film is used by audiences, artists, critics, and political groups.

CHAPTER ONE: Unruly Cinema and the Anarchic Space

In October 2014 a story appeared on *The Guardian* website concerning a series of incidents in a French cinema during screenings of the horror film *Annabelle* (John R. Leonetti, 2014), where teenagers "began fighting, throwing popcorn and even ripping up theatre seats" (Child, 2014). The cinema manager was quoted as saying "some didn't have the most elementary notion of how to behave…they were throwing popcorn and talking at the top of their voices or walking round", adding "it's not up to me to teach young people how to respect the law". Note the use of verbs and phrases condemning the teenagers' behaviour – 'throwing popcorn', 'talking', 'walking around' - none of which are actually against the law. And yet the law is invoked by the cinema manager as something that they should respect. What the manager is referring to, of course, is the law of the picture house, the laws of watching film, the laws of cinema.

This incident may now appear as a special or isolated case – worthy of mentioning as a story on the website of a major newspaper. But it encapsulates the key elements of this chapter; there is a screening of a low grade horror movie; the cinema is a regulated space with its own rules and laws governing 'proper' behaviour; and there is an audience who refuses to obey these edicts. The story exemplifies an anxiety about cinema and its potential for inciting dangerous or illicit behaviour in audiences. This is a result of the dynamics between film, audience, and spaces of exhibition. These concerns have been present in understanding the cinema since its inception at the end of the 19th century, and they hint at an anarchic underbelly that resides within it as a form of art and entertainment.

Richard Maltby, writing in Tino Balio's *Grand Design* (1993), locates cinema among a number of other popular forms of entertainment which are subversive whilst also operating under high levels of control.

> From amusement parks to rock 'n' roll, different sites and forms of popular cultural expression in the twentieth century derived their innovative energies from culturally and socially disreputable sources, but they have also operated under systems of convention and regulation that keep contained the subversive potential of their origins and that ensure they endorse, rather than challenge, the existing distribution of social, political, and economic power. (Maltby, 1993: 41)

The amusement park Maltby refers to is a physical space where people can congregate and socialise, and where they also have an arena to indulge in transgressive behaviours. Rock 'n' roll, on the other hand, represents an ideological or thematic space where the rebellion is

contained in a genre of popular entertainment. Cinema exists as a combination of a physical space of exhibition and a form of entertainment, and therefore it has the propensity for both tangible and ideologically rebellious behaviours. Of all the disreputable entertainments which drew concern about their ability to lower societal standards, it was the cinema 'which attracted the fiercest hostility and criticism' (Pearson, 1984: 93).

Historically, the cinema has been controlled in terms of its building regulations and safety procedures, as well as in the behaviours of its audiences. The content of films has also been subject to regulations and restrictions. It is precisely because of these constraints governing the spatial and creative aspects of cinema that it has the potential to be subversive; by resisting and fighting against these restrictions, and by testing their limits. The dual combination of control and subversion becomes a perfect breeding ground for an understanding of anarchism's association with cinema. Anarchism as a political theory, and anarchy as an impulse, provides the context for how these various subversions in cinema can be understood.

This chapter considers some of the ways in which cinema can begin to be studied under the framework of anarchism and the anarchic. It is not intended as a comprehensive assessment of all the ways in which it has been censored or regulated. Instead, it looks at some key moments which help articulate how cinema can be understood as a subversive force, and through this begins to investigate the relationship between anarchism, film, and cinema culture. It assesses how the cinema has been considered a space of disorder and how audiences have been regulated in the hope of preventing chaos or illegality, based around the fear of unruly audiences. The chapter also investigates some of the ways in which film content has been restricted and censored by moral guardians and those who maintain hegemonic and hierarchical power, and how those restrictions have been subverted. The anarchism of cinema occurs in the combination of these elements; it is in the resistance by individual viewers and larger audiences to the regulations governing their behaviour, and it is in the way film as an art form that can subvert the hegemonic notions present in societies.

The cinema as a place of lawlessness.

The idea that the cinema is a space of anarchy, and a home for rowdy and uncontrolled behaviour, is one which is documented with particular nostalgia and affection in American popular cinema. It alludes to a previous age when it was a dominant mass art form in the days before the widespread popularity of television, and was primarily associated as being

entertainment for the working classes or the uncultured. Joe Dante's *Matinee* (1993) is a nostalgic celebration of this era, and of cinema's unruly nature. Its story features a William Castle esque film maker (played by John Goodman), who is releasing his latest film 'Mant!', a gimmick laden horror/sci fi feature about a half man, half ant created through the misuse of atomic radiation. Both 'Mant!' and the cinema as a space of exhibition are presented as a form of escapism, made especially relevant in that the film is set in 1962 in Florida against the backdrop of the Cuban Missile Crisis. It reveals, in its own affectionate way, the interplay between film, audiences, and politics. The cinema is presented as a social space, which screens low budget programmes that simultaneously reflect relevant political issues (in this case fear of nuclear war and atomic radiation). Dante's film replicates this through a nostalgic gaze; a eulogy to an era long past. But a film like Wes Craven's *Scream 2* (1997) demonstrates a belief that this notion of cinema still existed at the time of its production in the late 1990s; a cinema which gives vent to anarchic behaviour by its audience, who interact with the events happening on screen.

Like Dante, who began his career working for Roger Corman's exploitation company New World, Craven's first film, the notorious *Last House on the Left* (1972), sat firmly in the low cultural margins of the exploitation and horror genres. *Scream 2* begins with two characters out on a date to see 'Stab', a slasher film based on the events depicted in the original *Scream* (1996). They have to queue with hundreds to get in to see the film, with 'Stab' proving a particularly popular attraction. Inside the theatre the audience runs riot, some are attired in the 'Scream' masks and costumes of the onscreen killer, and are wielding fake knives which are for sale in the foyer. These unidentified patrons inadvertently act as a decoy for the real killer, who roams amongst the crowd waiting to stalk and kill the couple on the date, seemingly at random. The noise and rowdiness of the audience, and their interaction with events on the screen, reveals the anarchy fostered by the horror/exploitation picture. In Craven's film it is the lack of artistic quality in 'Stab' that inspires the crowd's unruliness. The film is formulaic and dumb - leading to catcalls and other assorted interaction with the scenes. It is violent enough for the crowd to flinch or cheer, and in parts so uninteresting that the fun for the audience comes from the joy of being let loose in a cinema to create noise and to act badly rather than immersion into the world of the film.

The *Scream* series (1996-2011) fetishes the horror movie audience by its emphasis on the way movies are consumed. The first film in the series (1996) reaches its climax at a house party, where as part of the entertainment (alongside alcohol, sex, and drugs) is a VHS

machine playing real life slasher films, including John Carpenter's landmark *Halloween* (1978). The characters watching the video chat loudly throughout, but still cheer at the nudity and shocks, and quote the dialogue. In *Scream 4* the narrative takes place several years later, where there has supposedly been a raft of 'Stab' sequels. Two of the film's movie geeks, who run a film appreciation class at their college, organise a 'Stab' all night screening in a barn, with each of the numerous fictional sequels playing back to back. As in *Scream 2* there is chaos, with the atmosphere closer to a party than a traditional film screening; and once again a killer hides among those who attend in costume. These scenes shift through the varying ways audiences organise their own culture around film based on the technology available to them; from the home video era presented in the original *Scream*, through to film appreciation societies in academia, and the ability to organise all night screenings with projectors and DVDs in *Scream 4*. *Scream 2*, however, emphasises the uniqueness of the traditional cinema space. In the first and fourth instalments of the franchise those watching the films at the parties know each other since they belong to the same school or college, but in the darkness of the cinema the shared experience, the sense of solidarity, is one which is undertaken amongst strangers.

Joe Dante revisits these anarchic visions of cinema in a key scene from *Gremlins* (1984). Once again the auditorium is packed, this time with the maniacal Gremlins of the title enjoying time out from their rampage of terror to watch Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Popcorn explodes across the screen to indicate a sense of spontaneous disorder and anarchy. The legend of a gremlin as a monster who disrupts technology like some sort of demonic Luddite is replayed throughout the film, as they attack a middle class, middle American dream town; a strike against a symbol of conformity and complacency. In Dante's sequel, *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* (1990), they occupy a high tech corporate skyscraper, an emblematic symbol of capitalism. In the same film, in which some of the more intelligent Gremlins have developed the ability to speak fluently, they appear to take over the New York stock exchange; advising brokers to put all their money 'into canned food and shotguns' as the Gremlins begin taking over the city. In the sequel they also attack a cinema, and Dante includes a scene where they infiltrate a projection booth and disrupt *Gremlins 2* itself; making it seem as if the film in the projector is melting. The illusion for a watching cinema audience is that the film has indeed broken down for real, until the silhouette of a Gremlin steps into the light to reveal it as a reflexive prank by Dante on the audience.

But it is in the first film that the Gremlins have their most iconic moment; they are depicted as singing along with the Seven Dwarfs onscreen, fighting, and generally disrupting and ruining the performance of the animated classic. Except, of course, that their behaviour is barely any worse that of the audience depicted in *Scream 2*. They simply act in a way that audiences were thought to have acted in the past, and which forms part of a nostalgic memory of cinema-going for such fans of horror and exploitation as Dante and Craven. The 'Snow White' scene in *Gremlins* is a celebration of cinema and the anarchy it can inspire.

One of the most nostalgic elements to these depictions of the cinema is the way that the auditoriums are packed full and sold out, with audiences desperate to see the latest low grade horror film. *Gremlins*, *Matinee*, and *Scream 2* are higher budgeted and more mainstream films than Dante and Craven made in their early careers, but both directors are expressing a debt to the exploitation traditions in which they began. Despite the contemporary truth of these representations (do these sort of films pack out auditoriums, or are they more likely to appear on DVD or web streaming services?), the origins of this notion of cinema – a place of disorder, crime, and appealing to the basest of emotions, has historical accuracy and relevance.

Joan Hawkins, in *Cutting Edge* (2000), discusses real world examples of this type of crowd/audience behaviour as part of her examination of the links between high and low culture in the horror film. In her analysis she outlines the links between the audiences of low genres such as horror and exploitation and those who frequent the art houses. It is a connection which articulates how audiences are integral to understanding the interplay between the anarchic and film. She begins by examining critic Pauline Kael's article "Zeitgeist and Poltergeist, or Are the Movies Going to Pieces?", where an audiences' behaviour causes Kael much bemusement and displeasure. Hawkins finds a parallel with similar conduct by audiences during early Dadaist shows. She compares the talking and cheering that accompanied a screening of *The Horror Chamber of Dr Faustus* (a dubbed and re-edited version of Georges Franjus' *Eyes Without a Face* [1960]) that so annoyed Kael with Dadaist shows where;

> the audience participants would arrive at avant-garde events well armed with tomatoes, raw meat, and insults, which they would proceed to hurl at the artists on stage. Like the punk rockers who came sixty years later, the performers would simply fling the projectiles (and epithets) back at the audience. (2000: 60)

This element of interactive performance is easier to achieve with a live show, but one can see how the trend is invited to continue when the focus of a film is to affect a physical response from an audience. This effect, 'the ability of a film to thrill, frighten, gross out, arouse, or otherwise directly engage the spectator's body' (2000: 4), is, Hawkins argues, a key feature of the low genres such as horror, the various strands of exploitation, and other paracinema.

Hawkins acknowledges that there is an idea of a movie house as a place for 'a rigorous refusal of spectator passivity, a refusal that – in other contexts – has been lauded by Breton, Brecht, and Godard as avant garde, even revolutionary' (2000: 61). In other words, when the audience response is intellectualised by those who belong to part of the cultural elite, it can be considered political. But it needs this interjection of intellectual reasoning to render the behaviour as political resistance; otherwise it gets dismissed as the pointless behaviour of the hooligan; the dumb and reflexive response of the uneducated or uncultured – as demonstrated in the reaction to the disrupted screenings of *Annabelle* in France.

Kael demonstrates a distaste at such audience interaction with the events on screen, where she feels that 'too many people are enjoying films for the wrong reasons' (2000: 64), and that 'so much so it's destroying the medium' (ibid). This reflects some concerns about a shift from an attentive audience to one which is, at best, distracted, and at worst, threatening. But, as Hawkins argues, this is not symptomatic of the destruction of the medium, but a return to the original, and natural, state of cinema. A state which is dependent on class solidarity through a shared experience, and one which reveals the hidden anarchy present in cinema and film; where a sense of chaos is fostered in the interactions between audience, screen, and space.

The Early Cinema Audience.

Lee Grieveson demonstrates that the distracted and boisterous audiences recounted in the tales by Hawkins, and in the films of Craven and Dante, are nearer in spirit to those who attended picture houses in cinema's early years than the concept of an audience which sits in attentive silence to watch the film. Michael Chanan charts the origins of the rowdy audience back beyond cinema to music hall theatre entertainment and even to the local fairs that took place on an annual basis dating back to the middle ages. He writes that though the energy and 'lifeblood' of these audiences lacked a coherent political consciousness there was a definite 'class solidarity' (1996: 155), and that early film culture was born into an already 'strong sense of social class' (ibid) that the music hall had created. He also describes a business

model of music hall theatre which cinema eventually aped, based on the technology or product of film not being 'passed directly into the hands of the consumer as a commodity' (1996: 23), in the same way that what was being exploited was audience's time in the theatre, with profits drawn from the box office. (This model would continue until the rise of home video).

In *Policing Cinema* (2004) Grieveson outlines the developments and processes which took place between, audience, screen, and the regulatory bodies in the early part of the 20th Century, and how they shaped cinema's development. He writes that 'legislative and reform activism in relation to cinema gathered pace after the proliferation of nickelodeons from 1906 on had opened moving pictures to lower-class and immigrant populations that had not previously frequented theatrical style entertainments in any great numbers' (2004: 4). He notes that the cinema and the films on screen were deemed to have converged into a dualistic relationship; the unhealthy and unwashed masses being fed a diet of unhealthy and crude entertainments, both feeding off each other. To combat this relationship cinema became 'policed' as a space and as a 'social body' (ibid), as well as being subject to regulation and censorship for the films being played. This attempt at control also had its antecedents in music hall. Prior to the building of the specialist cinema, film shows often took place in music hall theatres, 'the dominant form of popular urban entertainment in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century' (Chanan, 1996: 130). Also, the general social and moral unease surrounding early cinema echoed that which permeated this earlier form of artistic practice, space of entertainment, and place of community. The middle classes 'were uneasy and suspicious' (1996: 139) about music hall entertainment because it did not propose a moral correctness. It was considered 'anarchic but inarticulate' (ibid) by political radicals of the time because it diverted working class energy away from the political and into the purely social. The reverberations of these opinions are found in the intellectualisation of audience response by Brecht and Godard that is demonstrated by Joan Hawkins (above), and shows how these working class or 'anarchic' audiences became a site for contestation by both moralist and radical critics – with audience behaviour either condemned or celebrated depending on the ideological position of the commentator.

Grieveson writes that 'regulatory discourses, practices, and institutions in this period were linked to fundamental debates about the social functioning of cinema - debates about how cinema should function in society, about the uses to which it should be put, and thus, effectively, about what it could or would be' (ibid). These arguments continue to reverberate.

He suggests three reasons as to why cinema was particularly vulnerable to legal and regulatory reforms as part of 'an ongoing process of cultural contestation' (2004: 13). Firstly, he asserts that the cinema (or nickelodeons as they were called in the US context he describes) was 'the first form of mass entertainment and culture for an emerging mass public' (ibid) who were working class, immigrant or women, and attracted by cheap ticket prices. Secondly, films had a greater sense of realism than previous entertainments, and so were said to provoke imitative behaviour. Additionally, illicit behaviour was thought to be encouraged among moviegoers due to the natural cover afforded by the darkness of the auditorium. Thirdly, the heightened awareness and fear of the new audiences was a response to 'the forces of industrialisation, urbanisation, and immigration' (ibid), and thus was an attempt to find some order amongst the 'social dislocation' (ibid) of the period. Out of this it is possible to detect the 'danger' lurking in the potent combinations of screen, space, and audience; combinations which provoke a particular sense of fear based on the assumption that there was the potential for some uncontrollable undercurrent of power emanating from the working classes. From the perspective of political cinema, the question is how that power can be harnessed. For the anarchist working in film and film studies, the role must be to celebrate the engendering of a fear and threat of the anarchic, and to combine it with anarchist theory. It is in the combination of these elements that an anarchist cinema begins to formulate.

The films being made in this period were subject to restrictions based on two dominant themes; sex and politics. Grieveson reports that the National Board of Censorship, and other groups established as moral guardians, considered it 'dangerous to disseminate knowledge about such important subjects as sexuality and politics to mass audiences' (2004: 33). At the heart of this is the fear that such inflammatory representations of immorality, combined with films which debate politically, are particularly problematic when placed in front of the uneducated. Amos Vogel in *Film as a Subversive Art* (1974) concurs with the view that sex and politics are a potent mix, and he celebrates the subversive power the combination can generate. Many years into the development of film as an art form a similar investigation of the politics of sex became the basis for Dusan Makavejev's *WR, Mysteries of the Organism* (1971). According to Vogel, the film 'quite seriously proposes sex as the ideological imperative for revolution' (1974: 153), based as it is on the work of Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich. The film, in its 'opposition to all oppressive social systems, East or West' (1974: 155) positions itself close to the anti-Statism of anarchist theory. Given this anti-State ethos, Richard Porton declares it 'surprising that critical literature on the film hasn't yielded a

full-fledged anarchist analysis', while also acknowledging that anarchism cannot be used as a 'Rosetta Stone for decoding *W.R.* in a glib or 'totalizing' manner' (2011: 134). While Makavejev's film is theoretically and aesthetically a world away from the popular films being shown to audiences in the early part of the 20th century, a consistent line of thought can be determined around these amalgamations of sex and politics.

This sort of dangerous content led to the 'consensus that mainstream cinema should principally offer harmless and culturally affirmative entertainment, that cinema should be defined, and should function, as a space apart from the political sphere' (Grieveson, 2004: 33-34). That cinema and politics should not meet is a concept violently opposed by anarchist and radical groups working within film and cinema in the later part of the 20th century and up to today - and is opposed for the very reasons the consensus was formed in the first place, because film has a power to harness thought and action, and is a particularly relevant art form for the working classes.

The shape of cinema hereafter the period Grieveson describes (1905-1915) morphed into what is now known as the classical period, and prompted the valorisation of mainstream narrative cinema above all other forms because of its apparent 'safety' (my quotation marks). Grieveson call this process 'hierarchization' (2004: 35); a process by which anarchist films, and any definition of an anarchist cinema, must oppose. This hierarchization 'shunted alternative conceptions of cinema to the margins of the mainstream, particularly apparent with politically oriented filmmaking, be that propaganda, the avant-garde, or "documentary", and visible also in relation to genres associated with the "exploitation" of sexuality' (2004: 35). Here, we begin to see the formation of anarchic resistance in film and cinema; at the margins of, and seeping into the cracks of, the mainstream. The modes of filmmaking which he describes at the margins, the political film, the avant garde or experimental work, and non-fiction filmmaking, dominate the anarchist and radical festival circuits which I later describe in the chapter *Anarchism and the Cinema Space*.

Nicholas Hiley's *"At the Picture Palace": The British Cinema Audience, 1895-1920* (2012) exposes how some of the processes of regulation were not culturally specific to the U.S., suggesting that they were a reaction to cinema's inherent power. He reveals how the 'awkward, dirty, and unruly' (2012: 34) audiences of early cinema in a British context were also integral to how we should understand the types of films being made and the way they were exhibited. One notable example from the period he uses is the addition of inter-titles to

films in the first years of the 1900s. This was due to the difficulty audiences had in understanding the increasingly more complex narratives of the movies being made, and so inter-titles would help explain the action being presented on screen. Their widespread use in explaining the on-screen stories was primarily an economic move. Prior to this, films were sometimes accompanied by lecturers providing a spoken word commentary on the action, and as cinema became a more popular entertainment the increase in the amount of shows meant that there were not enough lecturers to go around. The replacing of the lecturer also adds another layer of control – the inter-titles lock down meaning and remove or reduce the possibility for lecturers to be able to add their own interpretations of the image. The presence of inter-titles can prevent 'wrong' or deviant interpretations of the film by the lecturer or audience.

Hiley's claim 'that the art of film cannot be divorced from its economic context' (2012: 29) is laid bare by some of the practices of cinema managers at the time. One tactic was to increase the projection speeds of films to allow for more showings to be packed into a day's worth of programming. The onscreen effect of this was to make the movements of the performers or subject to appear faster than they would in reality. However, 'regular picturegoers accepted the acceleration as part of the medium' (2012: 30), revealing how expectations of screen realism were wildly different from those of later audiences.

He points out how the middle classes responded less favourably to the crude programming and speeded up projections than the working classes who made up the majority of those in the auditorium. The use of music in early cinema also reveals the impact of commerce on its development, and indicates another removal from later notions of what constituted appropriate film art or realism. In smaller venues many films were projected with no musical accompaniment. Even in cinemas which did have a pianist or a mechanical device to play music, what was played frequently was not synched to the action on screen, so there was a discord between the image and the extra filmic elements.

Hiley claims that the crudity of the average film programme was 'because their patrons were terribly poor' (2012: 31), and also that the successful spread of cinema was due to 'the fact that it was cheap to enter and, unlike the theatre or the music hall, did not impose a minimum standard of dress' (ibid). For poorer audiences, what was happening on screen was not the sole reason for attending the show. Instead, the cinema 'also offered refuge from the cold' (2012: 32). He writes that 'warmth has no place in the developing art of film, but in

1917 it was acknowledged as a significant factor in attracting the working classes' (ibid). Nevertheless, these audiences still responded favourably to the films, so much so that Tom Dewe Mathews notes how early cinemas often 'smelt of urine and disinfectant' (1994: 9), as a result of some audience members declining to use the outside toilets due to being so absorbed in the action on screen.

In these early configurations of the art form, the specifics of the screening venue and how it affected the relationships between audiences and the film is of paramount importance. Hiley points out that 'early audiences did not buy films, but bought time in the cinema, which they used for a variety of purposes' (2012: 33). These purposes included not only a degree of comfort and warmth not readily available at home or elsewhere, but it also became a place where time could be spent with the family, or a dark space where young couples could meet. It is important to an understanding of anarchist cinema because it reveals how the audience has agency over the presence within the cinema space; instead of the film being the chief focus, the social interaction the venue fostered, and its status as a community refuge takes on increased importance.

> For those historians committed to the developing art of film these working class audiences, with their love of comedies and crude melodramas, their indiscriminate passion for movement, their dirty clothes, and their tendency to rowdyism, must seem very unattractive. This is hardly surprising, for contemporary exhibitors also found them unattractive, and struggled to separate them from the middle class patrons and to overawe them with uniformed attendants. (2012: 33)

Hiley's quote reveals the powerful combination of low art combined with disorderly behaviour. Furthermore, the cinematic developments that came after this period fostered 'a style of filmmaking which absorbed the spectator into the illusion and thus broke the power of the working class audience' (2012: 34). These developments had the visible effect of being on screen; with greater realism prompted by the projection of film at more sensible speeds, and emotional developments though the increasing sophistication in the use of sound and music. And there were also expansions of the cinematic space, as it attracted a more diverse range of cinemagoers to include the middle classes. In addition, any rowdy behaviour began to be more strictly enforced.

The anarchy of these British and American audiences, and the sense of disorder fostered by the relationship between the audience and screen, was curtailed by the attempts at gentrification of early cinema by the various moral and ethical guardians. For there to be an anarchist cinema, there has to be a return to radical arrangements of film, audience, and

space; albeit with a consciousness and awareness of the political power of these combinations.

The place of exhibition was seen as one of the first ways early cinema could attain respectability and to help shed its sordid image. Tom Dewe Mathews notes how the change of screening venue 'from squalid penny gaffes into ornate music halls' (1994: 14) was one of the earliest attempts at catering to a more upmarket audience. However, he also points out that the films exhibited during music hall shows were frequently of such poor quality that they were played after stage performances to help clear out the auditorium to make way for the next set of punters. The move to more respectable sites of exhibition would eventually lead in time to the building of theatres specifically for the screening of films, named the Picture Palaces in Britain. These would be places where 'whitewashed walls were replaced by veined marble and bevelled mirrors, bare floorboards by fitted carpets, and the loud mouthed barkers were transformed into uniformed attendants' (1994: 14).

Health and safety fears would eventually mean separate entrances and exits; particularly for the poor and working classes in an attempt to prevent them from inadvertently occupying areas reserved for their social superiors (1994: 15). This gentrification of the cinema had seen a precedent in the transformation of the music hall, where in an attempt to 'elevate the moral tone' (1996: 147) there had been introduced a scale of seat pricing model. Chanan notes how this resulted in 'the separation of different social classes within the same hall and to the different class composition of audiences in different types of hall' (1996: 148). What was really happening amid the concerns over cinema safety (in particular fire safety) was moves towards legislation that was principally about 'social and moral control' (1996: 150). The initial legislation of the 1878 Suitability Act (requiring a suitable building space to host entertainment) had been introduced primarily as a response to anxieties over the rising spread of trade unionism in the music halls (1996: 151), both in the audiences and among those employed on the stage as performers and backstage as crew. The legislation reflected a sense of dread at the possibilities mass entertainment had for provoking a political consciousness in those who produced and consumed it.

In Britain, with the development of anxieties surrounding cinema safety, it sparked a convergence between restrictions on audience movement in terms of what they were allowed to do and where they were permitted to sit and what could be shown on screen. Mathews shows how because of the introduction of the Cinematograph Act in 1909 the local councils

would have the power to refuse cinema licences to those establishments which dared to screen films and entertainments that were thought undesirable. To counter this problem of 'revenue being lost due to different councils imposing different decisions about the same film' (1994: 19) the industry, led by Cecil Hayworth, proposed the British Board of Film Censors (later to become the British Board of Film Classification). In America, a comparable set of circumstances led to what became known as the Hays Code, which was introduced to help combat external infringement of industry products and profits.

Censorship, Regulation, and Self-Regulation.

The notion of the cinema as a place of subversive and unruly behaviour is amplified when a film is deemed to have similarly dangerous attributes. In *Film as Subversive Art* Amos Vogel investigates the ways in which a film may be seditious or undermine hegemonic ideas. He writes that;

> subversion in the cinema starts when the theatre darkens and the screen lights up. For the cinema is a place of magic where psychological and environmental factors combine to create an openness to wonder and suggestion, an unlocking of the unconscious. It is a shrine at which modern rituals rooted in atavistic memories and subconscious desires are acted out in darkness and seclusion from the outer world.
>
> The power of the image, our fear of it, the thrill that pulls us toward it, is real. Short of closing one's eyes – in cinema a difficult and unprecedented act – there is no defence against it. (1974: 9)

Vogel is making clear the reasons for film's usage by each and every political ideology; from communist and fascist propaganda through to standard party political advertisements on television, and also in anarchist uses of film such as during the Spanish Civil War. From cinema's earliest days there has been an attempt to harness its power for political power and leverage. Vogel hints at there being something inherently subversive about film due to the realities of perception of what is happening on screen. He suggests that a viewer has an 'acceptance of a flat surface as three dimensional, of sudden action -, scale or set-changes as ordinary, of a border delimiting this fraudulent universe as normal, of black and white as reality' (1974: 10). It is a claim that would mean an understanding of reality has been subverted and distorted by the viewing process.

   He continues that it is this power which film holds that has 'forever made the cinema an appropriate target of repressive forces in society – censors, traditionalists, the state' (1974:

11). The cinema, therefore, has been subject to restrictions in terms of its content as much as it has been due to the behaviour of its audiences.

Vogel's assessment of the power of film is specifically tied to the idea of it playing in a cinema, writing as he does in the pre-home video era. He claims that the cinema as a physical space provided the audience with a unique experience distinct from visual storytelling such as the stage play or the later television. The following, again quoted at length to take in the poetry and polemics of Vogel's language, reflects an entirely utopian viewpoint, that sits at odds with the realities of cinema-going.

> The viewer enters the theatre willingly, if not eagerly, ready for surrender, (and deeply dissatisfied later if the film is 'bad' and the illusion does not 'work'). The film experience requires total darkness; the viewer must not be distracted from the bright rectangle from which huge shapes impinge on him. Unlike the low-pressure television experience (during which the viewer remains aware of the room environment and other people, aided by appropriately named 'breaks'), the film experience is total, isolating, hallucinatory. The viewer 'forgets' where or who he is and is offended by stray light, street or audience noises which destroy the anticipated and accepted illusion.
>
> As soon as the lights are lowered, the huge rectangle of the screen – previously noted without interest – becomes the viewer's total universe. What transpires here in bursts of light and darkness is accepted as life; the images reach out to him, he enters them. (1974: 9-10)

As we have seen from the contradictory accounts provided by Grieveson and Hiley, Vogel's view is a nostalgic and utopian impression of the cinema and those who attend. He ignores the many divergent reasons for going to the cinema and implies an undivided attention from an audience which does not reflect the actual cinema experience. The reasons for attending the cinema by early working class audiences may no longer be relevant in the 21st century – the increasing costs associated with modern cinema-going make it doubtful many people still attend to shelter and to keep their families warm – but Vogel does not take into account the desires of the audience who might want a shared experience with family or friends over their complete immersion into the fantasy world of the story unravelling on screen.

Amos Vogel's claim that 'it is so much easier to turn from the action in a live play' (1974: 11) because of the power of the screen image over that of the theatre is only partially true. There is undeniably a greater realism to cinema than the stage play, and an immersion of experience that the closeness of the screen provides. An attention to the screen is demanded of the viewer/audience by various invocations not to talk during a movie or to turn off mobile

phones. But this is no more the case in cinema than it is in the theatre, where silence is demanded not only on account of respect for other audience members, but also for the performers on the stage.

Ruth Vasey in *The World According to Hollywood* (1997) assesses how it was specifically the increasing realism in film that became a problem for those concerned with the prospect for its damaging impact on an audience; and by extension it becomes the source of its latent, subversive power. The development of sound in particular meant that films centred on criminal behaviour or social problems 'threatened to become more sordidly realistic', and 'called into question Hollywood's suitability for general consumption' (1997: 100). The principle concern amongst critics of Hollywood was that cinema had the potential for undermining 'existing social structures' (1997: 101), based around the presentation of criminality and sexuality to mass audiences. There was a fear of a social collapse, of a state of anarchy, inspired by the movies.

The advances in realism led the U.S. industry to developing the production code; a 'set of representational guidelines primarily concerned with sexual or criminal matters' (1997: 101). The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, led by Will Hays, set up the guidelines to help ensure respectability for the industry, and help protect it from groups wishing to censor and restrict Hollywood product. The movies were, according to Richard Maltby, influenced 'more by economic considerations than by matters of film content' (1993: 40). Hays' guidelines worked through a process of self-regulation, with the intention of averting external pressures or control.

Stephen Tropiano in *Obscene, Indecent, Immoral, Offensive* (2009) lays out the three general principles by which the MPPDA stood by in the time of the production code;

1. No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence, sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrong-doing, evil or sin.
2. Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented.
3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, not shall sympathy be created for its violation.

These standards are dependent on conservative values and Christian morality. They present the hegemonic criteria for good taste. It is by transgressing these principles that one of the subversive potentials of cinema can be found.

Vasey points out that Hays was concerned with movies' effects on children and immigrants, but also that they might offend the tastes of more wholesome and conservative Americans. There are two anxieties at work here; one that film might genuinely cause unwanted behaviour through people mimicking, or being inspired by, on screen action, and two, that it might distance the communities whose financial support as a core audience the film industry relied upon. Regulation emerged, in part, because unruliness and lack of order on screen was seen as bad for business. The guidelines suggested by the code meant adding a layer of ambiguity to the films 'to allow multiple interpretations' (1997: 101), so that the meaning of the film was transferred from filmmaker to spectator. Agency in creating morally dubious content could then more easily be denied.

But the ambiguity demanded by the production code was confined to the movies themselves, while the marketing (particularly the film posters) continued to emphasise the sensational. This led to additional problems, namely complaints from both conservative critics 'who complained that the advertising was too salacious' (1997: 124), and from some members of the public who felt that the subsequent films 'failed to live up to the promise of the posters' (ibid). Even if depoliticised, there is a subversive and anarchic potential to those films which deliver on the promise of the sensational and which are deemed to threaten the 'existing social structures', and bristle against regulation and conformity. They may not conform to anarchism's proscribed political theories, but they have an anarchic quality because they disrupt attempts at imposing order.

Censorship and Subversive Content.

When the outdated production code was eventually replaced by the Motion Picture Ratings System (Tropiano, 2009: 90) there was continued pressure to censor and regulate film content. There developed, however, fresh concern about the impact on viewers of television, and later, home video. Tom Dewe Mathews in *Censored* (1994) notes how it was 'the popularity of a new medium' which dictated the 'direction and intensity' (1994: 1) of the efforts of the censors. Historically, that which has been censored was made with little intention of subverting established social convention and instead 'goes too far' in depictions of sex and violence and crosses the boundaries of taste. There is a distinction here between

what is controversial, and what is subversive. The controversial may include shocking depictions of sex, violence, or the use of language, for example, and push censorship restrictions to their limits. But this is done mostly without any political intent. The subversion, in transgressing any social convention, is inadvert. It is here that the academic or critic can reframe these moments as subversive. Amos Vogel describes the censors as the 'discredited minions of law and order … another cog in the generalised web of gentle oppression' (1974: 320), and that the censorship of film 'seems to happen perniciously under all systems' (1974: 321). The anarchist working in cinema, in production, exhibition, or even writing about film, must stand in opposition to the censor. They must embrace the political value in crossing the boundaries erected by censorship.

Vogel finds subversive content mostly among the avant-garde and European art film circles, in films such as *Fireworks* (Kenneth Anger, 1952), *Blood of the Beasts* (Georges Franju, 1947), or *Last Year at Marienbad* (Alain Renais, 1961). These films rarely give trouble to the censors, particularly in the United States or in Britain. They may contain subversive ideas and imagery, but it is easy to avoid exposing them to English speaking audiences because they have limited commercial expectations due to being foreign, and the audiences for them were thought to be middle class and educated. Many of the films he selects remain hidden and out of the mainstream for this reason, and so there is little need for the censors to attempt regulation. Instead, censorship mostly happens to films made within the already heavily regulated mainstream cinemas.

Politics and political films also feature strongly in Vogel's study. They present a threat to established political systems, but the values that Vogel holds as the standard are the combined forces of Western capitalism and Hollywood. Therefore, some of the political films he mentions do not critique the country in which they are made, but the value systems and social conventions of other nations. He establishes the subversive nature of films made for Soviet regimes in films like *Strike* (Sergei Eisentstein, 1925), those from alternative revolutionary left positions (including those as part of an anarchist cinema according to Alan Lovell and Richard Porton, such as films by Jean Vigo or Luis Bunuel), and also Nazi propaganda such as *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefensthahl, 1936). In his assessment of films which proclaim ideals of the 'revolutionary left' he sums up the essence of subversive cinema as 'when the artist goes further than his particular establishment wishes him to' (1974: 120). But in many of these cases they did not do this. Instead they went against different established conventions from different cultural contexts. *Strike*, for example, certainly

presents a subversion of Hollywood values; with its sequences that foreground tonal montage techniques over cutting for continuity; its dialectical editing; and its valorisation of the collective struggle over that of the individual. But it does not subvert the values of the Soviet Union of the time. Films become subversive when they are exhibited in the system they offend or attack. In this regard, mainstream films can be subversive if they critique the culture in which they originate, while simultaneously being contained by that culture through being made in that particular production context.

For Vogel the image of real death captured and presented on film contains within it an important element of subversion of social convention. In particular, his position is that it is the lack of romanticism in the presentation of genuine death, as opposed to the 'insufferable sentimentality' of commercial cinema. Vogel's claim that 'the manageable, anti-septic way in which people die in commercial films' (1974: 203) reflects another example of how the difficult and 'disruptive elements' (ibid) of life are ignored or smoothed over. This has a function for the State, and Vogel cites the absence of death footage from Nazi cinema and the suppression of news footage of US atrocities in Vietnam and the aftermaths of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as examples of where the State is protected by the censorship (and self-censorship) of real images of death and the dying. The function of the subversive film is to bring these 'disruptive elements' back to the fore.

Vogel writes that the 'subversive artist […] is always on the outside', and that the 'means of production, communication, and distribution are firmly in the state's hands' (1974: 318), and that 'many governments control the export of films, thereby preventing international circulation of unpleasant works' (1974: 319). But this is a simplistic view which does not account for the subversive moments in cinema (rather than entire films), or the ways in which subversive or anarchic content has filtered through into mainstream film (such as in the silent comedies of Charlie Chaplin or the Marx Brothers which he cites).

What all this makes clear is that to identify the anarchic moments in cinema, and any display of ideas associated with anarchist theory, one cannot look to clearly distinguishable moments in film history. There are contradictions in these moments described by Vogel, and it has been my task to identify where they are relevant to the relationship between anarchism and film. Anarchism in cinema has not developed by any linear process, through a coherent movement, cycle, or genre. Instead, it can be identified in a smattering of disparate moments

throughout cinema's history; sometimes in whole films, but also in individual scenes, and even just in single shots.

Home Entertainment, Video Nasties, and control outside of the regulated space.

Geoffrey Pearson writes that 'from the very beginning, the cinema and cinema-goers have attracted to themselves the kind of criticism which we nowadays associate with video violence and 'square eyed' telly addicts' (1984: 96). He reveals the continuity between the past and present in the various negative reactions to the screen and the moving image. Britain in 1984 saw the passing of the Video Recordings Act (VRA) in response to anxieties over 'video nasties'; films which were classified as obscene due to excessive amounts of violence or sex, and which included Craven's *Last House on the Left* among them. It is one of the most noteworthy moments in the history of film censorship, because the act specifically targeted home video distribution rather than the public space of the cinema. It also led to the temporary and long term banning and censorship of seventy one (mostly) horror films. But the VRA did not directly affect film production. Many of the films on the video nasty list dated back several years, as far back as the 1960s in the case of Nazi-exploitation film *Love Camp 7* (Lee Frost, 1969). Instead, the effect of censorship was on the domestic home video distributor, rather than the artist. The act of subversion, the point of resistance in this case, was found in those who supplied the films, rather than in the artists who made them.

Kate Egan, in *Trash to Treasure? Censorship and the Changing meanings of the video nasties* (2007), charts the shambolic process of attempting to control the films by the moral guardians of the National Viewers and Listeners Association led by Mary Whitehouse, and politicians; both of which were supported by the police when the VRA became law. She writes that 'this rather random group of horror video titles were there to serve, primarily, as useful emblematic scapegoats, whose suppression would enable the dramatically mushrooming video industry to be regulated and controlled' (2007: 4). Films which work against controls and regulations are subversive, but the subversion is not inherent in the content of the video nasties, or in the intentions of the filmmakers. In the case of the video nasties the terms is derived in a British tabloid furore. The films are very diverse, with little coherence as a body of work beyond their censorship difficulties in the UK.

Egan writes of the phrase 'video nasties' that 'the category isn't an industrial term that informs film production or marketing strategies' (2007: 3). However, the term is now used to advertise the rereleases of some of the films on DVD, based around their illicit and extreme

content; they are sold on the idea that they are subversive. And the subversive nature of many of the video nasties is only in relation to the controls to which they were subjected. Despite the lack of consistency of content or aesthetics as a body of work, the nasties provide an example of a literal unruliness in cinema culture, in that the VRA was enforceable by the prosecution of the video distribution companies found responsible for releasing uncut versions of the films on the list.

While Egan's focus is to sketch the intricacies of the video nasty phenomenon, she also uncovers how the marginalisation of horror titles was part of a trend among film critics writing in the press towards horror and exploitation more generally. This marginalisation did not always occur among critics working for right wing publications, and that 'within the realm of British film review discourse, it was often in the columns of these supposedly more liberal critics that attacks on the horror film were at their most ferocious' (2007: 24). While these critics would have no direct influence over censorship they were able to 'regularly and consistently put horror in its place' (2007: 25), devoting only limited space in the columns which prevented in-depth reviews. Subsequently, the censorious attacks on horror and exploitation films took place against a backdrop of them being side-lined as being unworthy of serious consideration, and by being subordinate to mainstream cinema.

During the time of the video nasty furore the subversive aspect came not in the making of the films (which in Vogel's study is the moment of subversion) but in their distribution and exhibition. It was those (at the time) unregulated parts of the industry – the home video retailers – that presented a subversive threat to the combined forces of moral guardians, law, and the State.

Anxieties over home video distribution demonstrated how the fears of audiences switched into a fear of what the individual was getting up to in their own home. The anxieties were sparked by the site of exhibition. Regulation of picture houses and cinemas was relatively easy to achieve because laws surrounding health and safety and building regulation would have to be considered. This added to the pressures on filmmakers and the industry from moral crusaders. But with home video the site of exhibition cannot be controlled, regulated, or any subsequent laws easily enforced. Control over home video content switched instead to the distributor. In 1984, in response to concerns over what films were being released domestically, it also became law for all films to legally require a BBFC certificate for it to be released on home video (BBFC, 2012). These concerns over domestic viewing are being

repeated in the age of the World Wide Web. One can also see a further shift in the 21st century away from fears over screen violence in film and television towards web based content and the increased availability to the 'impressionable' of violent, pornographic, religious, and political material such as beheading and execution videos uploaded by Islamist terror groups. The present anxieties about questionable content conflates professional film and video with amateur or news footage, all transmitted via the medium of the web. Prosecution for seditious, dangerous, or perverted material has, however, tended to focus on those who possess or download it. Again, it is far easier in these circumstances to prosecute the individual than it is to find and successfully charge companies who may be based in different countries and therefore out of the legal jurisdiction of the regulators. Also, the ability to download films, or buy films from abroad, has meant that the issue of BBFC certification is readily circumvented by consumers.

Egan writes that the fans and distributors of the nasties were 'able to realise the subcultural or commercial potential' (2007: 10) that is created through their regulation. The banning of the video nasties 'solidified their status as artefacts that had been distinguished from legitimate, authorised culture' (2007: 10-11). This sense of the nasties lacking authorisation and legitimisation, forcing them out of the mainstream and to the margins of cinematic culture, creates an anarchic edge to this particular episode in the history of censorship. This anarchic essence is based on the battles that were created between art, audience (fans), and State regulation. There was a drive for the freedom of expression and to engage with diverse ideas, versus the urge to clamp down on these freedoms by the State.

The video nasty period is characterised by (mostly, but not exclusively) right wing hysteria over declining cultural standards on the one hand, with the belief in freedom of expression on the other. Martin Barker in "Nasty Politics and Video Nasties" (1984) claims that the crusade against the release of these exploitation and horror titles became a prime cause for Thatcher's government, supported in their aim by a virulent press campaign led by the *Daily Mail*. Egan reveals this as a slight simplification, and that the early *Daily Mail* articles calling for greater restriction of the nasties were also broadly critical of the pro free enterprise politics of the Thatcher government which had led to the unregulated home video market in the first place.

The arguments that raged over the video nasties were, on the surface, largely depoliticised; the primary motivator of the distributors was certainly financial, rather than that of political

resistance. But they were supported by critics and academics like Barker who either politicised the cause for them, or who exposed the various political manoeuvrings that were behind the debates. Barker saw in the video nasty era a repeat of the censorship arguments and moral panics that crossed the party political divide in the 1950s in relation to horror comics (Barker, 1984 b).

The entire episode indicates another example of the inherently anarchic and subversive nature of cinema culture; a continual dynamic of regulation and the drive to smash, subvert, and deviate from those regulations. The formation of the video nasty list 'would propel Britain to an unprecedented level of state censorship' (Egan, 2007: 95), leading to a clash between the State and the citizen; where the regulations were challenged by an underground subcultural network of fans, traders, and collectors. This dynamic allows for an influx of political film culture – the making of political film and the theoretical construction of a political cinema as an alliance of artists, audiences, academics, and distributors. And, by impelling citizens to fight against such restrictions and laws this becomes a struggle infused with anarchist ideals.

Conclusion.

This chapter has highlighted some of the ways in which moments of film and cinema history have been unruly. Ultimately, this can only happen due to the considerable amounts of regulation to which it is subjected; from onscreen censorship restrictions to regulation of audiences and the cinema as a space. Due to anarchism's subversive status – as being anti-State and therefore against many forms of regulation – when looking at anarchist cinema one should see it as part of this trend of subversion.

Vogel's reason for venerating the subversive film resembles Alan Lovell's justification for his study of an anarchist cinema, that it is 'immediately relevant to our world of power states, mass murder, protests and revolts' (1962 a: 40). Vogel writes that there is 'the inevitable creation of new injustices and horror by the existing power systems' (1974: 322), mostly perpetuated by the State, that ensures that subversive art will continue to rise in its opposition. If one is to take Vogel's criteria for how art is subversive as the standard, it is clear that not all subversive cinema is anarchist (definitely not that which is produced by strong States such as under Soviet or Nazi control). But all anarchist cinema is subversive. And if so many of the established conventions, tastes, and morals are defined by the State, then all which fights against it or parodies it has an element of the anarchic; by attempting a

breakdown of hierarchical barriers. And if a film features a sustained and coherent attack on those State institutions and values, then it is appropriate to consider them in relation to an anarchist cinema.

But the anarchic and subversive in cinema is not something that is fixed. It is not a definite moment or period in time, and it cannot be identified as belonging to a particular country or culture. It cannot even be found just in the content of films; the behaviour of early cinema audiences reveals it can be present in film spectatorship, and the video nasties episode in Britain in the 1980s demonstrates that the subversive element came in distribution, not production. Instead the anarchic and unruly 'cinema', is a continual process of disruption which takes myriad forms. Some of which are explicitly informed by anarchist ideas, others contain, to quote anarchist historian Peter Marshall, a 'profound anarchist sensibility, if not a self-conscious knowledge' (1993: xi). My process of uncovering these moments of anarchist cinema is not linear or straightforward; it has to be continual and disruptive – looking in places not apparently obvious, and my methods should not be fixed. The identification and analysis of some of the moments where anarchism and cinema meet (the films, filmmakers, industrial practices, or sometimes just single shots) is the focus of the rest of this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: Jean Vigo, *St Trinian's* and the Anarchist Film

Jean Vigo is the filmmaker most commonly associated with the concept of an anarchist cinema. He is one of three directors, alongside Georges Franju and Luis Bunuel, analysed by Alan Lovell (1962), who marks him out as 'the most obvious candidate for the description of 'anarchist'' (1962: 2) out of them because of his father's connections with anarchism, which are deemed to have informed Vigo's own ideological outlook. Close examination of two of his films, *Zero de Conduite* (1933) and *L'Atalante* (1935), also forms a significant part of Richard Porton's study of films reflecting anarchist history and ideology (1999).

But Vigo is not obscured in some cinematic backwater, beloved only by intransigent anarchists and ignored by anyone else. In the lead up to *Sight and Sound*'s Greatest Films poll of 2012, and to coincide with the DVD and limited theatrical re-release of *L'Atalante*, Graham Fuller's article (2012) points out that it made their top ten list in both 1962 and 1992. In the September edition of that year, when the results of the latest poll were released, it duly made number twelve on the list. Vigo's work featured regularly among the favourite movies of the critics and filmmakers who were polled. Directors as stylistically diverse as Abel Ferrara, Guy Maddin, and Steve McQueen all selected *Zero de Conduite* as one of their favourite ten, while *L'Atalante* featured in the lists of Samantha Morton, Hong Sangsoo and Aki Kaurismaki. The way Vigo weaves anarchist themes into his films clearly has influence beyond the very narrow confines of those writing on anarchism and cinema.

In a December 2011 season entitled 'Anarchism on Film' at the Anthology Film Archives in New York, *Zero de Conduite* was singled out as being an especially prominent example. The following appeared on the website to promote the programme;

> Although an entity called 'anarchist cinema' is almost impossible to define, anarchists with an interest in film have long been preoccupied with two interrelated strands: historical films that excavate a submerged anarchist history and films that synthesize an anti-authoritarian political impetus with innovative formal strategies. In this series, Jean Vigo's ZERO FOR CONDUCT perhaps best embodies the latter tendency. (Anthology Film Archives, 2011)

Two things stand out from this passage. First, the claim that anarchist cinema is indefinable, and second, that in spite of this there is an identification of a series of formal properties and themes that might determine a set of films related to anarchism. The reference to *Zero de Conduite*'s 'anti-authoritarian political impetus' and 'innovative formal strategies', indicates

a synthesis of form and content from which an anarchist cinema can be developed. One of the aims of this chapter is to assess how critics such as Lovell and Porton have identified the concept, how Jean Vigo's cinematic style fits, and what it is that makes *Zero de Conduite* stand out as being identifiably anarchist.

The film is set in a boarding school for boys, where they are subjected to a harsh and boring regime by corrupt and incompetent school masters, and live in conditions more akin to a prison than a place of education. The formal lessons have limited use value and relevance, and the boys' inherent creativity, intelligence, and individualism is supressed and stifled by the dysfunctional education they receive. Eventually they organise a revolt, take over the school, and protest violently and joyously on the rooftops at the film's finale.

The film's savage critique of traditional education, and its oblique suggestion that it should be reformed to allow for greater freedom of expression and creativity over rules and dogmatic learning, finds a neat accord with the views of several important anarchist writers, including Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. For example, Bakunin believed that education should be free for all members of society and was a vital component in shaping a future anarchist world, and 'an indispensable condition for the emancipation of humanity' (Marshall, 1993: 299). The ethos of the film also finds a harmony with a range of thinkers who have defined complex ideas of what education, according to anarchist theory, should be. Francisco Ferrer, Ivan Illich, and Herbert Read, all writing from different countries and cultural backgrounds, developed theories which encouraged the fostering of creativity over the indoctrination that they saw was prevalent in traditional schooling. The Spanish Ferrer wrote in *The Origins and Ideals of the Modern School Movement* (1913) that education should be wholly secular and class conscious. Illich, from a Catholic background, published *Deschooling Society* in 1971, where the institutionalisation of education is challenged, and a distinction between teaching and learning is advocated. In *Education through Art* (1943), the English anarchist Herbert Read's focus was on the pedagogical processes of encouraging personal development via artistic practice. Despite these varieties of thought, the anarchist approach to education can be summarised by William Godwin's view that education should be to 'generate happiness and to develop a critical and independent mind', and that 'authoritarian teaching could be done away with' (Marshall, 1993: 197). These ideas flow as an implicit undercurrent through *Zero de Conduite*.

The spectacle of high school rebellion is not unique to Vigo's imagination. Many films located in high school feature unruly pupils that clash with adult authority, and because of this the second half of the chapter turns its attention to the British *St Trinian's* (1954 – 2009) series. These comedies, which are set in a boarding school, also feature the fetishisation of unruly and rebellious pupils. They are made in a very different production context to Vigo's film – they are produced by mainstream studios in Britain, and make reference to many uniquely British cultural values. But in their list of targets, in particular State institutions such as the police, education system, and the military, they take an uncompromisingly anarchist position.

That 'all education involves some form of despotism' (1993: 212) is the default setting for the high school films analysed in this chapter, based around resisting the tyranny and authority present in traditional forms of pedagogy and schooling.

Jean Vigo's Anarchist Cinema.

Most writing on Vigo refers to his political background, and in particular that of his father, the anarchist Miguel Almereyda. It is on this basis that much analysis of the political outlook of Vigo's films is built. Salles Gomes' *Jean Vigo* (1957) is a detailed account of his life and work. It serves as a linear biography and provides details about Vigo's creative intentions for each of his films. Salles Gomes spends considerable space outlining and examining in detail the life of Almereyda, and signals how important an influence he believes this was on Vigo's own creative output. He charts the origins and developments of Almereyda's 'strong attraction' (1957: 12) to anarcho-individualism, which eventually broadened out to a belief in the values of collectivism after interaction with various other anarchists, militants, and syndicalists. This included Almereyda's support for Francisco Ferrer, the anarchist, educator, and founder of the Modern School. Ferrer's belief that education should be 'free thinking, non-religious' (Kedward, 1971: 68) and with an emphasis on a child's development of expression and learning over teaching, would eventually be found embedded in the ideological stance of *Zero de Conduite*, according to Richard Porton's in-depth analysis.

Michael Temple's book on Vigo (2005) also begins with a brief biographical chapter, despite the focus of his work being a close reading of the films. Temple speculates that the political and personal influence of Almereyda on his son was significant, and is imbued throughout his cinematic career;

> The figure of Miguel Almereyda returns to haunt Vigo's films in a variety of guises: it is the journalist's satirical venom that flows through *A Propos de Nice*; his anarchistic idealism that inspires *Zero de Conduite*; and his left wing humanist values that inform the social realism of *L'Atalante*. (2005: 6)

There is, of course, much more to Almeredya's life, but this is not the place to reiterate every detail. Salles Gomes does a fine job of this in his biography. But it needs to be stated how important Salles Gomes and Temple consider this background of anarchist activity to be when analysing Vigo and his films. Almereyda's life and death are seen as the bedrock, the very foundation, of a reading of his work. Salles Gomes writes that 'there is only the slightest shadow of doubt' (1957: 27) that Vigo's father was not murdered in his prison cell in 1917 at the age of 34. This traumatic event for Vigo also indicates the turbulent nature of political Anarchism in the early 20th Century, and is deemed to infuse the narratives and visual tendencies of his films.

Salles Gomes recounts Vigo's personal experiences from boarding school to highlight the autobiographical origins of *Zero de Conduite*. One incident from the diary involving Vigo being afflicted with stomach cramps (1957: 38) appears to be recreated in the film almost identically. Temple also links Vigo's personal life with the content, indicating that *Zero de Conduite* 'retains such an odour of authenticity and anger about it that he must surely have been drawing on his personal recollections' (2005: 7). However, he also asserts that 'these biographical and historical aspects of our study of Vigo's work are interlinked with its aesthetic qualities, as well as its ideological dimension' (ibid). He describes a 'chaotically creative atmosphere' (2005: 51) on set, hinting at an anarchic approach to filmmaking which reflects the sense of 'chaos' and 'creativity' of the students' eventual revolt in the film's climax.

Salles Gomes and Temple are both strident in their summary of Jean Vigo's personal life and family background, but these factors should not necessarily have any relevance to an analysis of his films. To do so assumes an unquestioning stance towards the auteur theory and biographical analysis. It is possible to examine the lives of any director and place parallels with events in their films. There are limits to this type of analysis. How, for example, should we understand films which also contain the themes and formal disruptiveness of the anarchist film, but which do not have a biographical background to the filmmakers that supports the film's ideology?

When discussing Vigo and his relationship to anarchist cinema, his life and experiences help to locate and cement an anarchistic streak in his movies. Salles Gomes' detailed biographical research helps us to identify this link even without looking at the films. David Weir, too, in *Jean Vigo and the Anarchist Eye* (2014) emphasises the relevance of the way he was infused with Almereyda's political outlook throughout his film career. But it needs to be remembered that a director having a familial or historical background in anarchist activity is not necessary to establish a film with anarchic form or content. If this was my argument my thesis would be easier because an anarchist cinema would be readily apparent, yet also more difficult because the range of films available for analysis would be extremely limited. What should be paramount are the films themselves, and what themes, images and ideological position they portray. But Vigo's life does make the consigning of his films, *Zero de Conduite* in particular, to a body of work which can be described as anarchist cinema inevitable. As such, these biographical chapters act as a useful starting point for both his work and an analysis of anarchism and film.

William Simon's study of Vigo's films (1981) attempts to distance the analysis from the context of anarchism. It focuses on an analysis of 'form and modes of representation' (1981: 3) and provides a rigorous study of his use of cinematic techniques, thus attempting in some way to divorce itself from the ideological interpretations of the work. The concept of anarchism is addressed only once by Simon, but it is a reference which acknowledges its importance, and appears in his succinct summing up of *A Propos de Nice* as 'a kind of anarchist manifesto, exposing the bourgeois values of the city and calling for their overthrow' (1981: 4).

A Propos de Nice (1930) was Vigo's first film, a twenty two minute documentary chronicling the residents living in Nice, both rich and poor. With a specified urban environment as its subject, and the use of montage to achieve its affects, it sits within the cycle of other city symphony films of the period, alongside *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* (Walter Ruttman, 1927) and *Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929). *A Propos de Nice* makes a series of connections between the two social classes, established through editing and visually reminiscent shots. An early shot shows street cleaners in the wealthy area of Nice brushing away rain water, which contrasts with a later shot taken in one of the city's slums, where rain collects by drains blocked up by discarded rubbish.

Temple describes the contrast between rich and poor as being one 'of the film's key themes: an unconscious society whose deep divisions cinema can explore' (2005: 22). Temple's phrase is a poetic and romantic vision of both Vigo and the cinema. But to suggest unconsciousness between the leisure classes and working classes as portrayed in the film is a very wide broad claim which suggests a denial of the reality of these situations. The working classes and higher classes may often live in isolation from each other, or even choose to ignore, particularly in the case of the wealthy, their opposing social groups. But the divisions between them are hardly 'unconscious'. If they were, there would be little class conflict. I would suggest both classes are acutely aware of their position in society, even if this awareness is not infused with any particular political ideology. Cinema can explore class schisms, as Temple suggests, but it is not the only way, and it is naïve to suggest that the classes are unconscious of existing divisions in society.

Conversely, some of Temple's formal analysis hints at the way the film suggests a definite collision between classes. In discussing the tennis sequence from the film he writes that the editing, which intercuts the tennis match with other sports, makes 'the elegant tennis players appear momentarily to exchange blows with the less sophisticated bowlers, right to left and back again, as if their sporting gestures were parallels of the class struggle' (2005: 23). It is Vigo's editing, rather than shot composition or mise en scene, which forms the critical heart of the film, and it is through this that Vigo formulates his social commentary. Alan Lovell considers this a particularly 'crude Marxist attitude to class' (1962: 3), based on what he feels are simplistic binary oppositions set up in the editing strategy. For Lovell, it is when the film begins to include images of the military and clergy that it moves into uniquely anarchist territory. He sees the attack on the State and institutions as a particularly anarchist position. Among anarchist communist groups there is an emphasis on the potential for the working classes to be the dominant agents of achieving social change or revolution, and that 'the whole society should manage the economy while the price and wage system should be done away with' (Marshall, 1993: 8). In the members handbook of the Anarchist Federation in the UK (2008) they describe themselves as 'revolutionary class struggle anarchists' (2008: 5). In their self-published volume, *The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation*, they put distance between their philosophy and Marxism by rejecting the idea of a van-guard party controlling the development of communism in favour of 'class spontaneity' (2007: 6), where the working classes would undertake 'direct action on its own behalf' (2007: 7). In anarcho-syndicalist circles the stress is on industrial organisation amongst the workers themselves, rather than by

traditional trade unions seen to be complicit with bourgeois business owners; creating 'institutions of self-management so that when the revolution comes through a general strike the workers will be prepared to undertake the necessary social transformation' (Marshall, 1993: 9).

The focus on organisation from the 'bottom up' that is present in these anarchist traditions does nevertheless overlap with the Marxist stress on the importance of the workers and unionisation; and this is where Lovell sees Vigo straying into Marxist territory in the editing strategy in *A Propos de Nice*. The nuances between Marxism and anarchism only become apparent when the film attacks authority and institutions and are more difficult to detect in what is a dialogue free film about two different social classes.

Simon's extensive formal analysis of the film acknowledges the importance of the editing, and in particular what he describes as Vigo's use of Soviet style montage in the cutting together of imagery with the intention of drawing parallels or juxtapositions. But he also addresses Vigo's disorientating camerawork. Of the consistent use of hand held camera Simon writes that 'its effect is not as sensational as that of the low, high and slaked angles, but the frequency of its use contributes a great deal to the prevalent spatial disorientation of the film' (1981:41). While not linking it directly to anarchism, it is possible to make the connection between the seeming disorder of the film's formal strategy and the 'call to overthrow' the bourgeoisie of its ideological stance; the disrupting form standing for the attempt to unsettle the complacent wealthy of the film.

Lovell, despite his dislike of Vigo's basic approach, is in no doubt about the vehemence of his attack on the wealthy people portrayed in *A Propos de Nice*. 'There is no doubt how much Vigo hates these people' (1962: 2), he claims when describing Vigo's perspective on the leisure classes. J.M. Smith, in his close textual analysis of Vigo's films, takes a contradictory view; he 'does not hate these people' (1972: 35), is his unequivocal statement. For Smith, while dealing 'quite harshly with the pathetic aspect of wealthy mediocrity' (ibid), Vigo ultimately depicts them as not 'monsters but unhappy human beings, who wish they were not simply what they are' (ibid). Both interpretations at least acknowledge a view of these classes that is not celebratory, and is instead uncompromising in its assessment of the rich. Salles Gomes, armed with a deeper insight into Vigo's original intentions for the film, also notes a sense of anger in his range of attacks. But whether Vigo is expressing a hatred of the wealthier classes, or whether certain sequences are 'Marxist' or 'anarchist', is of less

importance than that his targets consistently align with ideas which are relevant to the subject of anarchism. In this particular case it is in the stark depiction of class conflict and social disparity based on wealth, and the effect this has on people's lives.

One aspect of the film upon which the critics agree is the playful and comic tone of the early sections. Smith draws attention to a scene where a passing woman is intercut with the image of an ostrich, which he describes as 'the most absurd of creatures and traditionally the most stupid in the face of unpleasant reality' (1972: 35). It is a startling clash of images, and for Smith it emphasises the ignorance of the wealthy in the film and their disconnection with those around them. Vigo's savage example of intellectual montage brings to mind the peacock sequence from Eisentein's *October* (1928). The head in the sand implication of the inclusion of the ostrich prefigures some the final images of the film, of smoke emanating from industrial chimneys and fiery furnaces. These final scenes are interpreted by Temple as 'the metaphorical flames in which the ruling order will be destroyed, and out of whose ashes a new and better world will be born' (2005: 28).

The more comical early scenes are described by Temple as a 'predominantly light hearted satire' (2005: 24) which 'gives way to a more biting social critique' (ibid) when the film ventures into the poor slum areas of the city. Smith observes that the slum sequence 'is in the controlling position in the structure, decisively and undeniably commenting on what has gone before' (1972: 44). For Smith, a 'tragic situation' is implied by Vigo in this sequence. He writes that 'the film's lack of a conclusion is itself tragic, far beyond the limits of anarchist (or other) propaganda' (ibid). Again, Smith takes another alternative viewpoint. His implication is that the slum sequence is so dominant and affecting that the playfulness of the early scenes and that of the carnival procession that comes after is completely undermined. The 'lack of conclusion' he discusses removes any sense of hope or purpose. It implies that the film moves beyond an anarchist reading, which would indicate either a utopian hope for the future or a belief in the utopian possibilities of the present, and into the realm of nihilism.

But the film does have a conclusion. Temple's assessment of it infers the possibilities of new beginnings or a new state of existence for the people it presents. The factory sequence of smoke and furnaces is a clear break from the type of images we have seen earlier in the film. It might not be an obvious conclusion which signals its intentions very clearly, but the factory scenes are carefully placed so that they could only come at the end of the film. Temple's assessment of these final scenes aligns with that of Simon, who suggests that the ending

'constitutes a revolutionary statement on Vigo's part, a kind of call to arms (1981:33). Smith is not oblivious to these moments; he understands that there is a 'note of affirmation' (1972: 63) to the scenes with the workers. But for him this is in the way they appear self-sufficient, rather than the implied dissatisfaction of the wealthy people. The dissatisfaction here being indicated by the editing's intercutting of incongruous images that denote a sense of 'imagination and yearning' (ibid). For Temple, rather than invoking a way of living in the present, the factory sequence points to the future.

The carnival scenes that follow the slum sequence prompt Temple to ask questions which are entirely pertinent to an examination of anarchist cinema. The sequence is preceded by an optical effect which elicits Temple to ask;

> Does it signal that the Carnival will offer a vision of an alternative world, a projection of a different social order? Or will it provide merely the exaggerated, grotesque continuation of the present unjust state of affairs? A number of delicately poised questions thus arise in this sequence, and they will remain until the end of the film. What is the sense of the camera's position, sometimes detached in the middle distance, sometimes caught up in the frenetic chaos of the Carnival crowd? How should we understand the staged violence of 'the battle of the flowers', which at times sees the dignified victims of the battle struggling to retain their social composure? Do these giant parading dolls represent the people as revolutionary excess, threatening to overcome the restrictions of bourgeois society? Or do they merely embody 'bread and circuses', the safely ritualised symbols of a politically controlled moment of licensed disorder? (2005: 26)

Temple speculates as to whether the representation of the Carnival, and indeed the Carnival itself, offers a mere distraction, or a hint at the possibility of a revolution of the traditional order. He questions whether the Carnival offers genuine 'joyous, anarchistic liberation' (ibid). It raises the issue of how to interpret film, and whether something is genuinely anarchist, or whether the constraints of hegemony remain. Can something ever be considered anarchist cinema, or is the purpose of the films to give vent to these feelings of revolt? Does the film stopping after the credits have rolled close down any subversive or revolutionary ideas it contained? And is the fact that the film has ended important? A film must end, it is not on going, and cannot run forever. In a horror film for example, the feelings of terror subside once the film is complete, but what the film does during its running time is to allow for those feelings to be vented.

Smith is unequivocal in locking down a reading of these Carnival scenes. He notes that 'the parade's status as an official and organised social function is established, but the normal discipline of such a function is relaxed and the harmless missiles are thrown by the officials as well as by the others: violence and disorder are being worked off in an acceptable manner, serving the status quo' (1972: 46). There is further evidence for this position in the presence of the military towards the end of the sequence; 'we see two men in uniform being followed by a crowd, which decisively links the theme of procession and mass-following with the military style of obedience' (1972: 56).

Smith senses that Vigo is scornful of the carnival, and that he is presenting the people as willingly subjugating and humiliating themselves, unaware of the wider implications of the procession. Smith's viewpoint here has a factual basis, the carnival *is* a harmless and officially endorsed festival of normally socially unacceptable or frowned upon behaviour. Indeed, Stallybrass and White, in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986) note that 'in 1873 the famous Nice carnival was taken over by 'comite des Fetes', brought under bureaucratic bourgeois control and reorganized quite self-consciously as a tourist attraction for the increasing numbers who spent time on the Riviera' (1986: 177). But Smith's locked down interpretation ignores that when such a procession is presented in a film there are extra dimensions. The power is in how an audience reacts to a sequence. The audience is not at a carnival, and the depiction of it on film has a different 'use' than the actual event. Simply put, the film is not a carnival, and so it is not subject to the same restrictions and dynamics with the crowd as an officially sanctioned carnival procession. The film is not contained by the carnival's original context. The act of filming it and placing it into a new context means it has broken free. Vigo's film, or indeed any film, does not present its images objectively. There is an added layer of complication because Vigo places the carnival between contrasting scenes of wealth and poverty.

Temple leaves these questions open and unanswered and, unlike Smith, believes that the film does too. Both positions are down to interpretation of the text. But it needs to be remembered that Vigo is associated with anarchist filmmaking. *A Propos de Nice* does not exist in complete isolation, it is not a film that stands alone. Its shot selection, editing strategy and ideological interpretation of the city have to be understood by looking through what David Weir describes as the 'eye' of anarchism (2014). Scenes of contrast, playful humour and official and unofficially endorsed procession also appear in Vigo's subsequent major film.

***Zero de Conduite* (1933).**

Zero de Conduite is set in a restrictive boarding school, whose oppressive and authoritarian atmosphere, cultivated by the oppressive and authoritarian teachers, provokes a rebellion amongst the boys forced to attend. It is described by Temple as 'a fable of libertarian revolt', and enthused with 'anarchist idealism' (2005:6). John Martin, in *The Golden Age of French Cinema* (1983), sees the school in *Zero de Conduite* as a larger metaphor; 'it is possible to extend this devastating portrait of an inflexible, morally corrupt and administrative hierarchy beyond the bowls of a small boarding school, to see it in an image of the whole of French society in the 1930s' (1983: 107). It is a view shared by Lovell, who writes that 'the school is not simply a school' (1962: 3) but an allegory for the way society is structured. And Martin also points out that this was the dominant way it was understood by the authorities of the time, who eventually banned the film.

To Lovell's chagrin the film has an aura of fantasy. It ends at the point of the revolt, and this means it provides nothing in the way of a concept for a future anarchist society. The final shot, of the schoolboys walking up over the roof of the school after having bombarded the school authorities with objects as they attend a fête down below, is described by Lovell as a looking towards a 'fantasy future' (1962: 5). His interpretation is that ending the film at this point renders the revolution 'incomplete', with the status quo merely 'disturbed but not overthrown' (ibid). The implication is that Vigo's film lacks subtlety or insight, and is ultimately unsatisfactory.

But for Porton, the film does obliquely address issues of education beyond mere rebellion, and provides theoretical frameworks for an anarchist future. That the film systematically breaks down and criticises elements of this particular authoritarian education system forces us (the viewer/audience) to consider what alternatives there may be. Porton directly links the ideology of *Zero de Conduite* to specific anarchist ideas on education.

> From an explicitly pedagogical vantage point, it endorses Ferrer's ideal of making education a testing ground for a new social order, even if the film's lucid propensity has little in common with his rationalist educational schemes. In other words, Almereyda's early pragmatic, if not militant, anarchism nor his later meliorism are tangible presences for *Zero for Conduct*, a film rooted in a utopian conception of childhood that not only looks backward to Fourier, but anticipates the work of radical deschoolers such as Paul Goodman, Everett Reimer and Ivan Illich. (1999: 196)

The way Porton aligns aspects of the film with these theorists[1] (as well as where the film diverges from them) allows for a radical interpretation of the text. The analysis he provides is interpretive, and allows for the removal of the film from its production context. It is safe to assume Vigo had some understanding of what an alternative approach to education could be (given his association with anarchist ideas) but the introduction of very definite theory is entirely Porton's, since the other theorists he mentions, beyond Ferrer, developed their ideas after Vigo's death. Rather than examining the film within a context of anarchist cinema, Porton's approach allows him to look at a film to see what it might tell us about anarchism, regardless of its original context. However, Keith Reader in *Cultures on Celluloid* (1981) sees the film as being mostly relevant to its original and very specific context. He does not assess the school in the film as symbolic of a broader notion of authority or of it standing in for any type of institutional power. Instead, he writes;

> if one looks at *Zero de Conduite* without reference to Vigo's personal circumstances and reputation, it is still comprehensible that it should have been banned on first release…the centralisation and bureaucratic pomposity of the French educational system are mercilessly lampooned, along with the corruption of the masters and the abominable food. Nothing was better calculated to elicit howls of chauvinistic rage than a combined assault on the educational system and institutional catering of the supposed intellectual and gastronomic centre of the civilised world. (1981: 122)

But Reader also senses the possibility that the film meant more beyond an analysis of education, noting that it was banned for its general 'anti-French spirit', and he links this to the idea of anti-Americanism in McCarthy era America; that there is something unpatriotic in Vigo's work which authorities felt should be discouraged and punished.

Porton also sees the convergence between theory and film beyond an analysis of content. He writes that 'the eccentric pacing and editing rhythms […] produced a film that illustrates, as well as endorses, anarchist pedagogy' (1999: 197). The allusion to pacing and editing refers to Vigo's refusal to conform to the continuity system, mostly as a result of the lack of establishing shots and inclination towards shooting scenes from either high or low angles (1999: 196). The form supports its content by being as disruptive and un-conventional as the ideology it propagates. Simon provides an astute piece of close analysis of the use of high angle shots in the film. Like Lovell, he expresses a disappointment in the end sequences of the film, but from a formal perspective rather than an ideological one. For Simon, Vigo's use

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[1] Important dissections of anarchist pedagogy by them include *The Community of Scholars* (1962) by Paul Goodman, *School is Dead: Alternatives in Education* (1971) by Everett Reimer, and *Deschooling Society* (1971) by Ivan Illich.

of high angle shots were 'vital elements in the spatial and representational disorientation and inventiveness of the film. Their lack of specific narrative function gave them a privileged effect which they lose in becoming functional' (1981: 70). The functional in this instance being the use of high angle shots in the rooftop sequence merely 'reproducing the four rebels' direct point of view from the roof tops' (ibid). Nevertheless, like Porton he still sees something radical in Vigo's shots in terms of their selection and angles prior to the final scene.

That the way the film catalogues 'the systematic repression of the children's natural freedom' (Temple, 2005: 65) reveals a core message which is also central to anarchist ideology; that of the importance of individual freedom and liberty. The repression of the children's freedom is reinforced through the use of high angle shots, which Temple reads as representing a 'spatial universe where the children are under surveillance at every moment, regulated, disciplined, controlled in their every movement through night and day' (ibid). This use of camera strengthens the prison analogy. It is easy to imagine that were the film made (or remade) today that some of these high angle shots would be replaced by ones mimicking the placement of a CCTV camera, or even made to look as if they were shot through one. The metaphor of surveillance instead would be replaced by its literal icon.

Temple sums up Vigo's concept of freedom as 'a political ideal that must be fought for, if necessary through a bloody and collective struggle' (2005: 77). And, from a revolutionary perspective, it is a struggle that must be continually fought. Smith's description of the dorm room rebellion articulates the sense of collective, and constant, struggle. This is encapsulated in the moment where the character of Tabard reads aloud the boys' new revolutionary manifesto as the riot rages around him; 'in the midst of complete disorder. His words are indistinct in the din. This underlines the comparative unimportance of his own rebellion in the context of a larger expression of feeling' (1972: 85). It implies that the individual is a part of a wider social context; the collective aims of the revolution being more important than any individual desires. Smith's understanding of the film contradicts this view of Vigo's formal arrangements. He calls his use of technique 'extremely unobtrusive' and says that 'his methods are almost exclusively those of the classic narrative cinema' (1972: 70). He describes Vigo's use of fantasy and dream like imagery as being subservient to the narrative, which he argues remains coherent, as in classic narrative cinema.

Alongside analysis of the formal aspects, of interest to the critics is the film's nature of production. Temple refers to 'the dynamic of creative disorder' (2005: 53) surrounding the production process. Martin alludes to how the organisation of the production married well with the film's style. He notes that 'Vigo worked without the benefit of an elaborate script, improvising scenes and dialogue as he went along, a technique which gives the film a narrative spontaneity that corresponds perfectly to the inner freedom of children which he sought to capture' (1983: 105). Again, Vigo's working methods are interpreted as an expression of anarchy, though it raises the question as to what this improvised working practice expresses when not traditionally associated with anarchism, such as Jean Luc Godard's apparently unscripted approach to *Pierrot le Fou* (1965), or the improvised script building of Mike Leigh or Penny Woolcock.

But the contemporaneous reception to the film also provokes interest. Temple notes that after the first trade screening 'the audience's reactions were violently split, mainly along the lines of personal loyalty on the one hand, and ideological prejudice on the other' (2005: 56). This is a telling remark, flagging up as it does how political viewpoints explain particular reactions, and points to the possibility of heavily slanted readings of films. This is especially relevant given the initially poor reviews the film received, with the most pointed reaction coming from critics and distributors Vigo was hoping to impress, who found it 'artistically amateurish and morally offensive' (ibid). These artistic failings and questionable morals become Porton's 'eccentric pacing and editing rhythms' and Temple's 'anarchist idealism' when looking for the film's anarchism.

The reactions from organisations on the opposing sides to anarchism inevitably see the film in less favourable terms. Salles Gomes notes a 'violent reaction from certain sections of the Catholic press' (1957: 138). It was eventually banned outright, with no cuts, suggesting an overall moral objection to the film as a whole, rather than any particularly offensive moments from it. Again, the spectre of anarchism and far left ideology hangs over an interpretation, with both Salles Gomes and Temple observing that at the time some felt that it was banned due to its association with Almereyda. The exact reasons remain unclear. However, one passage in Salles Gomes' chapter on the film is worth referencing in full due to its highlighting of the extremity of the reaction it provoked;

> If one lists the key words from the articles on *Zero de Conduite* published in 1933, the results are as follows: hatred, violent, destructive, rancorous, bitter, wretched, coarse, noxious, harsh, despair, anguish, confused, bad, passionate, daring, vicious, subversive, unpleasant, obsessed, troubled, erotic, scatological, excessive, satirical, sordid, exaggerated, insulting, pitiful, relentless, sad, uncouth, provocative, exasperating, cruel, perverse. (1957: 145)

While not all of these words imply a negative context, there was clearly something unsettling about the film to those required to comment on it. Looking at the words again brings us to the issue of defining anarchist cinema. Indeed, to look at these words through the position of an anarchist interpretation would certainly indicate what might be expected from an anarchist film in a very casual sense. Certainly, 'violent', 'destructive', 'subversive', 'provocative' are considered synonymous with anarchism, either for better or worse. The words 'bitter', 'confused', 'troubled' and 'pitiful' have also been used by the more patronising critics of anarchism and anarchists. It also reminds one of how anarchist historian Peter Marshall found, in *Roget's Thesaurus*, such words as 'savage, brute, hornet, viper, ogre, ghoul, wild beast, fiend, harpy and siren' (1993: v) as synonyms for 'anarchist'.

What is missing, however, from the list of descriptors is any reference to actual anarchism or anarchy. Salles Gomes notes that at that time the reaction was more in response to a perceived communist or socialist ideology running through the film. Vigo himself had sympathies for these strands in that parties associated with them helped make up part of a broader revolutionary movement (1957: 216). The association with anarchism came later, after Vigo's death, when the film was reappraised. An amusing example of how a slanted reading can change perception of a film is given by Salles Gomes;

> By 1950, certain more open minded Catholic circles no longer shared the repugnance of their fellow believers in 1933 for *Zero de Conduite*. Thus, Father Pichard, writing in the Parisian Catholic weekly *Radio-Cinema*, attacks the censors for having banned the film and praises it because he sees it as an attack on secular education. (1957: 147)

Father Pichard's is a minority view of course, but it indicates how an alternate ideological reading, of even something so uncompromisingly 'anarchist' as *Zero de Conduite*, is dependent on the position of the commentator.

Temple describes the film as being built on 'an extremely simple and elegant scenario' (2005: 61). There is certainly a very clear and identifiable narrative structure. So much so, that the story arc of *Zero de Conduite* resembles what could be described as the 'classic'

structure of films that feature rebellion against institutions, particularly the prison movie. It begins with the pupils/inmates being introduced to the prison, they are subjected to a series of humiliations and inhumane treatment, and then they strike back by rioting or escaping. Smith's highly intricate close analysis immediately draws attention to the connections to the prison movie by revealing that Vigo's original intention was to make a film actually set in prison, and also that he was an admirer of *I Am A Fugitive From A Chain Gang* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1932).

The similarity between Vigo's film and one set in prison goes beyond narrative structure. Salles Gomes (1957: 97) claims that some of the details were influenced by what he knew of his father's time in prison, as well as his own experience of boarding school. Porton writes of the visual design that 'the depiction of *Zero for Conduct*'s grimly spartan boarding school cements anarchist analogies between school and prison' (1999: 198), reflecting Salles Gomes' own observation. The lay out of the dorm room and the oppressive surveillance the boys endure further reinforces the connection. While it should be remembered that Vigo created the resemblance to actual prisons, since the generic formula had not yet been established by 1933, the parallels suggests that his film not only foresaw developments in anarchist pedagogical theory as outlined by Porton, but that it foresaw the standard plot outline of the insurrectionary film. Smith supports this view, writing that Robert Bresson's *A Man Escaped* (1956) 'could be taken, because of its nearness in basic conventions, as an unintended but direct reply to *Zero de Conduite*' (1972: 69). Though Bresson's approach is relentlessly realist, in keeping with the real world setting of many male prison films, the point about conventions is reinforced.

The comparisons between *Zero de Conduite* and prison movies are important to consider because they point us in the direction of what is the uniquely anarchist position, based on Lovell's statement that it is the critique of institutions which makes a film anarchist rather than Marxist. For example, it is possible to take a Marxist position and still be supportive of the prison or education systems of any given country, because the two institutions are run by the State. The critique of institutions as a concept is a specifically anarchist position precisely because they are run by the State. If the institutions instead happen to be privately funded, such as run for profit prisons, or are elitist in the case of education, they still remain anathema to anarchists. If we take this line of thought back to one of the originators of 19th Century anarchist philosophy, we see in Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's words a consciousness of the division between the communist and anarchist;

> The communists in general are under a strange illusion: fanatics of State power, the claim that they can use the State authority to ensure, by measures of restitution, the well being of the workers who created the collective wealth. As if the individual came into existence after society, and not society after the individual. (Quoted in Marshall, 1993: 242, from Hyams, 1979)

Writing decades before Communism took power in the Soviet Union and created its own nadir under Stalin, Proudhon's 1851 manifesto showed extraordinary foresight in predicting the dangers of State power. He writes;

> To be governed means that at every move, operation, or transaction one is noted, registered, entered in a census, taxed, stamped, priced, assessed, patented, licensed, authorised, recommended, admonished, prevented, reformed, set right, corrected. Government means to be subjected to tribute, trained, ransomed, exploited, monopolised, extorted, pressured, mystified, robbed; all in the name of public good. Then, at the first sign of resistance or word of complaint, one is repressed, fined, despised, vexed, pursued, hustled, beaten up, garrotted, imprisoned, shot, machine gunned, judged, sentenced, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed, and to cap it all, ridiculed, mocked, outraged, and dishonoured. (Proudhon, quoted in Marshall, 1993: 246)

This lengthy passage alone makes plain the anarchist approach to government and the State, whether it be run by communists, republicans, tyrants, conservatives, or anyone else. The State itself is the clear enemy of the anarchist. Any film representing anarchism and anarchy therefore must in some way reflect this attitude either in its own ideology or that of at least some of its characters and situations.

Zero de Conduite presents the school masters as grotesque figures. The most striking of these figures is the Principal, portrayed as a dwarf. For Simon, the dwarfism of the Principal is not intended as a realistic representation. Instead, he should be seen as both a literal and figurative embodiment of Keith Reader's suggestion that 'Vigo's anarchism diminishes rather than emphasises the iconography of authority' (1981: 121). It is a literal representation because the character is portrayed by a dwarf, and a figurative one because he has been reduced to his size in the minds of the school boys. Simon explains that 'all of the Principal's attempts to exercise his authority are rendered ridiculous because of his appearance and voice. He is like a child very seriously pretending to be an adult…his appearance in the film is best understood as a representation of how the children see him' (1981: 64). The sense of otherness in the depiction of the school authorities keeps them firmly in the role of villains, and helps stave off any possibility of audience sympathy or empathy.

It is the denouement which cements Vigo's uncompromisingly anarchist position. Salles Gomes writes: 'the conclusion of the film gives us all the elements of Vigo's ideology and the social implications of *Zero de Conduite'* (1957: 133). Of the school children escaping joyously over the rooftops to their freedom, he notes that it 'is an expression of the late nineteenth-century anarchist sentiment which induced so many militants, after attacking society for a time, to leave either individually or collectively in search of freedom' (ibid). Thus, the film reflects the anarchism of the time positively; jubilantly celebrating riot and rebellion after outlining the reasons for it. This is in contrast to the popular and negative perception of the anarchist in broader culture of the period, its release coming within living memory of the late 19th and early 20th Century connotation of anarchism with terrorism. The final rebellion, when the students throw objects from the roof at assembled dignitaries below, broadens the targets from oppressive educators to include the church and state officials. Temple's description of the climax, so readily discarded by Lovell, poetically reinforces the ideological drive of the film: 'having climbed from the attic onto the roof, the boys, appear untouchable and heroic. They have become iconic symbols of the revolutionary struggle' (2005: 76).

L' Atalante (1934).

Vigo's final film, *L'Atalante*, is on the surface a departure from the angry and rebellious anarchist spirit of *Zero de Conduite*. Ostensibly it is about a turbulent romance between a newly married couple set on a canal barge. Temple describes it as 'hardly a plot to set Vigo's anarchist heart a thumping' (2005: 92), reflecting the change from the more overtly aggressive display of anarchy in his previous work. After the problems surrounding the reception of his earlier work, it seems that this was a deliberate move, with the intention of helping to establish Vigo as a prominent director through the 'politically acceptable' (ibid) nature of the story. Despite this, Porton refers to the film as a companion piece to *Zero de Conduite*.

Vigo interrupts the narrative with scenes of social realism which puncture the political neutrality of the plot. As in his previous film, form, content, and ideology become intertwined: 'to save money, Vigo was forced to adopt a documentary style at times, and in a small way this allowed him to make social comments' (Salles Gomes, 1957: 179). The scenes away from the canal barge, where the married couple, Juliette and Jean, explore Paris, are where Vigo's 'documentary style' is given a free reign. Vigo shoots these scenes on location,

which for Temple is where the implication of a social realism originates (2005: 124). Salles Gomes notes the use of genuine unemployed workers to highlight social inequality, which goes someway to violate the producer's wishes of a film which would be socially neutral (1957: 179). Different social classes are presented side by side so that comparisons between them are implied; presented in a subtler way than the clashing intellectual montage of *A Propos de Nice*. A notable scene which betrays Vigo's political standpoint is the moment where Juliette is robbed in the street, and the thief is subsequently chased down by a mob and beaten before being dragged off by the police. Salles Gomes writes that 'the lynching of the starving thief by a mob of well-fed citizens is oddly reminiscent of the drawings of social themes by pre-1914 anarchist artists such as Steinlen, Grandjouan and Gassier' (ibid). That the thief is starving and worse off than Juliette, and savagely handled for his crime provides the viewer with an idea of what Temple calls 'Vigo's political views about social justice' (2005: 125). Thus, any audience sympathy is transferred from Juliette and onto the thief when his condition and fate are made apparent. In *A Propos de Nice* the classes are presented as separate and in isolation from each other. In *L'Atalante* the lynching scene shows the classes as sharing the same city space, and presents a physical manifestation of class conflict.

But Lovell makes an astute observation that there are two different worlds presented by Vigo, and that there is little reconciliation between them. He describes the two main locations – the barge and the outside (or real) world – as ones that 'co-exist without ever meeting' (1962: 7). In *A Propos de Nice* it is two opposing social classes which are divided and separated, in *L'Atalante* it is two different worlds. For Lovell, 'Vigo creates a world that is almost as fantastic as the boys' world in *Zero de Conduite*. Most of the action takes place on the barge, which, with its small rooms and isolated community life becomes a world in itself' (1962: 6). When the characters do venture into the 'other' world of Paris, they barely integrate into it. Juliette is rendered an observer in the lynching scene, and is almost entirely passive as she has her handbag snatched, and then only helplessly observes the thief's subsequent punishment. The real world and its realities of economic disparity, unemployment, and the crimes associated with it, seem to 'weigh down' (1962: 7) the fantasy idyll of the boat. In *Zero de Conduite* the boys are able to affect a series of blows against the oppressive school authorities and by extension the real, adult world. In *L'Atalante* the barge is a haven from the real world and the site of the film's optimistic ending when the couple are reunited. The positive and affirming denouement echoes *Zero de Conduite* as a triumph of

love and innocence, but in the former the lead characters march forward to take on the real world, in the latter they retreat away from it.

While an awareness of social realities and their inclusion in the narrative is not enough to determine an anarchist film, *L'Atalante* does contain a libertarian vein running throughout. Writing on the film points to the barge's assistant, Pere Jules, as being an embodiment of the film's anarchism. With his worldly experience, ramshackle appearance, and disentanglement from the plot, he indicates an anarchic physical presence. Unlike Jean, shackled by his heart, the legality of his marriage, and the responsibility of being the captain of the barge, Pere Jules lacks such restrictions. He is not bound by external influences. Porton points out some explicit references to anarchism in the depiction of the character; he talks of his revolutionary past, and has a tattoo bearing the initials of a French anti-police motto. That 'Jules's characteristically anarchist gusto has a kinship with the transgressive revelry of *Zero de Conduite'* (1999: 206) is a possibility, though what would a modern audience make of his position in the narrative? Looking back at the film from the 21st Century, his inclusion could be interpreted as merely comic relief. His role as the jester of the film is echoed in a variety of characters throughout later cinema. Physically he bears resemblance to the unkempt, filthy and boozy figures of a Sergio Leone film, such as Eli Wallach's Tuco from *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). Given that the film is a romance, he also resembles the dysfunctional and eccentric best friends familiar from contemporary romantic comedies, as in the role played by Rhys Ifans in *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1998). These characters exist not only to provide an irreverent comic element, but also to remain unaffected by the emotional journey of the leads.

This archetype is best understood as a clown. For Henry Jenkins, who in *What Made Pistachio Nuts?* sees the 'anarchistic' as a mode within the broader genre of comedy, claims the clown has an important function of making social comment; it 'poses a critique of the social order' (1992: 235). Jenkins writes that 'conformity to the rules of normal conduct dulls the mind, robs the individual of pleasure, and deprives the social order of innovation' (ibid). Jules fills the role of providing an alternative to this conformity. Jenkins continues: 'within such a world, personal expression can come only through comic disruption, only through transgression of social norms and violation of structured relationships' (ibid). Jules serves as a continual reminder of alternatives to the structured relationships and other lifestyle choices presented in *L'Atalante*. His position in the narrative is a thoroughly anarchic one; puncturing any conformity from a marginalised position within the diegesis. His disorderly streak,

complete with allusions to an anarchist past, demands he be unshackled from audience identification and the emotional ups and downs of the lead characters. The presence of this archetype exists in non-anarchist and mainstream cinema, yet its function remains anarchic; undercutting the sobriety and relative normality of the central characters.

Temple manages to isolate the film's libertarian spirit in the way Vigo constructs the narrative and the eventual fate of its characters. He highlights how Juliette escaping the barge and her marriage for the potential excitement of the city is not presented as being wrong or a moral offence. It is an error, and therefore she is not punished for her decision. Nor is she shown being saved from her choices or forgiven when she returns to the barge and her husband. He sees the concluding message of each film as the two sides of an anarchist or libertarian drive:

> If *Zero de Conduite* ends on the emphatically anarchistic assertion of revolt and destruction as transcendental values, then in *L' Atalante* it is the uplifting power of love that can change the world, by its passionate embodiment of freedom and its infinite renewal of the human experience. (2005:126)

Smith speculates over 'how many anarchists have been disappointed when, flushed with excitement from *Zero de Conduite*, they move on to *L' Atalante*?' (1972: 11). But it is the film's celebration of humanity, the joys of singing, dancing, and the enjoyment of the company of people that cements its connection to anarchism. It burns slowly, and much of it lacks true character conflict or drama. Instead, the film paints a utopian picture of the self-sufficient roughness of life on the barge. It is a celebration of human interaction that incorporates arguments and jealousy. The utopian aspect comes not from a life of perfection, but from the joy of self-determination.

Jean Vigo's early death shortly after the release of *L' Atalante* ensured his body of work remained slim, comprising of just three shorts (including the ten minute documentary, *Taris*, about the French swimmer Jean Taris) and one feature. It is difficult to think of another filmmaker whose small filmography has subsequently been examined in such detail. In all the research on Vigo, the spectre of anarchism is omnipresent, with each of the three films reflecting a different relationship with anarchy and anarchism. *A Propos de Nice* uses its documentary form to establish sometimes crude caricatures of class, ones that are clearly encoded with far left ideology. *Zero de Conduite* demonstrates the revolutionary, insurrectionary spirit of anarchism. It is violent, mischievous and uncompromising. Finally,

L' Atalante expresses the utopian and positive view of unfettered humanity common to anarchists.

The Criteria for an Anarchist Cinema.

From out of Vigo's oeuvre it is possible to form a criterion for establishing films under the banner of anarchist cinema. Anarchism becomes a necessary framework by which to understand a film if they contain more than one of the following elements;

1) The targets of the film's satire or scorn should be the enemies of political anarchism; such as the State and other authoritarian and hierarchical institutions. These include the police and legal systems, traditional education, and organised religion.
2) The tone should be aggressive, violent, playful, and disruptive. This must be reflected in the formal elements which would also be disruptive and challenge mainstream conventions.
3) It should embody a view of humanity that is essentially positive, and which celebrates the range of human experience, including the destructive or sexual impulses.

These serve to illustrate the complexity of the relationship between anarchism and film. The above criteria have not historically been enough for most critics to ascribe the term anarchism to a film. Analysis of Vigo's work is strongly informed by his biography. This puts the critic on safe ground when interpreting his films as anarchist; his family and political background works as proof. If we move beyond such biographical interpretations and look at only these elements it is possible to detect an anarchist streak in a far broader range of films. Such films might not directly reference anarchism, but they may contain the 'anarchist sensibility' that Peter Marshall (1993: *xi*) refers to by including one or more of the criteria listed above.

To illustrate this point I want to explore the British *St Trinian's* series. They originated in the 1950s, and like *Zero de Conduite* are set in a boarding school. They also feature highly rebellious pupils and depict authoritarian institutions as defunct and corrupt; all represented in a series of comically anarchic scenarios. But unlike Vigo's filmography, they are commercial feature films that sit comfortably in the mainstream. For some, this can restrict and even eliminate any consideration that they may be in any way radical. Porton voices his

disdain for those who pay homage to Vigo in production contexts that are different to their original use;

> The most grotesque outgrowth of this trivialization of Vigo's legacy is undoubtedly Leos Carax's *Les Amants du Pont Neuf* (1991), a $28 million paean to 'the homeless' that incorporates an explicit homage to *L' Atalante*. Carax's vacuous film transforms anarchist salvos into 'art cinema' and nothing becomes rancid faster than a bloated commercial film masquerading as radical art. (1999: 207)

Of later filmmakers who have been inspired by Vigo, Smith shares the same aggressive view. He writes;

> Many directors have since resorted to similar methods without necessarily having the sensitivity and intelligence of Vigo. His original use is in no way debased by later imitators. Returning to *Zero de Conduite* is a little like returning to *The Birth of a Nation*; both are original inspirations which have proved profoundly fertile. (1972: 87)

Note the uncompromising language being used to describe those who dare to traverse on the path already forged by Vigo. But this way of thinking can only close down and restrict the potential for film analysis, from an anarchist perspective or not. Can what comes after *Zero de Conduite* and *The Birth of a Nation* really be described as lacking 'sensitivity' or 'intelligence' (if these terms are even appropriate to use in relation to the latter film)? The meanings which are intended to be conveyed when a director uses a particular technique are broadly the same. Cinema has developed a repertoire of visual techniques available for use by filmmakers to help the telling of stories. Sometimes the origin of these techniques can be identified clearly, and certainly Vigo and D.W. Griffith are considered cinematic pioneers. In Vigo's case there is the precursor to the conventions of a prison movie as discussed, but also Smith (1972) points out that *L'Atalante*'s mix of documentary and fiction would become a characteristic of the French New Wave. Also, Fuller's *Sight and Sound* article positions the same film as the missing link between surrealist cinema of the 1920s and poetic realist cinema of the 1930s. But any filmmaker will use a particular technique to invoke a feeling, mood, or meaning in the audience. The quality of this use is unimportant. To assess the sophistication of a director's use of a technique can only provide a value judgement which can never be fixed and will always be open to debate. And while some directors will pay homage to other filmmakers by using a technique in a different context, such as Steven Spielberg's use of a contra zoom in *Jaws* (1975) by way of Hitchcock and *Vertigo* (1958), the origin of a certain technique is also unimportant. As time moves on the 'origin' of a technique changes, according to a fresh audience's reference points. Cinematic techniques

which attempt to create a sense of anarchy should not be immediately dismissed from a discussion of anarchist cinema, even if they are bloated commercial films. To do so unquestioningly looks like protectionism of Vigo and anarchist cinema, and this does little for either film analysis or the development of anarchist theory.

Porton makes the point that the commerciality of a film could potentially foreclose any type of radical or subversive interpretation because it must somehow appeal to mainstream concerns. This assumes a fixed audience response, and does not address the radical possibilities discussed by Joan Hawkins in *Cutting Edge* (2000) or Greg Taylor in *Artists in the Audience* (1999), where they ruminate on the subversive potential of the resistant audience. It also does not consider the possibility of radical thought being disseminated through mainstream channels, which is a debate that moves beyond film and into popular culture as a whole (particularly pop music or literature).

But most important is not the quality of a film's relationship to anarchy, but only that it engages with it in some way at all. It is my intention to assess the effect of this engagement, not its value. If a case can be made that the *St Trinian's* series enhances an understanding of the relationship between anarchism and cinema then the breadth of possibilities for determining other films in relation to the subject opens up. And this allows us to think of anarchism and related subjects in fresh ways. It opens up discussion on anarchist theory itself.

Anarchy and anarchism in the *St Trinian's* movies.

The *St Trinian's* series shares aesthetic and thematic links with *Zero de Conduite*, and has a relationship to anarchy in their imagery and content. They move beyond the narratives of rebellion crafted by Vigo and instead outline a burlesqued world, focusing on a girls' boarding school where the staff has little or no control over their pupils. They are certainly anarchic in the loosest sense of the word, referring to their depiction of the chaotic. However, within them it is also possible to detect a more solid connection to anarchist theory. Richard Porton's analysis of *Zero de Conduite*, that its representations embody ideas about education in accordance with anarchist thinkers like Herbert Read and Paul Goodman, is equally applicable to the *St Trinian's* series. The vision of the school as depicted in the film is anarchist in its orientation. They manage to transcend their mainstream origins and present a succession of subversive ideas that remain consistent across each film. They address ideas of education, female and youth empowerment, and the craven and obsolete nature of a variety of

authorities and institutions. All of which align with some of the most basic tenets of anarchism.

The source material on which the films are based is a series of cartoons by Ronald Searle, which depict a fictional school for girls called St Trinian's. The cartoons were published intermittently between 1941 and 1952 (Roberts, 2012). Searle's humorous and often surreal images portray the school girls as violent, murderous and criminal, and with a disrespect of any type of authority. The series can be divided into three time periods. The original series was comprised 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), and was co-produced by the partnership of Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat, with Launder directing each instalment (though ...*Train Robbery* is credited as being jointly directed with Gilliat). The second period is represented by just one film, *The Wildcats of St Trinian's* (1980), directed by Launder but minus Gilliat's involvement. The series was revived with *St Trinian's* (2007) and its direct sequel *St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold* (2009), both of which were co-directed by Oliver Parker and Barnaby Thompson.

The words 'anarchy', 'anarchism' or 'anarchic' are frequently used by critics as a description of either the films' content or as an indicator of the nature of the St Trinian's school. The association of *St Trinian's* with anarchy is a recent one. The contemporary *Sight and Sound* review of *The Belles of* (Robinson, 1954) has no mention of the word 'anarchy'. Neither does the *The St Trinian's Story: The Whole Ghastly Dossier* from 1959, a compilation of articles about the cartoons and films compiled by Searle's wife, Kaye Webb. However, reviews of the two most recent films in popular British film magazines *Empire* (Toy, 2007) and *Total Film* both use the word 'anarchic' as part of their description of the school. The obituaries for Searle in *The Guardian* (McNay 2012), *The Independent* (Plimmer, 2012) and *The Telegraph* (Ronald Searle Obituary, 2012) also referred to his creation as anarchic. Somehow the word became a relevant descriptor over time.

They differ from *Zero de Conduite* in that they feature no insurrections, rebellions or uprisings against the school authority. Instead, the school itself appears to be run on anarchist lines, with different and distinct social groups, and indeed teachers and school staff, but little hierarchical order or control. The narratives play out against a non-hierarchical, 'anarchic' setting. In *Renegade Sisters* (2001), her study of the representation of female gangs in cinema, Bev Zalcock highlights some of the pleasures offered by the series.

> The films in this quintessentially British comedy cycle...provide a radical representation of anarchy, disorder and riot. In fact, at their best, the films are positively (and euphorically) carnivalesque. It is hard in other cinemas – national or Hollywood – to conjure up images as powerful, memorable and enjoyable as those the *St Trinian's* films provide – gangs of girls taking up arms – lacrosse sticks and tennis rackets to repel all invaders – including rival hockey teams, the police and the army. (2001: 40)

Zalcock's concise summary points to the interest these films provoke in a discussion on anarchist cinema. She acknowledges the ideological and visual influence Vigo's film has on them and makes a persuasive claim that they feature an added subversive potential due to the pupils being violent girls rather than boys. This is in contrast to Lindsay Anderson's *If...* (1968), another film indebted to the aesthetic and thematic traditions of *Zero de Conduite*. *If...* follows the basic narrative trajectory of Vigo's film by being set in a boarding school and featuring an eventual revolution where the boys take over, but it is culturally closer to the *St Trinian's* series in that the reference points are to the British public school system and its customs and routines.

Zalcock speculates that it is the comic nature of *St Trinian's* which has restricted their ability to be taken seriously as subversive texts. This speculation carries some weight, given that *If...* won the Palme d'Or in 1969. The *St Trinian's* series, on the other hand, are only fitfully referred to in critical dissections of British cinema. In Bruce Babington's book on the films (2002) of Launder and Gilliat for example, the series gets barely two and a half pages of analysis, suggesting that they inhabit a marginalised space even within the careers of their makers. However, their comic nature allows them a greater opportunity to present images and narratives subverting authority and institutions.

Zalcock's description of them as carnivalesque uses the term in the same context as Marcia Landy in *British Genres: Cinema and Society*. When referring to certain comedy stars of the 1930s and 1940s such as Will Hay and Arthur Lucan, Landy suggests a comparison with Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque, describing them as performers 'who are able, through generating laughter, to ridicule and parody social ritual' (1991: 332). She describes them as being 'agents responsible for creating a topsy turvy world in which, in Bakhtin's terms, carnival prevails, a festive sense of the world that violates the high seriousness of conventional attitudes and behaviour' (ibid). The comedy of *St Trinian's*, emerging as it does out of clashes between order and disorder in the form of a simultaneously anarchic and criminal school and the symbols of institution and authority, including amongst other things cross dressing and uncontrolled female sexuality, invites these references to Bakhtin's

concept. Landy makes the connection explicit by noting that the films display 'a carnival atmosphere in which morality, sexuality and all social conventions are turned on their head' (1991: 364). The term 'carnivalesque' is in this instance far removed from Bakhtin's original medieval context of the term, and is being used more loosely to describe work depicting the usurping of a traditionally dominant order. It is a useful word to provide an overall description of the world of *St Trinian's*. Using the term does, however, mean adopting Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais and reinterpreting it. 'No dogma, no authoritarianism, no narrow minded seriousness can coexist with Rabelasian images' (1965: 3) writes Bakhtin. The sentence would remain an accurate description of *St Trinian's* if one replaced 'Rabelasian' with the name of the school.

This reinterpretation of Bakhtin's words has been applied to a wide variety of visual art contexts. Deborah Haynes in *Bakhtin and the Visual Arts* describes his work on carnival and dialogue as being 'immensely fruitful sources of insight for analysis of cultural artefacts' (1995: 8). To describe something as carnivalesque is to ignore its original context; the carnival pageants of folk culture; the back drop of Christianity and its influence in medieval Europe through its festivals, liturgy and social structure; the idea of the feast; and any other aspects of Rabelasian imagery, such as the use of clowns and fools. What a carnivalesque interpretation reveals is a sense of disorder, and a direct challenge to authority or dogmatic organisation. Use of the term may be several steps along from the original context of the word, but can refer to those cultural moments which foreground its most dominant and striking features. Michael Gardiner applies Tom Moylan's term 'critical utopia' to describe the concept of carnival, and says that it 'effectively broke down the formalities of hierarchy and the inherited differences between different social classes, ages, and castes, replacing established traditions and canons with a 'free and familiar' mode of social interaction based on the principles of mutual cooperation, solidarity and equality' (1993: 33). It is difficult to think of a more appropriately anarchist sentiment than this.

While this still does not necessarily mean that the series fits neatly into this pattern, there are parallels between Gardiner's description of the carnival and *St Trinian's* representations of the destruction, or absence of, traditional hierarchies. In his analysis of Bakhtin, Gardiner's use of Moylan's term 'critical utopia' refers to science fiction representations of societies which 'reject domination, hierarchy' and 'function in a more oppositional and subversive manner, and can hint at the possibility of a less oppressive and exploitative form of social organisation' (1993: 26). Gardiner believes that this strand of 'critical utopia' is at the heart

of Bakhtin's carnival, and it provides a key to linking the carnival and the carnivalesque with *St Trinian's*. The films do not present new rebellions. Instead they provide a representation of a world where traditional hierarchies do not exist or the guardians of them are powerless, and indeed 'hints at the possibility' of a world where the exploitative aspects of traditional social organisation have been eradicated.

The term epitomises the series' consistent establishment of its own world where revelry, vice and sensual pleasures are given free reign, where authority is threatened, and a vision of what a society might look like is painted in its place. The importance of comedy or laughter to Bakhtin's concept reinforces the appropriate use of the term in relation to the comic depictions of *St Trinian's*.

Harper and Porter position the films within the context of a cultural shift across British cinema in the 1950s.

> In the 1950s, the old patterns of social deference, which had been so much in evidence in class society and the cultural forms relating to it, showed signs of breakdown. Unquestioning obeisance to authority could no longer be taken for granted. There was a shift in the nation's cultural mood and tastes, which can be instanced by the most popular films of 1950 and 1961, which were *The Blue Lamp* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* respectively. (2003: 1)

The first two were made and released in the middle of this period and according to Harper and Porter their evident popularity is determined as a direct result of their 'challenge [to] dominant assumptions about the need to respect authority and for orderly and civilised behaviour' (2003: 258). They contrast this developing change in attitudes during the 1950s with the preceding period. They claim that during 'the 1930s and 1940s the aristocracy was a key recurring motif in film culture, and that class was used as a symbolic, disguised means of addressing social and moral anxieties and resolving them. But in the 1950s, that class symbolism disappeared with astonishing speed' (2003: 1). The shift is one based on the decline of the aristocratic class, or at least its visibility, and the growth of the rising middle classes. They suggest a near revolutionary period of British cinema that is the result of more than one factor; 'the 1950s industry was a battle ground in which different factions – in finance, in class politics, in gender representations, in technology – struggled for dominance' (2003: 2). Though they make up only a very tiny portion of Harper and Porter's focus, the *St Trinian's* films sit comfortably within this battleground, featuring as they do symbols of class based authority and an assortment of different sexual and gender based representations.

Christine Geraghty takes an alternative view of Porter and Harper's 'Decline of Deference', observing that the trend was not the widespread attitude they imply. For Geraghty, the films, that on the surface appear to be reflecting a change in attitudes toward authority, often reaffirm the hierarchies they appear to be criticising at surface level.

> What I am suggesting is not that comedies of the period bow down to superiority of the traditional forms of authority […], but that they present hierarchies in the traditional systems that are deemed to give everyone a role. Thus the meritocratic and scientific systems of expertise that see the common man as expendable are not to be trusted, but the systems that depend on tradition can be because their hierarchies require people at every level. This helps to explain why class continues to be such a strong and powerful signifier in films of the period, despite the modern political, sociological, and educational discourses that were proclaiming its rapid demise. (2000: 68)

This position acknowledges the superficial battleground about class that Harper and Porter claim is a decline of deference towards ruling classes, while also identifying the limitations of this cultural shift in British cinema's attitude toward class in comedies of the 1950s. She continues; 'is it this emphasis on class and hierarchy that gives the comedies their curious mix of rebellion and stultifying conformity' (ibid). The problem that arises in studying films which feature a clash between forces of rebellion and symbols of conformity has particular relevance to a study of *St Trinian's*. Geraghty writes the above in relation to *Carry on Teacher* (Gerald Thomas, 1959), a valid comparison to *St Trinian's* as a single film (school set comedy) and as part of a series (a popular and iconic series of British comedies originating in the 1950s).

Carry on Teacher demonstrates this combination of rebellion and conformity 'by making the children powerful agents in their own right who act effectively in the hierarchy of the school with the aim of defending that hierarchy' (2000: 69). The pupils of *Carry on Teacher* act rebelliously and disruptively, but only to prevent their well respected headmaster being offered a job at another school. *St Trinian's* resists fitting Geraghty's description of a film that is on the surface unruly, but actually deferent to authority. The hierarchies in *St Trinian's* are not supported or defended but, as in anarchist tradition, are mocked, ignored or removed. If anyone is given special status or respect in the world of *St Trinian's* it is not due to their pre-existing social position or ranking in society, but in their ability to be useful. The adult character of Flash Harry is respected because of his ability to provide black market goods and involve the schoolgirls in profitable schemes. The 6th formers are respected because of their ability to divert and manipulate the attentions of influential older men. Respect in the world

of *St Trinian's* has to be earned, it is not given to anyone based merely on their social position.

Yet Geraghty's own view of *St Trinian's* is that they fall into this representation of projecting a mood of rebellion whilst simultaneously supporting the hierarchies in which the films are set, noting that '[while] the…series certainly satirised old fashioned attitudes, they also mocked contemporary attitudes towards, for example, marriage and women's modes of consumption' (2000: 159). One assumes that what Geraghty is referring to is the way the materialist nature of the 6th formers is presented, as in Porter's assessment of *Blue Murder* that it is 'saying the unsayable about the way in which the new woman could use her sexual appeal to get on' (2001: 89). She may also be referring to Joyce Grenfell's police sergeant, who pines hopelessly for marriage, and by extension sexual fulfilment, across the first three films. Geraghty sees these examples as being part of a British cinema of the fifties which 'provides evidence of a strong resistance to the notion of the new woman and an ability to imagine her as any kind of modern heroine' (2000: 159). While she is correct in that it is difficult to make a case for *St Trinian's* providing an image of a modern heroine, it is also a very one sided view of the films' relationship to femininity, which ignores nearly every other message or representation of femininity they contain; such as the girls' resourcefulness; autonomy; capacity for cunning violence; and their status as sexual beings. In the case of Grenfell's police officer this should also be remembered that it is part of the series' anarchic lampooning of the law as being incompetent, as well as emotionally and sexually repressed buffoons.

The Belles of St Trinian's opens with a title sequence that evokes the origins of the series by being composed of cartoons by Ronald Searle. The Launder and Gilliat productions stick far more closely to the aesthetic Searle establishes in his original cartoons, than do the revived series by Parker and Thompson. The formal restrictions of the single image satirical cartoon, the solitary frame in particular, fits accordingly with the static camera and wide shots that make up the construction of many British comedy films of the 1950s. The standard Searle format is of an often comically horrific event taking place, embellished by a caption quoting one of the characters pictured in the cartoon. One example has two teachers walking down a hallway, the floor littered with the corpses of schoolgirls killed in a battle. 'Cleaners getting slack?' is the accompanying caption. Another has two pupils holding down a rival school's hockey player, about to inject her with a needle prior to a match. 'Fair play, St Trinian's – use a clean needle' is the only comment from a passing teacher.

This style is replicated in a number of scenes in the early films. These moments are often transitory, taking place as the adult characters cross corridors or walk down hallways to get to another room or location, and will feature a violent or chaotic happening involving a group of schoolgirls, accompanied by a contextualising comment by one of the adults. In one, Miss Fritton the headmistress shows a new teacher around the school when plaster from the ceiling drops on her head thanks to a riot happening in the dorm room above. 'Term has begun', she announces by way of explanation. A short time later they examine the science labs during a lesson; 'you will be careful with that nitro-glycerine, won't you?' she asks a 4th former, as the girl experiments. Locating the majority of scenes in restricted spaces such as classrooms can give films a stagy or theatrical quality. Setting a scene in between these spaces and outside classrooms helps avoid this. It gives films set predominantly indoors a greater sense of movement. The use of corridors for example, allows characters to be able to move whilst engaging in conversation. Vigo, however, avoids this sense of movement in *Zero de Conduite*. His interior scenes are oppressively enclosed. Many of his interiors are rooms without windows, and these are contrasted with the open and free spaces of his exterior scenes. Vigo implies through the contrast of the brightness of the exteriors and the dim lighting and claustrophobia of the interiors that the world outside is where the children should be, where they should be playing, learning and being educated. The classroom is presented as both intellectually and physically restricting. In *The Belles of* the transitory scenes add little to the plot, but are of vital importance because they provide support for the sense of disorder, transgression, and anarchy of the *St Trinian's* films. The concept of being 'in between' is important to the impression the series gives. Characters are 'in between' in terms of their age, their social status, and in their gender roles (both in terms of the roles the actors are playing, and within the diegesis itself). But most importantly, the girls' invasion and domination of these locations outside the classroom implies that they are let loose, and out of control. They have crossed the boundaries of the classrooms and dorm rooms; restrictive spaces originally built to contain them. The pupils utilise these spaces and force themselves into places they should not be, hiding in suits of armour to spy on the adults, or to set booby traps. In occupying and assuming control of the areas not meant for them another example of their anarchic energy is revealed.

These gags, constructed to replicate the style of Searle's cartoons, are not isolated examples. Instead, they are the dominant visual tendency of the Launder entries in the series. In *Blue Murder* an early scene has Flash Harry read off a list of the many benefits of the

school, while images are overlaid contradicting his claims. Harry's voice over acts like a cartoon caption. *The Pure Hell of* includes two images that work as comic tableau, wordlessly reiterating the danger the girls possess as a group. The first has 200 school girls on trial, all of them squeezed into the dock of a courtroom. The second is a brief shot later in the film of the girls imprisoned behind a barbed wire fence, a soldier crossing the frame, guarding them whilst on patrol. Any of these examples could come directly from one of Searle's cartoons.

In the early scenes of *The Belles of* conspicuous scenes of 'anarchy' are immediately foregrounded, using a selection of techniques intended to convey chaos and disorder. The title sequence ends with the rattle of a machine gun over the image of the school sign. As the train carrying the pupils in for the new term pulls into the station, figures of authority and established order are shaken to their boots, with 'station guards scarpering, shopkeepers pulling down shutters, streets emptying, hens running down the coop back into the henhouse, banks padlocked up, cars reversing down roads and police securing their stations and locking themselves in their cells; suggesting that no living creature in the vicinity of the school is safe' (Zalcock, 2001: 50). This type of scene is recurring in the early films in the series, with Babington describing it as 'the male enforcers and protectors of the social order (educational bureaucrats, police, the legal system, even the army) in panicking retreat' (2002: 171). The image of mostly male authority figures being terrified and perplexed (some of them even turning to drink) by the uncontrolled and uncontrollable behaviour of the school girls is utilised in some form in all films of the series as a comic undercurrent or leitmotif. It is a simple device that is used to generate comedy material, but also highlights the uncomplicated nature of the series' relationship to anarchy. There are persistent images of noise, chaos, rebellion and transgression, juxtaposed with scenes of order and old fashioned authority.

Part of the carnivalesque reading of the films also relates to this. Again, a portion of their appeal is in the reversing of traditional roles, which extends to the representation of gender and sexuality. Landy comments on the way in which 'morality, sexuality and all social conventions are turned on their head' (1991: 364), which is exemplified by the school headmistress being played by a man (Alistair Sim in the first cycle, and Rupert Everett in the two most recent). She argues that this signals an expectation, or at least an allowance of, a twisting of behavioural norms of the female characters. It is this initiation of sexual conflict which distinguishes the films from other class conflict based British comedies of the period, such as the Will Hay school master films *Boys Will Be Boys* (William Beaudine, 1935) and *Good Morning, Boys* (Marcel Vamel, 1935). The reference to these two films in particular

also raises another example that is in variance to the idea of the 'decline of deference'. George Perry, in *The Great British Picture Show*, describes St Trinian's as 'a feminine Narkover' (1974: 166), a reference to the name of the school in *Boys Will Be Boys*. It implies that the *St Trinian's* series reiterates a set of previous representations of a rebellious school, only with girls instead of boys. Though for Zalcock this is not a small matter, but instead the germ of a more radical interpretation – simply that representations of unruly girls are more subversive than imagery of unruly boys.

The sexualisation of the schoolgirl has a place in British popular culture that evokes at its most innocent a 'cheeky', childlike approach to sexuality. But it is also encoded with a rebellious, transgressive, and threatening sexuality; the emergence of female autonomy. Zalcock's perception of a further revolutionary potential to the female focus of the films is endorsed by Harper and Porter, when they refer to 'the potentially anarchic and socially disruptive power of the monstrous regiment of young schoolgirls who suddenly matured into sexually desirable women' (2003: 258). The films suggest a correlation between these two groups; the monstrous younger girls and the more sexually alluring older ones. In the two most recent films the girls are split into several sub cultural factions, but in the Launder and Gilliat entries there appears to be just two broad groups to which they belong, the 4th Form and the 6th Form. The 4th formers are the most obviously anarchic division, they are lawless and persistently challenge any type of authority or rules. The 6th formers embody a more universal and typical feminine and teenage rebellion familiar from 1950s films from both Britain and America. They drink and smoke, act older than they are, and listen to rock n' roll. The linking of their anarchic behaviour to youth culture is reinforced through several examples running across the series. Jazz and rock n' roll are referenced repeatedly; it is the style of music the girls party to in the dorm rooms; they play a jazz version of Mozart during a concert in *Blue Murder*; and model a cricket jumper with the word 'Elvis' inscribed across it during the fashion show in *The Pure Hell of*.

The girls are also not merely sexually active but also threatening, in that their sexuality is used as a tool to get their way at the expense of the men who fall victim to them. In *Blue Murder* there is a noted, more 'sexually cynical' (2003: 108) edge, with the girls consciously aware of their erotic appeal and willing to profit from it. The 6th form auction themselves to an Italian prince in a bid to marry him. The costumes of the 6th form are also more revealing, their skirts shorter and several scenes with them partially dressed or in swimwear. This more overt reflection of the girls' sexuality is continued in *The Pure Hell of*. As in the previous

film their sexuality is presented as alluring to an older generation of men, and comic scenes ensue from the way the girls are able to distract and manipulate them because of this. Crucially the girls are always shown to have agency in the wielding of their sexuality. Two examples from *The Pure Hell of* stand out. It is the judge's infatuation with one blonde 6th former which saves the girls from a Borstal sentence near the start of the film. Later, another performs her own solo striptease version of *Hamlet*, removing her clothes as she delivers Shakespeare's lines. The materialist nature of the 6th formers in *Blue Murder* threatens to undermine any radical interpretation, but the 4th form remains a dangerous entity. A dream sequence/fantasy scene from the finale shows them in the ancient coliseum in Rome, sending gladiators and lions fleeing in terror. There is still a sense of chaos, and importantly, female power remains dominant.

The films sexualise the image of the older schoolgirl in a way that is absent from Searle's original cartoons. There is something of the grotesque about the way he depicts them in the cartoons as being composed of pointy noses, unruffled hair, and shapeless bodies. This is obviously difficult to replicate in live action, and something to avoid from a commercial standpoint, but the way the films render Searle's vision is most accurate in the portrayal of the 4th formers. They are the ones in shapeless clothing with dirty faces, and are more highly aggressive and violent. The 6th formers in the films are attractive and desirable, yet in Searle's depiction they remain demonic. If there is a subversive reading to be made of this, then it needs to be remembered that these 4th formers will of course grow up to be the alluring, sexually cynical 6th formers, and from there to be grown adult women. The younger girls appear to be unaware of this coming eventuality. One very brief shot from *The Pure Hell of* has a group of 4th formers rolling their eyes disapprovingly at a curvaceous and glamorously dressed woman who passes by them in a bar. But the inevitable progression from the 4th to the 6th form suggests that there is an inherent power lurking beneath the surface of any young woman, and the undercurrent to their sexual appeal is potential violence and a threat to the dominant order.

Part of this threat emerges from the numerous cross dressing scenes featured in the series. Not only are there male performers playing female characters, but also there is a narrative device of cross dressing that crops up at key moments within the diegesis. One of the narrative threads of *Blue Murder* has a criminal smuggled onto the school's European trip dressed in drag to avoid detection. He also happens to be the father of one of the 6th formers, who encourages his forced transvestitism. Her acquiescence at the need for his feminised

appearance and behaviour threatens the familial patriarchal order. The father's traditional power over the daughter has been eroded. There is also a fundamental element of sexual humiliation which underpins the threat the girls pose. The Education Minster at the end of *The Wildcats of St Trinian's* is forced to strip for the girls' art class after being defeated by them, and in *The Pure Hell of* the army officer in charge of controlling them is stripped and forced to dress as a schoolgirl. The theme of cross dressing, feminisation, and sexual humiliation hints at a symbolically castrating threat to the male characters. Their source of power or authority is fragile and ripped away by the girls' intellectual and physical supremacy.

The *St Trinian's* series plays on the idea of femininity as that which is feared. This is in the shape of the girls as agents of terror, that they present an actual physical threat; and that the establishment figures embody a fear of the feminine, as in the spectacle of high profile men brought down by their own feminisation. While the cogent ideas of political anarchist theory are absent in the films, the stuffiness and order of the rule making establishment is pitted against the disorderly, sexually unrestricted, law breaking freedom of the pupils. The transgressions of the border of traditional gender roles add to their subversive potential. They stop short of providing a literally castration threat, they are family films after all, but the fear of what the girls are capable of, destroying patriarchal power and feminising the men previously in control, stands in for the threat of emasculation. It underlines Zalcock's assertion that the female aspect of the school is what makes them more subversive. It is worth mentioning here that because the 6th formers do not resist sexualisation, and embrace the traditionally 'sexy' interpretation of the school uniform it could make their representation 'safe' and manageable, reinforcing a patriarchal hegemonic order; that the schoolgirls' behaviour is acceptable to audiences because the girls are attractive to look at. Clearly this applies only to the 6th form in the films, and not to Searle's original vision at all, where both sets of girls have monstrous attributes that are not quelled by any traditional notions of beauty or 'sexiness'. Harper and Porter pin the films' relationship to gender down to the films' industrial context, 'Launder and Gilliat, of course, were not feminists. Rather, production conditions at British Lion[…] encouraged them to take risks with new material and timely issues, and to rehearse their fears about the changes in the traditional gender order' (2003: 101). But what is important is that the films give vent to these ideas at all, and that anarchism becomes a way to understand the series of transgressions that are taking place.

The films celebrate a rampant criminality (betting scams, heists, theft etc) that is divorced from the theory of political anarchism, but which bristles with anarchic power due to the overwhelmingly female, and feminine, origin of the crimes. They also celebrate the unruly. The 'sexy' representation of the older girls, which treads on the border between legal and illegal, is part of this. Zalcock positions the *St Trinian's* cycle within the context of her study of films that depict girl gangs, including the Women in Prison movie and the Women on Wheels/Biker Gang subgenre. She argues that films which feature a contiguous environment for female characters address the issues of the gender order and gender roles implicitly, as they are an arena for discussions on sexuality, patriarchy, conflict, and solidarity. It is difficult to make the claim that the original *St Trinian's* films fit this model neatly. They are mostly unconcerned with depicting the schoolgirls as characters and hence there is little interaction between them in the way that characters are forced to converse in the Women in Prison or the Biker movies that Zalcock analyses. They concentrate the story almost entirely on the actions of the adult characters. In this, however, lies a potentially anarchist and subversive appeal. The schoolgirls' disorderly conduct, and the way the school is run, operate as a violent backdrop to the criminal activities of the adults, including those employed at the school and the corrupt establishment figures. But the schoolgirls are presented as a force that is both uncontrolled and uncontrollable, and too powerful for any authority to establish regulation or dominance over. The two most recent films in the cycle take an added interest in the pupils, and push them to the foreground, meaning a greater sense of solidarity is fostered amongst them as characters. With Launder and Gilliat's films if there is a solidarity it comes in the form of the girls as a group which is a social force, with a distinct set of values and ideals in the form of spreading chaos and protecting the self at the expense of any external rules or regulations.

If the films of the 1950s and 1960s can be seen as part of a trend of 'declining deference' (according to Harper and Porter) toward class based authority, the middle entry in the cycle, *The Wildcats of St Trinian's* can also be seen as emerging out of a period of economic turmoil, in response to a Britain still remembering the antagonism between trade unions and respective Conservative and Labour governments during the 1970s. Released in 1980, the film directly locates itself in a Britain of trade union activity and strikes. The films of the 1950s saw the pupils and staff of *St Trinian's* showing little respect for established institutions of order, but with the aim of making money or profiting from illicit schemes. The narrative of *The Wildcats* sees the girls move beyond this and organise along political lines to

form their own labour union, the Trade Union of British Schoolgirls. The title *The Wildcats* refers not only to the tumultuous attitude of the girls themselves but also to the concept of the wildcat strike. The wildcat element, intentionally or not, provides an appropriately anarchist link. Wildcat strike action traditionally takes place outside of the consent and authorisation of trade union leaders, being entirely worker led, and a tactic that is endorsed more readily in anarchist philosophy than conventional industrial action.

A simplistic understanding of these elements could dismiss them as a reactionary and conservative position; as a critique of the trade union movement and its disruptive effect on Britain in the 1970s. *Carry On at Your Convenience* (Gerald Thomas, 1971) certainly takes this position by presenting the union activists as being continually troublesome and interrupting everyone's attempt, managers and factory owners included, to a good honest days' work, without the backing of the workers he is supposed to represent. Much of the humour comes from the repeated humiliations of the union representative, Vic Spanner, and the film ends with the workers defying the picket line and joining forces with management to continue to manufacture toilets and bidets to satisfy big commercial orders. But Launder's film does not follow this path of mocking the intentions and capabilities of the unionised group. *The Wildcats* at least allows the girls to have a voice, and while they are not defined as the heroes of the film, their rowdiness and ability to get things done are seen as admirable traits. Crucially, the narrative allows the girls to win the dispute and have their demands met. The viewing pleasure is derived not from the crushing of any anarchic force emerging from St Trinian's as an institution, but from its victory in asserting its right to independence. This narrative arc is something shared by each film in the series; the school faces a threat from a form of state authority and the girls' ingenuity and cunning forces it to retreat.

The Wildcats takes the step of dividing its battle lines even further. As the story develops there is a split between the 4th formers and 6th formers. As discussed earlier, the 6th formers exhibit materialist tendencies, and this leads to them abandoning the *St Trinian's* cause temporarily to party on a boat with some young male radicals who are actually provocateurs employed to undermine the *St Trinian's* cause. The more hardline 4th formers lead an attack on the party, exposing the provocateurs and getting their revenge on the girls who have sold out their principles and the cause. It works to reinforce the idea of the girls as an unrelenting, anarchic power. The film ends with the partially stripped Education Minister fleeing the schoolgirls in terror and humiliation out into the countryside. The end credits roll as a parade of adult characters from the film follow the Minister's route, dancing in a procession,

bizarrely bringing to mind the dance of death finale of Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957).

If anything undermines *St Trinian's* status as part of an anarchist cinema it is that they exhibit a quaint tameness that somehow tends to overshadow the otherwise radical narratives. The reference to 'genteel subversion' in Andrew Roberts' essay on the series (2012) underlines this. Babington's assessment remains scathing, suggesting that their 'old-fashionedness' is born out of the adult characters' narrative dominance.

> If the resolute old-fashionedness of the Frittons and Flash Harry provides a historic link with the war and guarantees for the audience – importantly – the harmlessness of what goes on, it is at the same time the key to the films' disappointments. The films display a world-upside-down where changes are burlesqued in a form as stripped of tendentiousness as possible, but the very suppression of tendentiousness, which probably guaranteed the films' success, leaves them tame for later viewers. (2002: 172)

The overwhelming focus on the older characters means that much of the dialogue, either exposition or comedy lines, is uttered by character archetypes familiar to audiences from an earlier period of British cinema. The unmarried School Mistress, Miss Fritton, and the Cockney Spiv, Flash Harry, are considered safe (despite Fritton being played by a man) because, according to Babington, they hark back to wartime archetypes. The view that these now benign character types keep the subversive potential of the films at bay is contradicted by Zalcock. She points out that there are other adult characters who work at the school that contribute to a sense of anarchic disorder despite them being pushed into the background almost as much as the pupils.

> In the all-female staff room we find…an upper class alcoholic, a golf player with a tweed jacket and monocle, a teacher in leather bondage who is on the run from the law, and a bohemian painter with palette and brushes – who is not the art mistress. All these characters are signally unsuited to their professed subjects and collectively represent the flotsam of a decaying aristocracy. Others are simply misplaced, like Miss Gale, the literature mistress, a chirpy character, who greets the pupils with a broad cockney "'ello ducks!" (2001: 50)

That this 'decaying' aristocracy is now indifferent to the behaviour of the girls provides a fine example of Harper and Porter's discussion of a 'Decline of Deference' across British cinema. It is as if the previous ruling class is making way for a new type of society. These staff members are, however, the ones with foresight. They are beyond mere indifference and actively help foster and develop the girls' rebellious attitudes. They are already decadent or somehow outside of mainstream society by being artists, alcoholics, or lesbians (the monocle

and tweed wearing golfer is played by Beryl Reid, foreshadowing her roles as lesbian characters in *The Killing of Sister George* (Robert Aldrich, 1968) and in the BBC adaptations of Le Carre's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1979) and *Smiley's People* (1982)). They are not protectors of institutions, and already seem aware that the establishment is on its way out.

As for the institutions themselves, the portrayal of their sheer incompetence is striking. There are too many moments to mention where they find themselves impotent in the face of the ingenuity of the pupils. It is the central comic trope of the series. But also the films show them as being crooked and almost entirely useless on their own. The police, army, politicians and legal systems are seen as corrupt, venal, and lacking the authority or ability to do the very things they are set up to do. If the *St Trinian's* films addressed the incompetence of just one of them then it would be easy to dismiss them as being merely mildly satirical. But the consistency of the attacks against the institutions across the films in the series cements the anarchic streak.

St Trinian's in 2007 revived the concept of the school and located it in a post Spice Girls 'girl power' universe where the historical context of the women's movement was a distant memory. The most obvious and stand out addition to the previous films is the way the sub divisions of the pupils are now much wider. There is no longer a straight split between the pubescent 4th formers and teenage 6th formers. The revived film, and its sequel, allows the girls to divide themselves on sub cultural lines, into Emos, Chavs, and Geeks among others. This suggests a further layer of self-determination among the pupils. In the previous films, despite the anarchist nature of the 4th formers, they are still regulated by the school code of dress, however unkempt they made it. The 6th formers were the ones who had greater autonomy over their mode of dress by allowing modifications to their uniform, usually by shortening the skirts and increasing the height of the heels. In Barnaby and Thompson's films there is still the aggressive and dangerous 4th formers in shapeless uniform, but also an array of other groups who individualise themselves further by modifying their uniforms according to their fashion and music tastes.

St Trinians and *The Legend of Fritton's Gold* also emphasise the characters of the schoolgirls, allowing them a voice and characteristics beyond the way they dress. It is an element not present in the series earlier entries. The behaviour of the girls remains superficially similar, in that it involves much petty crime, such as using the science labs to make and then sell bootleg vodka. The placement of drugs within the films is also updated to

move beyond alcohol and smoking, with references to marijuana and mushrooms. But there is a greater sense of female solidarity running across the Barnaby and Thompson films. The character of head girl Kelly Jones acts as a role model for the younger characters. She keeps control over their activities due to her poise, confidence, and understanding of their individual natures. This helps her avoid being the victim of any bullying or threats from other pupils. She is presented by the filmmakers as a positive role model within the narrative diegesis and for any watching female audience. She rises above any squabbling or weaknesses inherent in the characterisation of the other archetypes. Unlike the head girl in Searle's universe, she is an aspirational figure, and has not reached her position within the narrative through being the most violent or monstrous of the girls. All this is in contrast to the Launder entries. Porter, when discussing *The Belles of*, notes that 'the film is a splendid riot of anarchic images, but it also places its audience completely outside the narrative' (2001: 89). The lack of identification in the characters is a deliberate move by the filmmakers to create a burlesqued version of the world. By not identifying a key central character, nor using any traditional methods of cinematic identification, such as presenting a sympathetic or explanatory backstory, or a recognisable character arc, creates this distance. The 2007 entry in the series still has a large array of characters, but it also introduces the school through the eyes of a new pupil, one who comes to the school fresh, as does the audience. She has a narrative arc which sees her go from bullied outsider to head girl by the start of the 2009 sequel. Identification for the audience is fostered through the use of the sub cultural archetypes, rather than just the two homogenous masses of the 4th and 6th form. In the two recent films, it is possible for female audience members to locate versions of themselves on screen.

The focus in the Barnaby and Thompson films is less about creating an upside down world full of general criminality, and more an attempt to enforce an empowering sisterhood within the institution. In *St Trinian's* the antagonist is again the Education Minister, who is intent on closing down the school, a revision of the basic plot of *The Belles of.* But in the *The Legend of Fritton's Gold* the villains are a misogynistic secret order, intent on keeping women in their place in society. This post women's movement, post Girl Power vibe is the most startling addition to the series. The drug and clothes updates are perhaps inevitable inclusions, to modernise the cultural references to reaffirm the relevance of each new film. This is common to any franchise that runs over a number of generations. Any stylistic renovations are also to be expected. The style of the Launder and Gilliat entries converged

with Searle's single image cartoons for aesthetic reasons and industrial limitations. Barnaby and Thompson ensure their entries resemble a succession of music videos. Many sequences are edited to pop songs to provide a stylistic symbiosis with each track. Any resemblance to Searle's vision is understandably no longer in the visuals. The films are aimed at a young audience and need to reflect that in the way the imagery is presented. The music video aesthetic reaches its apex in *St Trinian's* final sequence, when the pop group Girls Aloud perform as the school band in the dorm room and sing a celebratory song about St Trinian's, which includes a line that declares the schoolgirls as 'defenders of anarchy'. Sarah Harding from the group also has a significant acting role in the sequel, reinforcing the music video aesthetic of the two most recent films. The sense of female camaraderie reimagines the original anarchy and 'decline of deference' of the first cycle of the series. The prologue of *The Pure Hell of* sees the girls burn down the school. They sabotage the fire brigades' attempt to save the building by switching the water in the fire engine for petrol, with one girl playing a jaunty tune, with jazz backing, on the violin as the school explodes. In *Blue Murder* the girls lock away the new headmistress so that they can continue their schemes. In contrast, Barnaby and Thompson have the girls working together to save the school and also look after the personal interests of Miss Fritton, replaying the reverent tone of *Carry on Teacher*. In this sense they conform to Geraghty's observations on 'rebellion and conformity', implying a less anarchic, more conformist attitude emerging from the pupils despite superficially being as violent and rebellious as previously.

Ideology and Form.

A discussion on the way education is presented across the series constructs the possibility of a radical interpretation. As previously discussed, *Zero de Conduite* and *If...* are differentiated from the *St Trinian's* films by their concentration on the pupils' rebellion against the school authority, rather than showing the pupils providing support for an institution that appears to be loosely run on anarchist lines. There are a range of individual concepts for how education should be conducted emerging from anarchist and libertarian thinkers. Most accept that traditional education is not in the best interests of the child, and actively works to restrict the child's ability to learn and to grow. Paul Goodman, Everett Reimer and Ivan Illich were in favour of 'deschooling', and advocated a pedagogy that would 'foster independent thought and expression, rather than conformity' (Marshall, 1993: 600). If one were to take seriously *St Trinian's* as an institution, it would be possible to draw comparison with these anarchist

ideas of what education should be. The school celebrates a rampant non conformity, providing scene after scene of direct conflict between the schoolgirls and controlling institutions. There appear to be few, if any, formal lessons. The pupils are taught subjects that are to prepare them for the world outside, rather than indoctrinated with any ideas from a National Curriculum. The girls' creativity is typically manifested in destructive activities, embodying Bakunin's famous claim from his 1842 article *The Reaction in Germany*, that 'the passion for destruction is a creative passion'.

The school in *Zero de Conduite* is not an anarchist school, and for Porton (1999) the link to anarchist pedagogy is in Vigo's formal strategies. For Porton, the sense of spontaneity fostered by the films' side-lining of linear character development helps to underline the desire to provide education on the lines of promoting a sense of impulsive creativity in the child, drawing analogies with the pedagogical theories of anarchist writer Herbert Read. Peter Marshall summarises Read's basic idea of what education should be;

> Read looked to education as the principle means of encouraging the growth of the creative and autonomous person; indeed, his greatest contribution to anarchist theory was probably in the area of education. He saw an inextricable link between the disordered state of modern civilisation and the traditional system of schooling. The cause of our ills can be traced to the suppression of the creative spontaneity of the individual which is the result of coercive discipline, authoritarian morality, and mechanical toil. (1993: 589)

Porton calls *Zero de Conduite*'s celebration of the artistic impulse as an 'unwitting tribute' (1999: 201) to Read's concepts, which themselves echo the radical school theories of Goodman, Riemer, Illich, and the 'Modern School' founder Francisco Ferrer. Porton sees this as an important interpretation of form which works as an addition to the allegorical reading provided by Lovell, who ultimately asserts that 'the status quo has been disturbed but not overthrown' (1962: 5). Lovell is critical of the inclusion of the dreamlike sequences in *Zero de Conduite*, seeing them as diluting any notion of rebellion. Porton disagrees, stating that 'Vigo's film punctures the ideological presuppositions of mainstream pedagogy with more success that many sober tracts' (1999: 204). He believes that this is based on the way the film challenges mainstream cinema's attempt at narrative logic and coherence, due to Vigo's particular use of cinematic techniques that have the effect of distancing the viewer; close ups, long shots, high angle or low angle shots. To a modern audience, familiar with the two most recent *St Trinian's* films' use of the full range of pop music video techniques, these things in themselves would not be especially alarming, Vigo's style is principally effective due to the

use of these shots being edited together in sequence; close up to close up, long shot to long shot, or high angle to high angle, as well as the alarming jumps between locations with a lack of establishing shots to contextualise the transitions.

Formally, the films directed by Launder are conservative in terms of their framing and editing. Coherent narrative space is consistently maintained through the dominant use of mid shots, framing the actors against the location or set. There are few examples of fast editing to infer an impression of violence or chaos. One stylistic touch employed in the Launder and Gilliat productions is the use of the undercranked camera during overtly comic scenes, as in *The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery* sequence in which the girls protect the school from invasion by the robbers; repelling them with water, paint, flour, eggs, and darts; a scene which is reiterated and updated in *The Legend of Fritton's Gold*. The effect undercranking has of speeding up the action is a shorthand technique for invoking the comic, familiar from a range of films of wildly different genres, including Brian De Palma's *Carrie* (1976), where characters try on tuxedos in preparation for the high school Prom; a sequence tonally inconsistent with that film's ensuing horror movie violence.

If there is an anarchic style it is achieved through the mise en scene. The wide shot and static framing provides an aesthetic link with Searle's cartoons, who achieves an 'anarchic' essence by packing his frame full of information. The Launder films follow this example. There are numerous examples across the films displaying this tendency. The hockey match from *The Belles of* and the attack on the boat by the 4th formers in *The Wildcats* foster anarchy and chaos by creating constant movement within the frame. In the foreground and background the actors are in persistent motion. The images are underscored sonically by the incessant shouts and screams of the girls. This conspicuous and rather obvious shorthand for an anarchic happening, the implication of riotous behaviour, is also used by Vigo and Anderson. In the case of *If…*, Anderson's arrangement of the battle scenes are reminiscent of the chaos cultivated in various westerns and war movies, typically focusing on one character firing a gun or throwing a grenade in the foreground, while extras run amok in the background. The dorm scenes in Vigo's film similarly use the packed frame to imply anarchic force, with each child moving independently, smashing things, doing handstands, and throwing around plumes of pillow feathers. If the speeded up shots used in *St Trinian's* are shorthand for comic representation (something which is common across a range of films to indicate a comic happening), then a frame full of moving information is a visual short cut

for 'anarchy'. Launder pays explicit homage to Vigo's film in *The Belles of.* During an early sequence he replays the *Zero de Conduite* dorm room riot, as the schoolgirls brawl with each other amongst a cloud of pillow feathers, shot from a high angle. However, it is the hockey match scene from *The Belles of* which provides the film's best exemplar of 'anarchy'. The formal tendencies influenced by Searle, the frame packed with bodies, schoolgirls perpetually in motion by constantly waving flags, running or jumping on the spot, are replicated effectively with appropriately riotous content such as the referee being knocked unconscious, or fighting, illegal betting, and opposition players being stretchered off the field.

If the films themselves do not integrate form and content in a way that Vigo and Anderson manage, it is because they are aimed at mainstream audiences. Continuity of narrative space must be maintained. This leads to a conflict between whether it is more radical to propagate anarchist ideas in a popular industrial context of cinema (or books or music publishing) or to stay on the fringes of this commercial mainstream, providing radical commentary on it. For Babington the issue is the way the content is presented and rendered tame, thus diluting their seditious potential. Whether the comic nature of the films also dilutes their subversive nature is also a relevant question, as is the familiarity of the image of the sexualised schoolgirl. Joan Hawkins in *Cutting Edge* claims that there is room for a dual argument, with the potential for films to be 'both subversive and hegemonically contained' (2000: 215). By taking one position on this issue, the possibility of another is not necessarily thwarted or contradicted.

I am not providing a value assessment of the *St Trinian's* series. Instead, I believe that they explicitly have a relationship with anarchy and anarchist ideas, however unsophisticated. To make the connection explicit we can look back to the criteria I listed earlier, inspired by the anarchist cinema of Jean Vigo;

1) The targets of the film's satire or scorn should be the enemies of political anarchism; such as the State and other authoritarian and hierarchical institutions. These include the police and legal systems, traditional education, and organised religion.

2) The tone should be aggressive, violent, playful, and disruptive. This must be reflected in the formal elements which would also be disruptive and challenge mainstream conventions.

3) It should embody a view of humanity that is essentially positive, and which celebrates the range of human experience, including the destructive or sexual impulses.

For criteria 1); the central comic trope of the series is based on the school girls defeating and humiliating the police, government ministers and officials, oil Sheiks, and the military. For 2); the films make a spectacle of the violent resistance to authority. And for 3); the ultimate conclusion of each film is that we should trust the baser elements of the girls' (and our own) instincts over rules, regulations, and governance. The *St Trininan's* films do not condone anarchism, but nor do they condemn it. They are not made by anarchist filmmakers, but they feature an array of anarchic, subversive, and potentially revolutionary representations and images. They celebrate the ingenuity and ability of the anarchic nature of the schoolgirls, and consistently allow them to triumph over traditional enemies of anarchists.

Babington's critique of them as being tame, featuring familiar, and therefore safe, archetypes is astute. That this tameness harms their potential as revolutionary or subversive texts is arguable. But he is right in observing that they are certainly not films that are considered dangerous, and have not been supressed in any way, unlike *Zero de Conduite,* which was banned in France, and the way *If...* encountered censorship issues with some of its nudity. Indeed, when shown on British television they are broadcast in afternoon slots as befits any other family film. But in this lies the embryo of a radical interpretation. In his criticism of *If...* Porton notes that it 'provides a schematic portrait of largely pre-political anarchist impulses, but its half-hearted riposte to the status quo and restrained, derivative style prevent the film from being a bona fide example of cinematic anarchist pedagogy' (1999: 211). He disqualifies the film from a position in his canon of films which articulate anarchist ideas of education, in contrast to Vigo's examination of the same themes. However, if it is accepted that *If...* has a relationship with anarchism due to its array of representations and obvious inspiration in the work of Jean Vigo, then the *St Trinian's* series has to be considered in the same way. Like *If...*, they would not meet Porton's requirements for films displaying a coherent summary of anarchist approaches to education, but as a mainstream cinematic example of 'anarchist impulses' they have few peers. I argue that Porton's argument in celebration of *Zero de Conduite*, that 'it punctures the ideological presuppositions of mainstream pedagogy with more success than many sober tracts' (1999: 204), holds true for *St Trinian's*. There are a number of other high school rebellion movies, including *Rock and Roll High School* (Alan Arkush, 1979), and *Class of 1984* (Mark L. Lester, 1984). But because the *St Trinian's* films provide a completely unsober view of a school, run by the students for the students' own interests, they are the most unrelievedly anarchist of all of them, despite their unabashed commercial origins.

Lovell notes that in the climax of *Zero de Conduite* 'the boys do not complete the revolution but disappear over the roof tops singing into a fantasy future' (1962: 5). By not merely recycling a narrative of rebellion against traditional school authority, the *St Trinian's* series presents an institution that across seven films provides, in an admittedly comic and burlesqued way, a depiction of what an anarchist school might be. In this sense they are the 'fantasy future' that Vigo's schoolboys, in Lovell's assessment, are climbing over the rooftops into.

CHAPTER THREE: The Women in Prison film and Anarchist Analysis

The previous chapter demonstrated that the *St Trinian's* series had aesthetic and thematic connections to anarchism. The films display elements which are anarchic; formal characteristics which are either chaotic or which are employed to create the impression of 'anarchy'. Thematically, they display ideas that concur with fundamental aspects of anarchist theory; in particular comedic attacks on hierarchy, institutions, and authority. But this study took place within the confines of a commercial cinema, and where the connections with anarchism were partly oblique. The process being worked through was, in many ways, one of re-appropriation. The anarchism of the series was based around my own methods of interpretation, where I was looking for those elements which supported my thesis. This method cannot work for any movie; films which are 'anarchist' are not common. Yet while establishing that the 'anarchic' elements are ingrained into the narrative and formal construct of the films, I was still reclaiming them out of the commercial production context in which they were made. There is an established tradition of this type of critical re-appropriation in the history of audiences and within film studies.

Greg Taylor examines these processes of personal interpretation and analysis in *Artists in the Audience*, and discerns two distinct types of audiences and approaches; the cult and the camp. The cult audience is when a film is deemed to have achieved a set of criteria determined by that of the audience themselves. Typically, though not exclusively, these films have been excluded in some way; either because they originated outside of the mainstream, or because the film failed to become a financial success. Taylor argues that those spectators who fall into the first category have developed 'a resistant cult taste for more obscure and less clearly commodified cultural objects' (1999: 15). The camp approach/audience instead fetishises the process of reclaiming cultural artefacts, especially those which fail to meet recognised aesthetic standards. Often, these might be films overwhelmingly considered as 'bad' examples of film art. Of these processes Taylor writes;

> Vanguard criticism does not allow the bar to be lowered so much as thrown away – or rather, disavowed – by those who have cultivated a preference for the aesthetically incomplete, fractured, uncontrolled. Cultism, after all, makes a virtue of ordinariness, camp of obviousness; both approaches are meant to maximize the value and interest of

>naïve art, not to reward skilled artists whose work offers the critic the threat of competition. (1999: 152)

The previous chapter looked at what constitutes an anarchist film, and specifically at what themes and formal properties determine where a relationship to anarchism exists. By concentrating on the *St Trinian's* films, the features of Taylor's delineation of camp re-appropriation were taking place. The films had escaped widespread critical appreciation, but in their 'obviousness' was found an anarchic impulse that contributed to an understanding of anarchist cinema.

In the range of critical literature lauding the work of Jean Vigo, whose *Zero de Conduite* provided an aesthetic influence on *The Belles of St Trinian's* (particularly in the visually reminiscent recreation of the dorm room riot), there exists a cultism equivalent to that defined by Taylor. Vigo's work had been largely forgotten, only to be reclaimed many years later (after his death) by critics who re-evaluated his films out of their contemporary context to establish a coherent thematic and formal strategy working through them (whether they described it as anarchist or not). These re-evaluated elements in Vigo's films then became the standard by which I began to re-appropriate the *St Trinian's* series for anarchism. What was initially found in a cultist approach became my camp analysis. Somewhere in between these two approaches I formed the basis for what constitutes an anarchist film.

This chapter turns its attentions to a different set of films. It looks towards exploitation cinema and the Women in Prison movie. This is an area far removed from the 'safe', mainstream context in which the *St Trinian's* series resides. The Women in Prison cycle brings with it a new range of problems and questions that, if answered, make clearer the connections and relationships existing between anarchism and the cinema. The cycle trades on the spectacle of soft-core sex, violence, and on images of the female body. But also, amongst such content they make a spectacle of rebellion and anti-authoritarian politics. These elements, directly emerging out of the cycle's exploitation origins, cement a connection to my definitions of an anarchist film.

The Women in Prison cycle conforms to the criteria for films relevant to a study of anarchist cinema that were laid out in the previous chapter. They present the prison authorities and other powerful figures as villains, who are subsequently defeated in each film (Criteria 1). Formally, the films are disorderly and inconsistent. This comes from a combination of deliberate practice by the filmmakers, and sometimes as an inadvertent

consequence of their very low budgets. This results in a challenge to the traditional, mainstream, narrative filmmaking techniques and conventions. In combination with the attacks on some of the enemies of anarchism, the films conform to my second criterion. Each film presents a collective response to the oppressive regime as the female prisoners mount violent rebellions against the aggression of guards and governors (Criteria 2). Finally, in their depiction of comic sexual encounters, they celebrate an unabashed and crude sexuality (Criteria 3).

The films share a number of characteristics with the *St Trinian's* films, but shift their critiques from education to the prison system – another tool of the State. The focus of them is also female centred, which creates a binary clash with mostly patriarchal structures depicted in the narratives. But unlike the *St Trinian's* series, they are not made in a mainstream industrial context. And unlike *Zero de Conduite* they are neither critically nor artistically respected. The Women in Prison cycle is a marginal cinema whose anarchic elements can only be understood by analysing the films and the industrial context in which they were made.

These contexts are in their own way as equally commercial as any mainstream film. They are made with the sole economic intention of generating a profit. Also, the most prominent iconographical image of the Women in Prison film is that of attractive females in a state of undress; an image which, in some feminist criticism, is associated with patriarchal control of film, media, and culture. This chapter looks to ways in which these issues, which contradict some aspects of anarchist theory, can be accepted and lived with by opening up the possibility for an anarchist intervention into the study of film and cinema.

In spite of the contradictions, the Women in Prison cycle can be interpreted and understood by an anarchist analysis. It is an analysis that reveals the vociferously anti-institution and anti-patriarchal message of the cycle, whilst handling the inconsistencies, the disorderly nature, and the occasional incoherence of the individual films themselves. By doing so, I show how an anarchic spirit is articulated through this area of cinema, and how it is resistant, oppositional, political, and anarchic.

The History of the Women in Prison cycle.

In the early to mid-1970s the Women in Prison film was one of a number of other exploitation cycles, such as the Biker Movie. They depicted female convicts rebelling against

their degrading and inhumane treatment in prisons. Films such as *The Big Doll House* (Jack Hill, 1971), *Women in Cages* (Gerardo de Leon, 1971), *The Hot Box* (Joe Viola, 1972), *The Big Bird Cage* (Jack Hill, 1972), and *Caged Heat* (Jonathan Demme, 1974) were released under the guidance of Roger Corman at New World Pictures. Other notable examples included *Black Mama, White Mama* (Eddie Romero, 1973) and *Terminal Island* (Stephanie Rothman, 1973), released by American International Pictures and Dimension Pictures respectively. As a concise cycle based around remarkably similar situations, themes, and scenes, the Women in Prison film tightly resembles Eric Schaefer's descriptions of exploitation cinema in general; that they were 'usually thought of as ethically dubious, industrially marginal, and aesthetically bankrupt' (1999: 17). Also, exploitation films frequently 'centred on some form of forbidden spectacle that served as their organising sensibility' (1999: 5). [2] Schaefer explains how the exploitation film 'became a recognized and distinct' (1999: 3) part of cinema from the 1920s. It was a type of cinema forged around the presentation of taboos, including 'sex and hygiene, prostitution and vice, drug use, nudity, and any other subject considered at the time to be in bad taste (1999: 5).

The Women in Prison film is a cycle that began to take shape in terms of its own distinctive conventions in the 1950s, in B movies such as *Girls in Prison* (Edward L. Cahn, 1956) and *Reform School Girl* (Edward Bernds, 1957). These very cheap productions relied upon the cliché of the good girl gone bad, often inadvertently having been led into a life of petty crime, and then sentenced to serve time in prison. They traded on 1950s iconography of rebellion; such as Hot Rods and flick knives, and their tone was one of heightened melodrama.

A tradition of the Women in Prison movie extends back to Hollywood of the 1930s. Tino Balio describes a set of films that emerged in 1930s Hollywood as the Social Problem film. It was typified by the gangster and crime movie, of which *The Public Enemy* (William Wellman, 1931) and *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1932) are notable examples. However, there were other cycles which broadened the scope of the Social Problem film, including 'the yellow journalism, shyster lawyer, and vigilante cycles' (1993: 286) such as *Five Star Final* (Mervyn LeRoy. 1931), *For the Defense* (John Cromwell, 1930), and *Star Witness* (William Wellman, 1931) respectively. Further films would deal

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[2] The cycle was not confined to America. There were also European and Japanese versions which form a part of each culture's respective exploitation traditions. Films such as Jess Franco's *Women in Cell Block 9* (1977) and *Sadomania* (1981) operate on superficially similar lines to the America Women in Prison film, but minus the explicit political references and with greater reliance on the soft-core pornographic elements.

with issues such as the economic depression, as in *Wild Boys of the Road* (William Wellman, 1931), and trade union activity in *Black Fury* (Michael Curtiz, 1935). These early indicators of the political focus of low budget commercial filmmaking would eventually extend to the Women in Prison films discussed in this chapter.

Balio describes the Warner Bros. studio as having 'devise[d] a formula to capitalize on social problems' (1993: 281). This formula was one of relatively low budgets, paired with topical subjects, to produce fast paced and sensationalised films. This process of 'capitalising' on social problems, combined with the economically sound production models, became the standard practice of the later 'B' picture. In turn, this morphed into the exploitation film, which proliferated with the rise of independent filmmaking in America after the break-up of the Hollywood studio system in the middle of the 1950s.

When the Women in Prison cycle was resurrected in the 1970s, it was in a climate of decreased censorship and where increasingly graphic depictions of sex and violence were permitted on screen. Furthermore, they were produced against the backdrop of an expanding and more visible feminist movement. The Women in Prison films of the 1970s combine the concerns of the earlier Social Problem films, such as the anxieties over the changing roles of women in society, with the 'bad taste' (Schaefer, 1999: 5) sensibility of exploitation cinema – with images of nudity, violence, and crude humour based around matters such as rape or castration.

The Warner Bros. films of the 1930s and their ethos towards the presentation of social problems shows an early example of the sort of contradictions which pervade the Women in Prison cycle and other films with connections to radical left wing politics. Balio writes that 'after Roosevelt's inauguration, Warners changed its strategy for social problem films. Although fervent Republicans, the Warner brothers not only backed FDR's election efforts but also acted as major propagandists for the New Deal' (1993: 288) by creating films such as *Black Fury* and its narrative of crime and corruption within trade unionism. Therefore, a clash developed in these films between capitalist practice and socialist or liberal policy. Any single interpretation of a film, that it either propagates a particular ideal, or that it is a purely cynical cash producing exercise, is neither accurate nor useful. There is clearly a complicated dynamic between any commercial film and its message that emerges when the ideology appears to conflict with conditions in which the film was made.

Barry Keith Grant argues that, in genre films as well as cult films, the series of transgressions that they present (in image, of ideology, of production standards and quality) end up 'recuperating that which initially posed a threat to dominant ideology' (1991, quoted in Mathijs, Mendik, 2008: 87). But the Women in Prison films, it can be argued, do not do this. In the examples Grant cites, of gangsters meeting their comeuppance, or the seemingly 'sophisticated' sexuality of Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly being tamed as they settle for monogamy in musicals, it is easy to identify a narrative closure in the restoration of traditional values. Each Women in Prison film may struggle within the confines of capitalist production methods, but order is not maintained in the climax of their narrative.

The contradictions of the Women in Prison film are inherent, but serve to highlight how they are also both subversive and problematic. They do not comfortably fit the realm of commercial cinema, which, if one were to offer an unsubtle critique, might be accused of offering simple and easy pleasures, playing directly to the desires of an inbuilt audience. Nor do they easily align with strands of the anti-authoritarian avant-garde, which may attempt to explicitly challenge the ideologies of mainstream cinema by offering a range of alternative representations inverting those Hollywood relies upon.

My assessment of the Women in Prison film combines a formalist analysis and a more personal interaction with the text. This necessitates moving between the films to look at the methods of interpretation. Of the two strands of cult and camp appreciation that Taylor outlines, the linking of the Women in Prison cycle to anarchism would appear to put me firmly in the camp audience. The Women in Prison films do not conform to standardised notions of what constitutes good production values. One might argue that they lack quality, and any attempt to proclaim a seriousness beyond the surface means I have eulogised the simplicity and obviousness of the imagery and characterisations; I have, in Taylor's words, 'thrown away the bar'. However, my process of anarchist interpretation is about discovering what a film might tell us about structures of domination, and how the film does this not only through its cinematic practice but also through the processes beyond the text; including the range of possible interpretations. This is a political way of viewing, which links to the anarchic content or essence of the film. My process differs from the cult and camp theories of Taylor because it is not about reclaiming a body of work as having qualities previously missed (cult), or about eulogising and revelling in the lack of 'quality' (camp). But it is necessary to look towards films designated as cult or camp, terms which fit the cycle very closely, because this is frequently where the anarchism in cinema resides. It exists in those

cultural artefacts which have been discarded, or which simply do not fit, aesthetically or thematically, with the mainstream.

Critical analysis of the Women in Prison cycle and their subversive nature dates back to the era the films were being made, where they had an immediate, if slight, impact in the circles of film academia. The cycle's focus on the rebellious and violent woman attracted the attention of burgeoning feminist film critics and academics in the 1970s. Pam Cook discusses the links between the exploitation film, the Women in Prison movie, and their potentially subversive aspects in *Exploitation Films and Feminism* (1976). In her article she outlines the ways in which the exploitation film can act as a subversion of mainstream Hollywood's codes and conventions. The article discusses the exploitation movie in general, while its feminist drive puts the main focus on the films of Stephanie Rothman, in particular her Women in Prison film *Terminal Island*.

For Cook, the 'bad acting, crude stereotypes and schematic narrative' (1976: 125) of the exploitation film work as a meta-commentary on mainstream cinema by exposing the way 'myths are revealed as ideological structures embedded in the form itself' (1976: 124-125). She is unclear about whether this is always intentional, or instead an inadvertent symptom of the 'badness' of the exploitation film, the poor quality of their production values in comparison to Hollywood counterparts. She is clear, however, that the characters who dominate the Women in Prison movie, including in Rothman's film, constitutes a version of the positive heroine, one who takes on masculine characteristics in a way of 'parodying male violence' (1976: 126). Furthermore, she claims that while the 'positive-heroine stereotype rests on the possibility of woman becoming the subject rather than the object of desire, that desire is seen totally in terms of male phantasies and obsessions' (ibid). For Cook, the framing of feminine power within the context of traditional male fantasy figures of women erodes the radical potential that exists in the films, in spite of whatever power the characters are deemed to possess.

In his book *The Wow Climax* (2006) Henry Jenkins continues these discussions in the essay *Exploiting Feminism in Stephanie Rothman's Terminal Island*. Indeed, his choice of words for the title of the essay – 'Exploiting Feminism' – links back to the Social Problem films of the 1930s, and how topical issues were exploited by filmmakers to add to their commercial value. It indicates that feminism was used as a social anxiety (or a problem?) which provided fertile ground for exploitation filmmakers of the 1970s. He claims that the

film warrants special attention because of the contradictions interpreting or analysing it draws. He writes that 'any film that negotiates between these two competing discourses warrants closer consideration. Such films may help us to better understand the ideological fault-lines within popular cinema' (2006: 103). For Jenkins, that Rothman was 'working both within and in opposition to the exploitation film' (2006: 124) is where the power of her work lies. By using archetypes and exploitative forms Rothman is able to subvert mainstream conventions and turn them in on themselves. He claims it is the locations of the Women in Prison films that help to limit their 'radical potential'. Most of the films discussed in this chapter are shot and set in the Third World, specifically the Philippines, and according to Jenkins this creates a 'displacement' which dilutes their political power. In referring to *Terminal Island*'s borderline science fiction setting of the near future, he argues that because the world of the film 'closely resembles, yet is marked out as separate, from our own' (2006: 115) the 'radical potential is contained' (ibid).

I would argue that it is because of the locations that the radical ideology of the cycle is allowed to play out. Because they are located in an unfamiliar setting, the films are freed from the restrictions of realism. While there may be exceptions, male prison movies usually take place in the 'real world', so the status quo tends to remain fundamentally unthreatened. In films from diverse production contexts such as America in the 1950s, as in *Riot in Cell Block 11* (Don Siegel, 1954), or Britain in the 1970s, as in *Scum* (Alan Clarke, 1979), the riotous behaviour of the inmates is eventually quelled, through negotiation or force. That the films are set in contemporary society means they must maintain a sense of realism which would be lost if the films ended with the prisoners escaping forever or destroying the prison, which is the recurrent climax of the Women in Prison films discussed in this chapter.

The finale to *Caged Heat*, the only film from the cycle discussed in this chapter which is set exclusively in America, serves to illustrate this point. Some of the prisoners in the film do mount a daring and violent escape. They manage to get a prison van to the outer fence, making hostages of the prison governor and doctor, before engaging in a violent and protracted shootout. They kill several fat, barely competent, prison guards, and in the crossfire the governor and doctor get shot. Eventually they reach the getaway car waiting for them outside the fence. However, the central foundations of the prison, the physical construct of the building and the ideological fabric of the institution, are not destroyed or overturned. The group that escapes is small; there are only four of them. There is no sense that the prison will cease to function in the aftermath of the escape. There are still plenty more prisoners to

keep incarcerated. With the replacement of the dead governor, doctor, and guards the prison will continue to function. The wholesale destruction of the prison as a system is a step too far in this particular case, even for a Women in Prison film, precisely because it is set in a recognisable America. As the shootout rages, director Jonathan Demme cuts in shots of a sightseeing bus rolling past, providing a score of witnesses to the escape and shootout. The film has to acknowledge the real world consequences of such a prison breakout. The setting demands a gesture towards realism not needed in the other films of the cycle. The realism that is a feature of the male prison film is far more necessary than in the Women in Prison cycle.

This is not to play down the serious politics of the male prison film. All prison films, regardless of the gender of the onscreen inmates, are overtly political. They are forced to take a position on class, if only in the presentation of a criminal class of inmates and a dominant ruling class of guards and governors. The political implications are inherent. But the politics of films such as *Riot in Cell Block 11* or *Scum* is based on a reformist agenda, rather than a revolutionary one. Any political content serves to highlight problems within the prison system, rather than call for its complete removal.

In the context of the 1930s Social Problem film the political implications in each narrative could be diluted with a subtle shift in a film's focus. Balio writes that 'Warners did not meet the social problems head on; instead, the studio typically sidestepped issues by narrowing the focus of the expose to a specific case or by resolving problems at the personal level of the protagonist rather than at the societal level' (1993: 281). This move from the social to the personal is not one which the Women in Prison film wholeheartedly makes. The films nominally revolve around personal stories, but they are formulaic and rely on such close repetition of detail between movies that the characters remain archetypes; fulfilling roles as agents in the story of the destruction of a fictional prison system. And while displacement of feminist rage can be argued to have occurred in the Women in Prison films due to their disassociation from realistic settings (in the use of exotic locations, or dystopian ones in the case of *Terminal Island*), I argue that it is because the shackles of realism are absent from the films that they are allowed their fantasy endings of escape and revolution.

Pam Cook's conclusion, that the patriarchal nature of the films' production context undercuts the subversive aspects, falls in line with Nathan Jun's conclusion in *Towards an Anarchist Film Theory* (2011). In his article Jun attempts to address these perpetual tensions

between a film's capitalist production context and any kind of oppositional message the film might contain. He details the problems of discussing the radical politics, and specifically anarchism, of films, when most commercial cinema is produced with major corporate support. While Jun acknowledges that cinema does not exist in a single fixed state that invites any one particular reading, there is still the huge problem of the dominance of capitalism lurking in the background to any analysis of film and radical politics.

> There is scarcely any question that the contemporary film industry is subservient to repressive apparatuses such as transnational capital and the government of the United States. The fact that the production of films is overwhelmingly controlled by a handful of media conglomerates, the interests of which are routinely protected by federal institutions at the expense of consumer autonomy, makes this abundantly clear. It also reinforces the naivety of cultural studies, whose valorization of consumer subcultures appears totally impotent in the face of such enormous power. (2010: 156)

To stand in opposition to this he calls for a 'cinema of liberation', one which should be 'self — consciously political at the level of form and content; its medium and message would be unambiguously anti — authoritarian, unequivocally opposed to all forms of repressive power' (2010: 157). This would be a cinema which supports and perpetuates anarchist theory. Jun's approach to an anarchist film theory rests on the notion that 'cinema is neither inherently repressive nor inherently liberatory' (2010: 158).

Jun is either unaware of, or ignores, films that have been labelled anarchist (such as *Zero de Conduite*) or the body of films that have been discussed through research into anarchism and film (such as Richard Porton's work). To Jun, the concept of an anarchist cinema emerging from a commercial environment is a contradiction that cannot be bridged; which by not engaging with previous thought on the issue he does not attempt. Cook, while not reaching such uncompromising conclusions, ultimately falls in line with this view. No matter what *Terminal Island*'s relationship to feminism is, Cook cannot reconcile the contradictions in the production context and imagery that the film relies upon.

While Jun states that his idea for a 'cinema of liberation' cannot exist in a capitalist society, for Cook a truly feminist representation cannot exist in a film made within the confines of a patriarchy. Their arguments are powerful, but I believe they undersell the films themselves in favour of paying too much attention to the production context. Cook and Jenkins are not looking at *Terminal Island* from an anarchist perspective of course, but both too readily close down the potential for a radical interpretation and for the possibility for the film itself to be radical.

Their analysis primarily focuses on content. But a more rigorous examination of the cycle's radical politics needs to emphasise the formal tendencies which lace the Women in Prison film, which can liberate us from the restrictions the production context imposes. The work of Evan Calder Williams highlights the limiting nature of analysis which focuses on content at the expense of form. In his essay *Sunset With Chainsaw* (2011), Calder Williams attempts a fresh way of looking at certain specific horror films, a way that can be applied more broadly to the Women in Prison film and beyond. He notes that previous discussions of horror and politics typically mount an analysis of a film's content rather than its formal elements. This is a 'dominant tendency in horror film scholarship, concerned above all with *horrible content* (author's italics) – and especially with who is threatening whom and how the given situation of danger can be understood allegorically in terms of resistance to the contemporary society' (2011: 28).

In reference to *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974) and its infamous closing scenes, where the final female survivor escapes on the back of a truck while the chief monster Leatherface whirls his buzzing chainsaw in frustration, this tendency becomes particularly apparent. It is worth quoting Calder Williams' essay at length to demonstrate the prevalence of using content to interpret the film politically.

> Kendall Phillips in *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture*…sees Sally's hysterical laughter as the only possible response of youth "left adrift without guidance" to "a world without hope" (120-21). His account recalls Robin Wood's hugely influential work on horror. In *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* … Wood declares Leatherface and clan "representatives of an exploited and degraded proletariat" belonging to "a civilization condemning itself, through its popular culture, to ultimate disintegration" (94). Or, as the caption for a picture of Leatherface in Peter Hutchings' recent *The Horror Film...*puts it more succinctly: "The proletariat strikes back" (122). (2011: 28)

In the accounts of Phillips, Wood, and Hutchings, Leatherface stands in for the ignored masses; and his rage is an allegory of a political underclass asserting its anger on the bourgeois society which has locked it out and pushed it to the margins.

Calder Williams' addition to these particular interpretations comes in his unique close reading of the same scenes. He puts the focus and importance as much on what would previously be thought of as the incidental elements of the frame, such as lens flare or the vegetation in the foreground of a shot, as on the actions of its characters. Of the final shot in the film of Leatherface and the chainsaw he writes that in the;

> moronic, wordless twirls before the setting sun, the light hits the lens and refracts, such that the surface of the frame is stained with lens flares, blinded by what comes from behind our prancing villain. His last moments of screen time are interrupted by what gets no billing, the sunset backdrop's failure to stay back. (2011: 32)

Here, Calder Williams uses allegory too, but it is these formal aspects, the 'secondary material that refuses to quit the scene or do its job', that is an allegory for revolutionary classes and activity that is attempting to affect the middle ground; 'the insurrectionary prospect of the background coming monstrously into its denied prominence' (2011: 33). He takes the concept of Wood's return of the repressed, and Hutching's proletariat striking back, and puts the allegorical emphasis on form, rather than 'who is doing what to whom'.

Calder Williams reveals how these formal aspects can support the conclusions on the film's content by considering those otherwise incidental elements as the 'repressed' pushing their way into the foreground of a scene, refusing to be locked away or ignored. In relation to the Nobuhiko Obayashi film *House* (1977), he writes that the 'fright is not just in the violence enacted and indulged, but also in the way what might have been just passing details have taken over the screen' (2011: 32). This, in a hint of the anarchic potential of such an interpretation, suggests 'a carnivalesque misrule of what should not have come to the fore' (ibid).

The tendency to rely on analysis of the content of a film does two things. First, in Calder Williams' words when discussing the horror film, he says that 'it forecloses other, more provocative possibilities of interpretation' (2011: 28). Second, it means that those writing about the Women in Prison movie have barely taken part in film analysis at all. They have described the films and their relationship to feminism, which is that the female characters are victims of patriarchy and capitalist exploitation who then find strength and solidarity together to overthrow the symbols of their oppression. At the same time, Cook and Jenkins outline that there is a contradiction in this ideology due to the sexual exploitation that the films seem to revel in. But claiming that the films somehow have a feminist stance is not a particularly difficult one to make, given the persistent narrative structure of the women prisoners turning on their (mostly male) oppressors. Additionally, that the focus is on *Terminal Island* as the standout movie from the cycle makes it very easy for Cook and Jenkins to make their claims and stand vindicated. *Terminal Island* is the easiest film of the cycle to proclaim a radical stance on its behalf because the film itself seems to present a utopian possibility for male and female equality and communal living in its denouement, and importantly, it has a female

director. It echoes the way it was far easier for critics to claim *Zero de Conduite* as an anarchist film because the biographical detail of the director supported that particular interpretation (and easier for them to ignore others such as the *St Trinian's* series); that Stephanie Rothman directed *Terminal Island* allows the critics proof of their assertions.

This is not to say that their analysis of *Terminal Island* is wrong. The claims for the film are intelligently put and are in many ways accurate. But the tendency of relying on the filmmaker itself to support the critic's claim is persistent in film studies, and continues to cross the different schools of film interpretation.

The status of the filmmaker is seen by David Bordwell to be prevalent in the interpretation of films regardless of whichever model for analysis is being used. In *Making Meaning* Bordwell attempts 'an analysis of film studies' interpretive system' (1989: 249), looking at and critiquing the processes academic critics move through in ascribing meaning to films. He writes that 'meaning-making is a psychological and social activity fundamentally akin to other cognitive processes. The perceiver is not a passive receiver of data but an active mobiliser of structures and processes (either "hard wired" or learned) which enable her to search for information relevant to the task and data at hand' (1989: 3). He continues to claim that 'no description of anything is conceptually innocent; it is shot through with presuppositions and received categories. Therefore, every critical interpretation presupposes a theory of film, of art, of society, of gender, and so on' (1989: 5).

He divides these processes into two categories or stages. First, there is the comprehension stage; which 'constructs referential and explicit meanings' (1989: 9). The referential mode is where 'the spectator draws not only on knowledge of filmic and extrafilmic conventions but also on conceptions of causality, space, and time and on concrete items of information' (1989: 8), in the understanding of the construction of a film's narrative space. The explicit meaning builds on this to identify the embedded clues which indicate how the film intends to be understood. The second stage involves the 'construct(s) of implicit and symptomatic meanings' (1989: 9). The implicit meaning looks to how the film might be understood via its 'covert, symbolic, or *implicit* (original italics) meanings' (1989: 8). The symptomatic reading looks to those meanings 'that the work divulges "involuntarily"' (1989: 9). The symptomatic could be found in the recurrent themes which preoccupy particular filmmakers, or be found in how the film reflects 'economic, political, or ideological processes' (ibid). In the interpretations of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* which Calder Williams isolates above, we

can see that they move through the two stages and four types of analysis, but do not specify any recurrent themes in the director's work. Cook and Jenkins follow these models of analysis also, but the crux of their argument for feminism is in Stephanie Rothman's status as an auteur.

Bordwell highlights that 'despite their debts to the objectivist, text centred side of New Criticism, most explicatory critics use the schema of the personified filmmaker. And although symptomatic critics often declare the irrelevance of the creator's intention, the emptiness of crude auteurism, and the death of the author, we find this heuristic in the symptomatic camp as well' (1989: 158). So, while Cook and Jenkins make a strong claim for the potentially radical nature of *Terminal Island*, there is nothing particularly radical about their process of interpreting the film. They rely on a simple model of analysis; and indeed, one could argue that they only attempt to make the radical claims for the Women in Prison cycle precisely because they have Rothman's role as the director as 'proof' of their analysis. Therefore, they are analysing films which are political, but they are not engaging in political analysis.

In his essay *The Bordwell Regime and the Stakes of Knowledge* (2001) Robert B. Ray charts how film studies has a tendency to become bogged down or side-lined by existing arguments and methods of analysis, and how Bordwell's own formalist approach can sometimes be considered part of this. Without disagreeing with his findings Ray manages to outline how the authority of Bordwell and his collaborators assumes dominance based on its establishment of the rules of analysis. Bordwell's 'persistently used method' (2001: 42) leads to a limited range of possibilities. Ray writes that were Bordwell to 'move only slightly away from his established domain […] he would risk undermining what he has already done' (ibid). The dominance of the classicism and formalism within film studies is questioned by Ray as being limiting because there is a world of speculation about the effects of cinema that falls outside of the remit of Bordwell's analysis. When discussing *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1988), Ray claims that 'the larger ideological stakes […] are left unexplored because the book's methodology commits […] to risking only those hypotheses confirmed by empirical evidence' (2001: 62).

The effects of cinema Ray refers to here are held in the impressionist concept of photogenie, a way of thinking, or a belief, of film that its 'essence lay beyond words' (2001:5). Ray charts how this line of thinking was soon eclipsed by more rational theories of film modelled on the Eisensteinian notion of 'cinema as a means of argument' (2001: 3). In

Film as Subversive Art (1974), Amos Vogel chronicles the ways in which a film can be considered subversive. Photogenie is what he is alluding to when he describes the emotional effects films can have on audiences; 'the surfacing of deeper desires and anxieties, and the inhibition of reasoned response in favour of 'gut level' reaction' (1974: 9). The anarchic in cinema is a subversive trend, and its 'essence' can in some instances only be grasped on this level.

To mount an anarchist interpretation of the Women in Prison film one must build on these processes from film studies' past. The varying models of analysis which Bordwell discusses in *Making Meaning*, and his own formalist methods, are not wrong. But I argue that they limit the potential for radical, politicised film analysis because they do not allow themselves the possibility for a revolutionary reading, and ignore the photogenie that might emerge from the text. Instead, there is an attempt to make things explainable and provable, to lock down the interpretation of a film. The production context is too easily grasped for to make explainable unruly and difficult films, which the Women in Prison films are. It is easier to close down the understanding of a film than allow it to grow out and make claims for it which can then be contradicted. The non-provable aspects are therefore ignored or dismissed. An anarchist study of cinema has to go beyond this type of analysis. An anarchist interpretation has to allow for the possibility for a film to be 'anarchic'. It should not try to restrict the disruptiveness or the illegitimacy of a film by confining it to films studies' dominant tendencies of interpretation, and locking away any possibility of a radical reading by forcing it into pre-established interpretative modes. An anarchist interpretation would not see the difficult aspects of the Women in Prison film as problematic. It would instead see the anarchic potential of these aspects and not attempt to confine the film or make it safe by using the production context as a way to make it explainable. Instead it would look to discover what these films tell us about the possibilities for an anarchist cinema, and how that could educate us about the issues which surround anarchist theory.

In her article Cook understands the need for deeper textual analysis. Her final paragraph states that 'any argument about the differences between Rothman's films and other films in the exploitation field must ultimately be sorted out by close analysis of the films themselves' (1976: 127). Of Rothman's films she writes that they 'have a polemical value in relation to feminist film criticism: while they cannot in any sense be described as feminist films, they work on the forms of the exploitation genres to produce contradictions, shifts in meaning which disturb the patriarchal myths of women on which the exploitation film itself rests'

(ibid). The description of the term 'polemical' here reads like an invocation to the idea of photogenie; the emotional and 'gut level' reflex in response to a film's aesthetic and narrative.

Similarly, the Women in Prison films also do not fit Jun's idea of a 'Cinema of Liberation'. They may not be anarchist films because the production context alone prohibits this possibility, but they do have a 'polemical value' for anarchism and its relevance to cinema. The 'contradictions' and 'shifts in meaning' which work to 'disturb' dominant codes of cinema that Cook recognises, describe some of the cracks which Comolli and Narboni refer to in the essay *Cinema/Ideology/Criticism* (1969). These cracks, through which 'an internal criticism is taking place' and where the film is 'splitting under an internal tension' (Comolli, 1969, cited in Harvey 1978: 35), combined with the 'ideological fault lines' Jenkins describes, is where the anarchic and anarchist elements of the Women in Prison movie can be found.

Nevertheless, there are limitations to analysing the films through anarchism which require acknowledgement. Both Cook and Jenkins recognise the contradictions prevalent in a film like *Terminal Island*. Their essays are an attempt to lay out these contradictions and to work through them, to find moments where the contradiction can be resolved and where a feminist analysis falls short. Ultimately, both recognise the limitations of politicising *Terminal Island* for a feminist cause in the face of the strong opposition inherent in its representations. However, the 'feminist' elements of the film still stand, they are present and visible. The interpretations Cook and Jenkins suggest are relevant and exist despite the contradictions or limitations which challenge them. In analysing other films from the cycle I will inevitably encounter a similar set of restrictions when relating them to political anarchism. There are limits to what extent the films are actually unruly. The limits encountered by previous critics, their sometimes reactionary content and commercial production framework, are also difficulties for an anarchist analysis. Some of the Women in Prison films contain material that is contrary to a traditional anarchist message, and the issue of profit driven cinema could be considered anathema to an anarchist cinema.

In the first instance, I have to acknowledge that an anarchist interpretation is a personal one, and that political anarchism is not going to be relevant to most audiences due to a disconnection between anarchist action and cultural production. In contrast to this, actual audience members who identify with anarchism may well be put off by the surface content of

the films; their seemingly shallow depictions of women, or their genre trappings. In the second instance, the films are contained by those who control distribution and exhibition. As of writing this, the films are not yet available in their entirety on YouTube or in other public domains. They have not in any meaningful way broken free from their commercial and capitalist restrictions (and whether being freely available on a user generated content site such as YouTube can be even considered outside the capitalist domination of cinema, given the site's ownership by Google). Also, there are questions as to what extent cinema is a controlled space; one that fosters rebellion within highly controlled borders on the screen when the lights dim, but which immediately shuts down the revolution once the film finishes playing and the lights go back up.

This type of contradiction will be forever present in the cycle, and so therefore cannot be completely worked out or fully reconciled. Instead, ways of living with the contradiction must be adopted. Peter Stanfield, in *Maximum Movies, Pulp Fictions* (2011), demonstrates how this type of contradiction can arise when a set of films becomes a space of conflicting viewpoints by using the career of director Samuel Fuller as an example. The issue of the political implications across Fuller's body of work was pushed to the fore in the writing about him which proliferated in the 1960s and into the 1970s. Stanfield argues that 'working through political contradictions they found in his work became the dominant activity of British critics who engaged with Fuller' (2011: 127). Fuller's films, such as *The Steel Helmet* (1951), *Shock Corridor* (1963), and *The Naked Kiss* (1964) were 'objects of extraordinary contestation, valorised as examples of pure cinema at the one extreme and condemned as violent, sadistic, lurid trash at the other' (2011: 115). The following lengthy quote from Stanfield outlines where these contrary positions clashed;

> In his focus on life's losers, the dispossessed, and the outlawed, Fuller showed no interest in dramas that promoted conspicuous consumption or in characters who had aspirations that extended beyond their immediate survival or momentary gratification. In an age of abundance, his supporters claim, he mounted a rearguard action against consumerism, yet Fuller also held up a belief in his country and in the system of free enterprise that he accepted without question. The contradiction implied in his finding fault with the system and his unyielding support for the foundation on which that system was built-his critique and championing of the United States- is the basis on which Fuller is fashioned as an American primitive. (2011: 115)

Here, Fuller, and the critical reaction to him, highlights some of the very arguments of Comolli and Narboni in their essays on the political ideologies entrenched in popular cinema. In particular there is a neat fit with the sections Sylvia Harvey finds in their essay, where

films appear to be conservative, but which contain elements that contradict simple identification of a political stance. They note 'that this is in many Hollywood films […] which, while being completely integrated in the system and the ideology, end up partially dismantling the system from within' (Comolli, 1969, cited in Harvey 1978: 35).

Ultimately, these contradictions in his work, and the schisms in critical opinion surrounding them, cannot be bridged. Instead, Stanfield argues that;

> Fuller can be seen as a symptom of a wider concern with the politics of film among progressive critics, who were asking the question, How can you love the attractions of commercial cinema and at the same time hate the repressive forces of capitalism that produced those films? Fuller's films suggested ways of living with that contradiction. (2011: 125)

Stanfield describes Fuller's films as being 'wracked by inconsistency, incoherence, and a disregard for character motivation based on accepted notions of realism' (2011: 116); a description that is equally appropriate for the films discussed in this chapter. As with Fuller's films, when analysing the politics of the Women in Prison film one must also live with the contradictions and accept that they exist.

Once the contradictions are accepted, an anarchist analysis which follows must allow for the radical or anarchic elements within the films to flourish. In doing so, the disconnection between cinema and political anarchism can begin to be bridged. This is anarchist analysis; allowing the anarchism to present itself, not attempting to close out the possibility by searching for limiting contexts.

The Women in Prison film as Anarchist Cinema.

To begin an anarchist interpretation one does not need to ignore the films' content completely. The narrative structure of the Women in Prison film strongly follows that of Jean Vigo's tale of a boarding school rebellion. In Michael Temple's (2005) close analysis of Vigo's work, he describes the narrative of *Zero de Conduite* as being built on 'an extremely simple and elegant scenario' (2005: 61). The film certainly has a very clear and identifiable narrative structure. So much so, that the story arc of *Zero de Conduite* resembles what could be called the typical structure of films that feature rebellion against institutions, particularly the prison movie. In John Smith's highly intricate examination of the film (1972) he also draws attention to the connections to the prison movie by claiming that Vigo's original intention was to make a film actually set in prison, and also that he was an admirer of *I Am A*

Fugitive From A Chain Gang (Mervyn LeRoy, 1932). Temple produces a detailed table (2005: 61) organising the structure of the film and including the timing and duration of each scene. For the purposes of examining the overall narrative structure, the titles Temple gives to each section are listed below;

1. Back to school

2. In the dormitory

3. Play and study

4. Promenade in town

5. Sunday life

6. Protest begins

7. Open rebellion

8. Revolution's here!

The audience is introduced to the central pupils in the opening scenes (section 1); life in the school, including its routines and rules, is established (sections 2 and 3); friendships and alliances are formed (sections 4 and 5); and a revolt eventually happens (sections 6, 7 and 8). If a parallel with the prison genre is to be made, I suggest that the Women in Prison cycle is the closest in structure to these eight sections.

Each of the Women in Prison films in this chapter follows a simple pattern; an inmate is introduced to the prison (she is either not guilty of the crime or given sympathetic reasons for committing it); they are educated on the rules, and introduced to a series of inmates and authorities, some of whom might be friendly; a series of humiliations takes place, some of which include unwanted sexual advances; alliances begin to form, organisation takes place for a rebellion or break out; the violent revolt eventually takes place. The parallels with Temple's list of sections are clear. Sections 1-3 of Temple's chapters accounts for the woman's arrival to the prison and introduction to the regime. Sections 3-5 cover the repeated humiliations and degradation the convicts are forced to endure, providing motivation for the violent rebellion; and 6-8 parallels the forming of alliances and eventual uprising. The description of *Zero de Conduite* as 'a simple and elegant scenario' is applicable to the typical Women in Prison movie. It is also possible to see counterparts in the scenes and events from the films. For example, the final straw which prompts the schoolboys' revolt in Vigo's film is the cautious yet sleazy homosexual advance on the androgynous character of Tabard by the

chemistry teacher. While far more graphic and unambiguous in the average Women in Prison movie, the uninvited sexual approaches, rape and sexual humiliations (including same sexed encounters) faced by the imprisoned characters at the hands of the authorities helps to forge bonds which lead to the final revolt.

The significance of the Women in Prison film to the topic of anarchism and cinema comes from the repetition of certain tropes, conventions, and each film's narrative trajectory. A look at the surface of the films reveals that they specifically invite an association with anarchy and revolution. Several include a character designated as the 'revolutionary' or guerrilla freedom fighter, imprisoned for crimes against the State. She is a stock character of the cycle; alongside the prostitute, black woman, drug addict, and rich girl. Sometimes these characters are combined, such as the black revolutionary, or the rich junkie. What stands out about the revolutionary is that she is the only character not presented as in some way a victim of capitalism or patriarchy. Each of the other stock characters has been victimised by a man on the outside, and languishes in prison either directly or indirectly because of him. This may be a boyfriend who has framed them for drugs possession, or the woman may be serving time for the murder of an abusive or violent man. The revolutionary character avoids this victimisation by being active politically in a way the other prisoners are not. She does not go through a change from passive to active in the course of the narrative arc. Unlike the others she has already taken up arms and fought against perceived injustice prior to the start of the narrative. This is something the other characters will learn to do as each film plays out.

The narratives are built around female solidarity in the face of imprisonment. This crosses racial and cultural boundaries where black, white, and Asian characters, as well as heterosexual and lesbian characters, mix. Class divides are broken down in these displays of solidarity, which resemble Kimberle Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality (1989). The society girls, the prostitutes, and the revolutionaries stand together, with only incidental and minimal disagreements between them. The range of character archetypes creates a tick box of oppression. That the prisoners are overwhelmingly portrayed as victims invites a binary way of understanding the ideology of the film; they are presented as sympathetic and in sharp contrast to the villains. That they are all female indicates an awareness of the negativity of a patriarchal society; while the black character (often played by Pam Grier) has been victimised because of her race; the drug addict because of her social class etc. Capitalism, patriarchy, and racism are the 'villains' of the films, and their values are brutally upheld by the behaviour of the wardens, guards, and governors of the prisons.

The references to prostitution across the Women in Prison film demonstrate their awareness of the social consequences of class struggles. In *Caged Heat*, after an escape bid by two characters early into the film, the women hide out with an old friend. They find her in the middle of a BDSM scenario, erotically wrestling with a semi naked man in a grotty brothel; or, as the sign outside the building describes it, an 'academy of sexual satisfaction'. Their friend has turned to sex work after having been 'laid off at the plant'; the recourse to prostitution highlighted as an economic necessity in the face of capitalist downsizing. Any sense of victimisation in this instance is subverted by her being the dominant partner in the exchange between her and the man. When the man quickly reveals himself as a cop and attempts to arrest the woman for solicitation and the prisoners for escaping, the three of them join together to beat him senseless. Capitalism, authority, and patriarchy are thus symbolically defeated in one encounter. The solidarity created among the prisoners in the cycle is fostered by them being shared victims of injustice. At the start of each film they are separated by their differences and fight each other over them. The course of the narrative serves to educate them on how they are all victims of the same system. The films bring each liberation struggle (race, class, feminist) together under the same umbrella.

Black Mama, White Mama (Eddie Romero, 1973) starkly illustrates some of these points. The main plot is a homage to *The Defiant Ones* (Stanley Kramer, 1958), and has a black prostitute (Grier) chained to a white revolutionary (Margaret Markov) as they make their prison breakout. The early scenes are perfunctory, as if the director is tired of the Women in Prison format. Romero appears more interested in staging the action scenes and shootouts between the guards and a revolutionary gang who want to spring Markov's character from the prison. The film includes only cursory nods to the traditional elements of the genre. The scenes are moved through fleetingly, though the conventions are still present; sex between inmates; the forming of solidarity and alliances (smoking illicit pot leads to the forming of new friendships); followed by the inevitable violent breakout. But the foregrounding of the action scenes and the actions of the revolutionaries in the narrative pushes the rebellious and political content to the fore. The emphasis is instead on the political clashes between violent authority figures and the freedom fighters.

The clumsy dialogue across the cycle describes these themes in broad strokes. Markov's character refers to her non-white revolutionary gang as 'her people', and attempts to connect with Grier by emphasising the connections between political movements: 'you're black, don't you understand?' Jenkins describes similarly obvious dialogue in *Terminal Island* as 'crude

agit-prop' (2006: 108), which nevertheless expresses the clear feminist message of that particular film. In Robin Wood's analysis of *Terminal Island* he is similarly critical of such an unrefined approach. He writes that it is 'too clear-cut, too pared down to the bare lines of a thesis; a message movie is a message movie even if one likes the message' (1986: 116). But this type of unsophisticated and direct dialogue works as a verbal equivalent of the binary ideology of the cycle, as a continual reminder of the anarchic spirit running throughout. One of the final lines of *The Big Bird Cage* epitomises this outlook: 'we don't have to follow the rules anymore.' The message is simple, but it is also polemical.

The 'revolutionary' aspect of the plot is dealt with in a matter of fact way. Markov's politics draws no particular intrigue from either the other prisoners or the guards. It just happens to be her personal background and is assumed to be no more unique than any other convicts' reason for imprisonment, such as Grier's background as a hooker. Nevertheless, both Grier and Markov's characters are presented as outside of the mainstream; the rich girl activist who chooses to attack the system, and the black prostitute who is economically disadvantaged by capitalism and patriarchy. The films take a non-judgemental stance to the women's lifestyles, and there is a normalisation of radical politics as a legitimate lifestyle choice. In *The Big Bird Cage* the central characters, played by Grier and Sid Haig, are self-declared revolutionaries with generic left wing affiliations. The film does not detail specifics in terms of time and place; instead, the politics remains an abstract concept. For example, the country for which they fight is not theirs, they are a white man and a black woman, whereas the country appears to be South East Asian (the Philippines in reality), and their gang is made up of non-white actors. And while the primary reasons for this might be industrial, it is an American film, therefore it uses American lead actors, one can read this as a further example of the cycle's deliberate attempts at an association with international liberation struggles that were topical at the time of production.

But it is typical of the cycle that these characters are the heroes of the film, rather than the villains. Haig's character is called Django, a reference to Sergio Corbucci's film of the same name (1966). Corbucci is the director of several Spaghetti Westerns which contain left wing sympathies, and propagate anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist views, including *A Professional Gun* (1967) and *The Great Silence* (1968). *Django* is his most famous film, excerpts of which appear in *The Harder They Come* (Perry Henzell, 1972). Henzell's Jamaican film was distributed in the United States by New World Pictures – the production company and distributor of *The Big Bird Cage*, and takes a similar sympathetic stance towards its criminal

protagonist and his relationship to capitalist exploitation that the Women in Prison films do to theirs. The connections between these three films, the character names within the films and the industrial links between an independent foreign film and New World, helps to place *The Big Bird Cage* and other Women in Prison films within the sphere of increased politicised filmmaking post 1968. They are made in a climate of experimentation, specifically referencing European and international films.

The Spaghetti Western exemplifies the kind of infusion of politics into popular genre film that can be found in the Women in Prison cycle. Austin Fisher in *Radical Frontiers in the Spaghetti Western* (2011) identifies two types of political Italian westerns. The first is what he calls the RSA or 'repressive state apparatus' films, which he says are an 'attempt to expose brutal mechanisms lying behind modern day Western society' (2011: 3). The second is the 'insurgency' strand. These films are typically set in the Mexican revolution and 'are endorsements of violent peasant insurrection' (2011: 4).

The RSA strand identified by Fisher demonstrates a 'consistent determination to unmask an outwardly civilised society whose covert mechanisms are predicated on violent tyranny' (2011: 82). Films such as *Django Kill* (Giulio Questi, 1967), *The Big Gundown* (Sergio Sollima, 1967), and *The Great Silence* feature 'heroes [...] trapped in labyrinthine webs of vice; the 'law' is both a tool of oppression for those in power and a commodity on sale to the highest bidder; and those who profess to stand for justice, tolerance and civilised virtue are shown to be thoroughly, irredeemably corrupt' (ibid).

In contrast to these overarching and abstract themes the 'insurgency' strand emphasises a specific historical context and 'openly and programmatically endorse armed insurrection using Mexico as their surrogate for contemporary anti-colonial uprisings across the globe' (2011: 115). They reflect, according to Fisher, the New Left's rejection of the authoritarianism and reverential fustiness of the 'Old Left'. In place of the 'Old Left' were the 'radicalised youth [who] increasingly saw fit to reject established structures of authority and political expression in favour of militant insubordination' (2011: 119). Fisher considers this is in relation to Corbucci's *Companeros*, but this ethos can be found across other films in the cycle such as *A Bullet for the General* (Damiano Damiani, 1966), *Run, Man, Run!* (Sergio Sollima, 1968) and *Tepepa* (Guilio Petroni, 1969).

The character of Django in his original incarnation (1966) does not readily fit with those Italian westerns designated as part of the two political strands identified by Fisher. But as a

character he fights racist and corrupt villains, and his subsequent reincarnations in unofficial sequels turn him into a folk hero. There are two 'official' *Django* films, first in 1966 and followed belatedly in 1987 by *Django Strikes Again* (Nello Rossati). Any other films released with the name Django in the title were either made as non-*Django* films but then marketed under that name, or were unofficial sequels. And because of this diversity in their origins each film recasts the character in a variety of roles, including as a Mexican peasant in *Django Kill*, and as a ghost in *Django the Bastard* (Sergio Garrone, 1969).

The effect of this is that Django becomes a cypher who emerges to fight against injustice but remains removed from any singularly defined specific political context. One could argue that his is an anarchic presence in Italian cinema. His is a presence which floats between films, taking on different forms each time, continually shifting and changing. Industrially this is also anarchic. The borrowing and stealing of the Django name by different films companies is a direct violation of the notions of copyright law and intellectual property. Though Haig's character is far from the chief focus of *The Big Bird Cage*, by naming him Django a symbolic connection is drawn between these political attempts at genre film and the Women in Prison cycle.

The industrial connections between the *Django* movies, the Women in Prison cycle, and New World's position as a key force in the merging of art films, cinema, and politics, is highlighted in the use of the scenes from *Django* in Henzell's *The Harder They Come*. A scene set in the Rialto cinema see dozens of poor Jamaicans cheer as Django mows down the red hooded Klanesque villains with his machine gun. The joyous reactions of the cinema goers in the scene foreshadows those moments later in the film where Jimmy Cliff's character becomes a popular criminal outlaw, supported by the poor populace despite his violent crimes (or because of them) against the police.

The industrial context and cinematic content converge in these moments; diverse films from diverse cultures; *The Harder They Come*, the Italian western, and the Women in Prison film are politically infused genre films, connected in the United States through the distributor and in the cinemas they would play.

In their narratives and imagery Spaghetti Westerns and the Women in Prison cycle are popular and populist. There is an emphasis on playing to the crowd; the working class audiences that would predominantly make up the audience. As with anarchist politics, there is a focus on class and its importance as a force. What the Women in Prison film (and the

Italian western) appeals to is a class awareness which can come through large audiences being encouraged to cheer violence and rebellion against those who control them. This provides a historical continuity with the dynamic of early film audiences and the screen, as demonstrated by Lee Grieveson in *Policing Cinema*, where working class audiences attended cinema shows that displayed simplistic but popular narratives of rebellion against authority figures.

The very things which prove contradictory for an anarchist analysis of the Women in Prison cycle - its populism, the commercial context, its representation of women, its concepts of spectacle and pleasure - are also those things which encourage larger audiences. There is an argument that the more sober engagement with politics found in art/avant-garde cinema is itself a contradiction. The serious and reverential attempt at broaching these same subjects can work to repel the very audiences who could most benefit from the awareness raising that the films attempt. Lawrence Staig and Tony Williams in *Italian Western: The Opera of Violence* (1975) make this specific point when they argue that 'when properly used, motifs of the political western can get the message across though to a mass audience much better than any *Vent d'Est* of a Jean Luc Godard' (1975: 92). This seemingly derisory reference to Godard's political western made in 1970 with his Dziga Vertov group nevertheless makes an important distinction between a political film's mode of address; one which is serious and therefore respected, and one which is populist and mostly ignored by critics and intellectuals.

The problem of the lack of reverence afforded to the serious political topics in the Women in Prison film can be found in a comparison highlighted in Stanfield's essay on the Blaxploitation film, a cycle contemporaneous to the Women in Prison films discussed here. In his essay from *Mob Culture: Hidden Histories of the American Gangster Film* (2005), Stanfield demonstrates how any political consciousness inherent in the cycle was readily dismissed by Cedric Robinson, a Professor of Black Studies, because of the lurid characterisations and representations they traded on. He writes that Robinson did not 'find a progressive political agenda and describes the films as a "degraded cinema"' (2005: 286). Stanfield argues instead that 'although Robinson is justified in finding them wanting in respect to their contribution to the progressive ideals of black American identity he espouses, there is enough evidence to suggest that, however speculatively, Blaxploitation films *do* (original italics) express "political" concerns' (2005: 287). And, in a response to Robinson's suggestion that Blaxploitation cinema falls short of achieving the representation of the "authentic" of black experience, Stanfield poses the question; 'why should an adolescent

audience, the primary consumer of Blaxploitation, care for such an "authentic" representation?' (2005: 289). In other words, the Blaxploitation film was political, but not in the way Robinson would have liked. The Women in Prison film should be approached in the same way. It is an explicitly political cycle, with an uncompromising attitude to hierarchy and institutions which can be identified as anarchist, but they are not political in a way some would like. Instead they are disrespectful, contradictory, and irreverent. They combine broad comic vignettes (such as characters falling face down in mud), with the distasteful (rape being used as a threat in *The Big Doll House*, or the rape of a man by a gang of women in *The Big Bird Cage*), and with the semi-pornographic (topless women, softcore sex). Occasionally this is mixed with more serious depictions of violence and torture. They are, if one were to use Robinson's words, a 'degraded cinema'. But this provides the germ for their anarchic nature.

A more immediately relevant and analogous example for the Women in Prison film might be Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames* (1983). Described by Bev Zalcock in *Renegade Sisters* as being 'energetic, anarchic, and analytical' (2001: 119), it is about women joining together in moments of direct action to fight back against a semi-fictional (alternative) patriarchal society. *Born in Flames* is low budget and independent, and lacks both the studio control and the genre restrictions of the Women in Prison film. Conversely, because it was made without the minor studio backing it lacked some degree of financial security, and without the virtually guaranteed audience that an exploitation film would have at the time. Despite the science fiction style alternative society it presents, Richard Porton calls the film an 'optimistic evocation of the current trends within anarcho-feminism' (1999: 50), indicating its deliberate intent to engage with anarchist theory.

For Henry Jenkins, it is the generic trappings that surround *Terminal Island*, the preset distribution and promotion, and the reactionary nature of some of its imagery, that leads to any 'radical potential' of the film to have 'new importance' (2006: 124). He continues: 'the people who go to see *Born in Flames* probably already have a solid commitment to feminism; the people who go to see *Terminal Island* probably do not. If most of her (Rothman's) feminist politics falls on deaf ears, some of it probably gets heard, and in being heard, creates an opening for change where none existed before' (ibid). He emphasises the importance and relevance of the audience in these discussions on politics and film by observing that *Terminal Island* is available in his local Blockbuster DVD rental store, whereas Borden's film is not.

It needs stating, however, that as of when this chapter was written, that *Born in Flames* is freely available in its entirety on YouTube, unlike *Terminal Island*. Nor is Rothman's film available to buy on DVD in the UK, other than via a high priced, and used, US import. Somehow, while Borden's film struggled to find a large audience on its original release, it now has the potential to be seen by everyone with free access to the web, whereas some of the other Women in Prison films are still under studio restrictions and have not broken into the public domain through fans uploading them to free to view websites.

Born in Flames' intelligent dissection of anarchist and feminist politics, and its exploration of strategies and methods for resistance and change (including armed resistance and propaganda by the deed), make it the serious counterpoint to my claims for an anarchist reading of the Women in Prison movie. Porton suggests that anarcho-feminism and women in the anarchist movement, and the traditions of both which are explored in the treatise that is Borden's film, 'are often uneasily wedged between unsavoury polarities - they refuse to endorse wholeheartedly the often macho tradition of propaganda by the deed, but are equally alienated by a reflexive non-violence that coincides with clichéd preconceptions of feminine radicalism' (1999: 55). The discussions on the role of women in political movements and the questions that arise are made almost entirely absent in the Women in Prison films' simplicity. The films of the Women in Prison cycle are about women being radicalised (in some instances they are already radical) and reacting in emotional, violent outbursts, rather than intellectual ones. Yet their simplicity of narrative structure and character development is no more naïve or artless than the trajectories Vigo chronicles of the radicalised schoolboys in *Zero de Conduite*.

Where the insurgency Spaghetti Westerns Fisher describes use the Mexican revolution to draw parallels with various national liberation struggles happening at the time, the Women in Prison film reveals its political sympathies through its characters and settings. The specific anarchist intervention in the Women in Prison cycle is in the overarching themes of being anti-institution, in line with the themes of Jean Vigo as described by Alan Lovell in *Anarchist Cinema*. But they also converge with other political struggles; feminism, in its depictions of women as victims of patriarchal oppression who fight back; civil rights, in the black characters given space to challenge their place in the system; and war and national liberation struggles, reflected in the jungle based rebels who aid the heroines in *The Big Bird Cage*, *The Hot Box*, and *Black Mama, White Mama*.

Underscoring these consistent thematic concerns are the films' formal aspects. Cook alludes in her article to the way the crudeness of the exploitation films' production values exposes and lays bare the 'ideological structures' of the mainstream fiction film. The low budget and unpolished production values of the Women in Prison films add an anarchic form to the content and conventions of the genre. The critics' choice of what moments to analyse or interpret in a film is important here. If one accepts one possible reading or interpretation based on a set of scenes or moments from a film, what happens when another scene contains elements which contradict this analysis? This is one of the problems encountered by Cook and Jenkins in their work; the weight of the cycles' contradictions is a continual problem which needs to be reconciled. This is where the Women in Prison films defy conventional analysis and where an anarchic approach can help interpretation. An anarchic methodology can be useful for using the film as an indicator of wider political associations. Analysing the film politically, anarchically, becomes necessary.

The way the Women in Prison films crack or break free from the conventions of traditional mainstream cinema creates an anarchic resistance to those forms. The Women in Prison films struggle not only against mainstream filmmaking conventions, but also their own conventions which are established across the cycle. Also, they work against ways a critic or academic can safely or predictably read them. To make the Women in Prison cycle safe and identifiable, as Cook and Jenkins attempt by too easily giving in to contradictions in *Terminal Island*'s production context, one must ignore the moments when the films do not conform to patterns of film analysis, or to the conventions set by the cycle itself.

One sequence in *The Big Doll House* encapsulates the different ways a film can demonstrate a relationship with anarchism. The formal aspects of the scene are disruptive, the narrative and content are deliberately subversive, and the sequence demonstrates a questionable taste which is evidence of an unruliness within the text. Also, it suggests a disturbance of the cycle's own conventions. One of the film's two male characters, a delivery man named Fred, makes his way down a prison corridor. As he passes a cell a female hand shoots out in desperation and attempts to grab him without explanation, which he narrowly avoids. As he passes the next window he looks in and realises it is the prison shower room, and one of the female characters is showering. He presses his face against the frosted window to get a better view. She notices and puts on a brief show for him, washing herself seductively. The film portrays Fred's point of view literally, with a shot through the frosted

glass which has the effect of presenting the naked woman in soft focus, so soft that the defined features of her body are partially obscured.

This particular shot is narratively appropriate in that it is a point of view shot through a window, showing us what a character is seeing. But it indicates a subservient position of the film's supposed intended audience. Here, the gaze of the male viewer, both Fred's diegetic gaze and that of the audience watching, is being denied and unsettled. Prior to this scene several women are shown naked in the shower, in full perfect focus, but when the male figure is introduced to the sequence the free unencumbered voyeuristic access to nudity is withdrawn. The blurred shot of the woman deliberately washing herself for her audience (both Fred and the audience of the film) is a hiccup in what would be an otherwise uncomplicated sequence of straightforward voyeurism. Nudity is present in the film both before and after this moment, but this shot suggests a more troublesome element to the film. The audience is being addressed with the POV, and yet it is being teased and partially denied a simple pleasure. The inclusion of the soft focus POV shot in the shower shows an understanding of its own voyeuristic nature, and it uses the shot to subvert the genre's conventions and the audience's expectations. Furthermore, the scene indicates that the identification of the audience is being steered towards the female characters. Prior to Fred's appearance, the audience is placed inside the shower, 'with' the girls. The shots are in focus when the girls think they are alone, but when it is the male POV this clarity is denied. The audience is initially being given voyeuristic access to female nudity, but when they are being asked to be part of the film as an active agent, assuming the POV of one of the male characters, the access is taken away.

In the next scene the woman has left the shower and corners Fred in the store cupboard and threatens him with castration at knifepoint unless he has sex with her. He manages to flee, traumatised by the encounter. Later in the film Fred's partner Harry is also threatened with castration at gunpoint and is also shown to be intimidated by the sexually aggressive women of the prison. Both Fred and Harry, despite their bravado, are driven to distraction by the women. They are repeatedly bullied by them and are ultimately sexually impotent in the face of their aggression. These scenes in *The Big Doll House* illuminate the 'contradictions' and 'shifts in meaning' Cook describes. The film displays sexualised women, presenting them without clothes, but asks its supposed intended audience to assume the role of weakness and submission. When the film directly addresses its audience with the point of view shot it disrupts the previous pattern and shows only a partially out of focus image. There is both an

anarchic playfulness, and a disorderly and potentially dangerous violence to these scenes. They are unruly.

The representation of Harry and Fred as being full of impotent machismo and weakness in the face of aggressive women reveals a scorn for its supposed key audience. Jenkins states that the idea that exploitation films are intended purely for men, a position Cook takes in her article, is problematic and overstated, and instead points out that as commercial movies it would be necessary for films to have elements which appeal to both sexes. Eric Schaefer concurs with this view, and claims that the audience for exploitation was historically always 'heterogeneous' in that it was based on the 'salacious and suggestive' (1999: 8), in contrast to something like the stag film and later pornographic features which were typically aimed at men only. But one cannot simply state that these scenes are there so as to appeal to female audiences either. Instead, the scenes are evidence of an anarchic essence running through the films. Rather than just calling into question to what degree these films might be contained by the patriarchal production context, this disruptive presence also attacks and undermines the capitalist ethos underlying the reasons for the film being made. Here, the anarchic content of the film is displayed by these attacks on its audience (or part of it in its representation of pathetic and incapable men), and the dissection of its own conventions. Cook's argument that the feminism of Rothman's *Terminal Island* and the Women in Prison film is contained by the production context might be an accurate assessment, but in this instance *The Big Doll House* is demonstrating a refusal for the film itself to be contained. It rejects simple categorisation by critics, academics, and audiences. The scenes demonstrate the 'anarchic sensibility' Peter Marshall refers to in *Demanding the Impossible* (1993: xi). They are disruptive, violent, and with an undercurrent of liberatory politics.

Running through the cycle are almost incidental moments conferring a sense of the anarchic, or which emphasise continual battles with authority and oppression. These incidental moments happen between scenes, or appear as a superfluous element within a scene, never emphasised, but nevertheless providing a constant interruption, reminding the audience of the forms authority can take and ways of resisting it. One recurring image is that of the prison bars holding the inmates, and causing shadows to be cast across walls and bodies. The bars work in two ways. They are a physical restrictor of individualistic behaviour, holding the prisoners captive. And the straight lines of the bars and those cast by their shadows symbolically stands in for order and conformity, a continual reminder of

oppression. These elements work as a binary clash with the chaotic and inconsistent mise en scene which dominates the rest of the films.

Hands grasping or reaching through the bars is yet another recurrent image. In the shower scene above, it is preceded by an unexplained and unidentified hand grasping for Fred as he walks past. Within the context of the cycle, there is no need to provide any further explanation. The sense of desperation it helps convey is reason enough for its inclusion. In a surreal sequence from *The Big Bird Cage* inmates who have been mentally and physically broken by working in the prison are locked together in a bamboo cage. As punishment the wardens turn a powerful hose on them, and for several seconds the women scream and cower from the water, some of them reaching through the bars in an attempt to get away. The hysterical panicking ceases when the film cuts abruptly to Pam Grier machine gunning open a row of coconuts for local peasant children to enjoy in another location. The cutting of the two scenes together shifts the tone from one of victimisation (in the bamboo cage), to one of revolutionary power (shooting practice).

In an economical moment from *Caged Heat* this tone of rebellion and power in the face of the institution is encapsulated in a single shot. A longer scene set in the prison canteen begins with an establishing shot of the canteen wall. The entire shot lasts for a couple of seconds only, and shows a dirty wall with the sign reading 'No Food Throwing'. Almost instantly food hits the wall, thrown from off screen, joining at least two other platefuls already stuck beside the sign. The moment is not referred to again, but the single image helps provide the rhythm of anarchy and rebellion bubbling through the film. The shot is also reminiscent of Ronald Searle's *St Trinian's* cartoons – a single image that captures weak and ineffectual authority being affronted, topped off with a humorous punch line.

In the same film authority and power is encoded in the vocal tones of the prison governor, played by the British actor Barbara Steele. Her tones are clipped and in an upper class, British Received Pronunciation style; the voice of uptight, old fashioned authority and class superiority. The binary clash set up by the film is sonic, in the contrast between upper class Englishness and the blue collar American accents of the inmates. These vocal symbols are combined with the icons of American authority hanging on the walls of the governor's office; the Stars and Stripes banner and a portrait of Richard Nixon, still President at the time of the film's shooting, but who was forced to resign in August of the year 1974, just after the film's release. The combination of diverse symbols of authority appears scattershot. But this is part

of the anarchic sensibility of the film and cycle. All authority and hierarchy is deemed to be illegitimate and corrupt (the referencing of Nixon especially pertinent), and by conflating all signs of it the films wage a war against it on all fronts.

The framed photograph of Nixon is glimpsed in the background of a shot, barely in focus. In Roger Cardinal's essay *Pausing over Peripheral Detail* (1986) he looks to those background details and those which hover at the margins of the screen to find added detail and meaning in a film's incidental elements. He writes that;

> Any sign upon screen or printed page must rely for its emergence into meaning upon being picked by a witnessing subject: the fact that the latter is ordinarily inclined to channel his or her responses within limits fixed by culture and collective criteria of interpretation should not prevent us from recognizing the existence of a no less persuasive marshalling context which operates of the level of subjectivity, informed by the individual's desires, tastes, fetishes and fears. (1986: 119)

In Cardinal's analysis every aspect of the frame, rather than what is immediately obvious, becomes up for grabs and open to reading. Furthermore, this constitutes a form of political analysis because the viewer is undertaking a 'refusal of the obvious' (1986: 113). They are determining the elements relevant to them, and are being active as spectators. He also indicates that this process can travel both ways, in that some filmmakers could even encourage this type of reading with the aim of 'coaxing the viewer into a fresh relationship to the image' (1986: 126). In the use of Nixon's picture on the wall *Caged Heat* pulls us away from the main focus of the scene. It becomes possible to find meaning in the film's margins. It does not emphasise the elements in the background, but allows the reader to resist the obvious subjects (the characters) that dominate the frame.

Similarly in the background of *The Big Bird Cage* there is a constant presence of prisoners being forced to work. They appear in nearly every external shot wider than a close up, even during the comic scenes. The undercurrent of injustice and oppression is enacted in every shot – the serious notion of women prisoners forced into hard labour resides in the margins of even the broadest comedy, a constant reminder of the class struggles at hand.

Clearly, this type of shot is carefully arranged, needing sometimes dozens of extras to be marshalled and directed. The filmmakers are urging the viewer look to the peripheral details by which the film might be understood. However, the gaping hole in the corrugated roof of the prison in *The Big Doll House* is an example of how my own 'refusal of the obvious'; imbued with my own tastes and ideologies, demonstrates how this type of spectatorship can

produce a political interpretation out of the marginal elements of a shot. The main subject in the particular moment of the film is a prisoner hung in a tiny bamboo cage, ten feet from the floor. The other prisoners look up in horror at the brutal punishment being acted out on her, but in the corner of the screen the hole is clearly visible if one looks at the image in the way Cardinal suggests. My anarchist analysis of this particular shot reads it as evidence that the power behind the prison is flimsy, archaic, and weak. The prison is literally falling apart. The physical structure which holds the inmates is crumbling; the whole becomes an indicator of the violent escape that will happen by the end of the film.

This type of analysis is only possible if one uses a diverse range of interpretative approaches, shifting between methods, being anarchic. The inconsistencies of the visual style means one must be ready to be anarchic in the process of viewing the film to fully understand or be open to alternative or deeper political readings. It is looking for the anarchist elements despite opposition in the form of contradictory messages and signs.

In *Women in Cages* the anti-authoritarianism present across the genre extends its range of targets to include the church. Two scenes depict an iconoclastic anti-clericalism in line with much of mainstream anarchist theory. In the first scene the women are led into the prison chapel in pairs, and sit in cramped pews while the priest delivers his service. Church organ music plays on the soundtrack and the service is intermittently intercut by a shot of a gaudy crucifix hanging on the wall. A shot of the prisoners dominates the scene; a tight frame of six prisoners, two of them talking in the foreground and four in the background. The film cuts back to the priest on one occasion in a shot that mirrors the one of the prisoners opposite him; a frame packed with candles and crucifixes surrounding him instead of women either talking or sitting silently. The sound of the Priest's sermon continues on the soundtrack whilst the dialogue scene of the two most prominent prisoners plays out.

They engage in a conversation consisting of soap-operaesque dialogue about lies and secrets between friends and includes the backstory of why one of them is incarcerated. The banality of their conversation works to undermine the sombre, supposedly reverential atmosphere of the service. That the prisoners' entire conversation runs across the sequence, giving the service no room to develop into a scene on its own, highlights the utter pointlessness and futility of the church to the girl's lives. The church is mere frippery for them. They cannot even be said to have had to endure the service, they are not even bored by it; they just talk all the way through. By constructing the scene in this way, with the service

and church music running concurrently with the dialogue of the prisoners, and with the dialogue taking precedence, the film demonstrates how the church holds no power over them, or offers them little comfort.

The framing and placement of the actors here reinforces the idea of solidarity. The priest is on his own, surrounded by religious icons, symbols of his work. The women are surrounded by other women. Throughout, the Women in Prison films are dominated by mid shots of several prisoners as they enact dialogue scenes. In *Black Mama, White Mama* the framing of these scenes is replicated in those featuring the revolutionary gang. When two characters are talking in the foreground, in the back ground, either standing or sitting, are peripheral characters, engaged in the scene but not actually talking. In terms of filmmaking practice, the reasons for these shots being the dominant tendency are economic. The films in the genre are low budget and shot very quickly on tight schedules. It is cheaper and quicker to run through dialogue scenes in long master takes in mid shot, than it is to construct the film out of a range of shot sizes and edit them together. This is especially the case of films with large casts. But these scenes emphasise the idea of individuals within a collective group, a notion lost if a film repeatedly uses shots of individual characters divorced from their surroundings or comrades.

The scene in the chapel cross cuts between two essentially static entities; the priest and the congregation forced to sit through the service. The scene has a visual passivity which it overcomes by its framing, editing, and soundtrack. The shots are static, and the anarchic edge comes from the combination of elements. A similarly passive scene takes place in *Caged Heat*. Instead of a church service, the prisoners watch a performance by other inmates, a comic burlesque of male behaviour enacted by two female prisoners in drag. The crudity of their play, with jokes about erections and STDs, plays out to the disgust of the uptight and prudish female governor. During the performance the camera makes some unmotivated, barely perceptible movements. At one point it zooms closer onto the performers, but not to cover any particular detail. Later, it zooms out. Both movements are not linked to the actions of the characters or to emphasise any particular detail. Also, shots of the audience are punctuated by short camera pans, so subtle to become almost unnoticeable. Once again, these movements are not made to reveal new information to the viewer, but instead appear as unmotivated camera moves. This is visual incoherence and inconsistency. Both the zooms and the panning shots make the camera seem like a restless entity, interrupting the flow of the sequence.

Concurrent with this the accompanying soundtrack begins by relaying the laughing and catcalling of those watching, but then settles into a continuous sound of mumbling and murmuring from the audience. Again, this is at odds with the images we are presented with. The audience is not shown to be bored. They are either watching and giving their fellow prisoners respect or laughing along with the jokes, or they are prison staff appalled by the performance. But the soundtrack rubs against this by consisting of the sounds of boredom, the quiet mumbling and muttering of a disinterested audience talking amongst themselves. This soundtrack disrupts the pleasure of the scene both diegetically and non diegetically. If the events of the film were actually happening, anyone talking throughout would be spoiling the enjoyment for those interested; and for the viewers of the actual film, any enjoyment is challenged by a soundtrack which mimics that of a bored audience, and which works as a constant interruption of the play being performed.

The film is not attempting to make a comment on the boring nature of the sketches being performed. The women on stage are two of the heroines of the film, not figures of ridicule. The camera and sound recording them are never fixed. Both the actions of the zooming and panning and the muttering on the soundtrack appear motiveless, as if the film is working against itself, to undermine its own pleasures. As with the shower scene in *The Big Doll House*, there is an anarchic struggle embedded in the scenes. On one hand they use mise en scene to create films of anarchic resistance to authority, on the other they fight against their own conventions with disruptive, unmanageable elements which break through to ensure that the anarchic essence is always visible or heard.

These tiny, incidental moments are examples of what Cook refers to when she discusses the 'badness' of the exploitation film. The techniques being used by the filmmakers to capture this particular scene are symptomatic of low budget productions. The two separate sections to the scene – the shots of the performers of the play and of those watching – were most likely filmed in long, continual takes to save time, film stock, and ultimately money. There would not have been time to set up individual shots of each moment in the sequence. The camera movements are general and non-specific, because the instruction would most likely to have been to the camera operators to capture as much of the action as possible in the given time. As long as the scene was captured on film, regardless of whether the camera was moving or focused on the perfect elements, then that would prove good enough. But when analysing these moments in how they are presented to us, as interpretable images and sound, and by resisting the obvious, one can detect an inherent commentary in the sequence.

Whether this becomes a comment on the ideological structures of Hollywood, as Cook suggests, or an anarchic sensibility, as I propose, comes down to the position and motives of the person analysing the scene.

The anti-church ideology of the chapel scene in *Women in Cages*, implied in the shot selection and editing, is reinforced later in the film by one of the main prison guards being shown to hold strong Christian convictions. Director Gerardo De Leon cuts in a close up of her fingering a cross on a chain around her neck to make it clear. This association of the church with the oppressor, the prison authorities, rather than the oppressed female prisoners, is made explicit here. The anti-clerical strain links the church and the State. The connecting of the church and organised religion with authoritarian oppressors and the demonstration of its scant relevance to the lives of the oppressed are two subtle attacks which the film achieves through its mise en scene. But this strand of anti-church sentiment is underscored by a more aggressive element when the Christian guard is hung up on one of the crucifixes by the escaping prisoners, after they ambush her whilst she is praying.

This is an example of the anarchic, revolutionary violence of the Women in Prison film. The narrative trajectory across the cycle calls for fitting and ironic punishments for those who commit acts of misogyny, or trample the freedom and rights of others. The death of the prison governor in *The Big Bird Cage* typifies this simplistic poetic justice while foregrounding the anarchic form. The prison of the film is explicitly a government work camp, with the inmates forced to build a large cage in which to imprison them further. The death of a prisoner, the former sex worker, due to a brutal work schedule, sparks the final rebellion. A gun battle ensues and the film resorts to the shorthand for chaos and anarchy, extras running this way and that in a seemingly haphazard manner. The bird cage of the title is set on fire by torch throwing prisoners, turning the cage into a huge, rising inferno, with flames shooting spectacularly into the sky. As the women look on at the destruction they have caused and cheer, one of the actresses slips accidentally. That the moment is left in the film reinforces the air of spontaneity of the sequence. It is another disruption to any sense of order. Soldiers appear in the background to massacre the prisoners and the prison governor moves into shot to witness what has happened to his cage. He looks on distraught as the structure burns and begins to crumble. He is prevented from fleeing by a half dead prisoner grabbing his leg and Hill uses the film stock as material to create the effect of the cage collapsing on top of him.

First, there is a 'fake' zoom, not generated by the lens, but recreated in the development lab. The frame is enlarged quickly so that it appears as if the cage is getting closer to the camera/governor/audience. There follows a cut to a static freeze frame of the governor screaming, at which point the frame burns through and melts. The actual film stock burns from the inside in a configuration of orange and black fire and smoke. The visibility of the constructed nature of film, and the manipulation of the stock itself, is a familiar self-reflexive visual style present in much of the post French New Wave influenced American independent cinema of the time. *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) for example, features abundant lens flare throughout. The graveyard trip sequence near the end of Hopper's film adds in superimposed shots, visible fish eye lenses and rain on the lens to mimic the effect of a bad LSD trip. In *Two Lane Blacktop* (Monte Hellman, 1971), like *Easy Rider* another film associated with the American Counter Culture, the film ends with the frame burning out into black, then giving way to the rolling end credits.

But *The Big Bird Cage* goes one step further. Instead of using lens flare or other conspicuous uses of the camera as psychedelic effect, the melting stock scorches the illusion of the fictional narrative because there is no other precedent set in the film's running time for this type of conspicuous reflexivity. For a fleeting moment the barrier between the screen and the audience is obliterated, if only until the next shot begins. The shot, actually one of a burning frame overlaid across one of raging fire, hints at a literal embodiment of the genre's refusal to be contained, as if not even celluloid itself is enough to imprison the film's ideas. And because it happens during the final sequence, rather than right at the close of the film as in *Two Lane Blacktop*, it works as a significant interruption of the narrative instead of a closing statement. It becomes another anarchic burst of energy, emerging from the hidden margins.

A similar moment occurs in the finale of *Caged Heat*. The escaping four prisoners shoot their way to a getaway car, and just as the final escapee reaches to close the passenger door behind her, the film freezes and zooms in to enlarge the frame. Gunfire continues to crackle on the soundtrack and is joined by the opening bars of the music that will play through the end credits. Tommi Rompotti suggests that the freeze frame in cinema is typically utilised 'as an attractive piece of narrative discourse…to guide the spectator to some sort of definite closure' (2011: 33). This is most often used to halt the film before the death of major characters (as in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, or *Thelma and Louise*), which has the effect of 'leaving the end open' (2011: 34) by sparing us the moment of their demise. By

doing so the freeze frame also becomes 'a narrative saviour instead of a dead end street, the end becomes contesting [sic] the repressing standards of continuity typical of capital cinema' (2011: 41). It presents a moment of reflexivity, by revealing the 'cinematic apparatus' needed for the construction of the world of the film (2011: 34). The freeze frame in *Caged Heat* marks the moment of escape, the precise juncture where the prisoners have finally broken free from their captors. Whereas it prevents us from witnessing the deaths of outlaw heroes like the Sundance Kid or Louise, here it marks the death of the characters' previous lives as prisoners. What they were once defined as – convicts and captives – is no longer relevant. And, in the use of such reflexive techniques, it becomes the point where the film breaks free of its narrative and ensuing illusions of fiction. Because the film continues and the freeze frame is not the final image, it works as yet another interruption of the diegesis, another moment of anarchic disorder typical of the cycle.

The anarchism of the Women in Prison film comes in the repetition of the details of the cycle. Each individual film has specific variations – a different setting, a slight alteration of the ending, a different cast – all of which can be isolated and understood differently. But when put together the details add up to an overall attitude of anarchy which pervades the entire cycle. The meaning is generated in both the repetition of the details, and in the subtle differences. There is no doubt that the cycle has an emphasis on creating spectacle which contradicts some aspects of mainstream political anarchism. The films fetishise and make a spectacle of women and their bodies, and also in their oppression. But above all I believe they make a spectacle of rebellion; and of the joy of making fun of a fragile authority and ultimately destroying it.

By virtue of their content, and the way the formal aspects of the films expose the ideologies and structures of Hollywood movies, Cook and Jenkins establish that the Women in Prison film has an inherent value to a discussion of feminist cinema, even if they are not actually feminist films. In my analysis I have established that there are contradictions and disruptions in the films that go beyond those which they already debated; including disturbances in the visual form that remove the films from their own conventions, which in turn support the narratives of liberation they tell. It is in this step that they display a relationship to anarchism. That they exist at the margins of cinema, struggling at the edges of the mainstream; mimicking dominant modes of film practice, while using excluded forms to do so (semi pornographic imagery, violence, low production values, irreverent or disrespectful tone), proves analogous to the role of anarchism in politics. The anarchist sits at

the edges of mainstream politics; using illegitimate or illegal tactics of direct action or protest to win support, make its point, or to comment on the mainstream. The films do not meet the requirements that Jun desires for his 'cinema of liberation', they are not 'financed, produced, distributed, and displayed by and for their intended audiences' (2010: 157). They are not made by anarchists for anarchists. They do however, spark from their disruptive, contradictory and anarchic form and content, the possibility for anarchist criticism. They are active films, not passive. They display a committed voice that attacks mainstream conservative values. And because they are active films, continually shifting boundaries of form, narrative, and taste, the critic must be active also. She must be willing to go with the process, allowing for dead ends and possibilities that her conclusions or assertions might not be correct in the end. Searching for a context that can contain the films – production context, capitalism, patriarchy – continually closes down analysis and means the analytical process is redundant. Film analysis is superfluous if the production context, or the social or economic conditions of its existence, is too readily accepted as an explanation for the film. Anarchist film analysis can free us from this by assuming the context and conditions of any type of commercial cinema is always capitalist; whether it be a Hollywood film or an independent film. The anarchist question must then be what does the film tell us about this system and these conditions? How does the film then work within the social system from which it emerges?

Cook and Jenkins claim that *Terminal Island* and the Women in Prison cycle retain power by working against the system from within. But this goes beyond feminism. The power is not just in the binary opposition of men versus women that it sets up, but in the disorder it causes throughout. The Women in Prison film bristles violently against the mainstream orthodoxies of content, form, and structure. In doing do so it demonstrates an anarchic resistance to these norms, even while conforming to the conventions of exploitation cinema.

CHAPTER FOUR: Anarchism and the Cinema Space[3]

Emeterio Diez's essay on the anarchist cinema (2009) that was produced during the Spanish Civil War reveals it was a consistent attempt to integrate all stages of film production; from funding and shooting through to exhibition. The anarchist production of over a hundred films during the period (2009: 34), most of them documentaries or news reels, reflected the belief that cinema was a valuable entity in which to educate the public on matters of politics. The intention was to find 'a novel way of producing, using, and thinking about films' (2009: 35), and in doing so challenge what was perceived as the malign sway of Hollywood product on the general public. This period during the Civil War is the only concentrated, large scale, and quantifiable example of an anarchist cinema. But the aims of such a cinema, one that is radical and politicised and which provides a genuine alternative to Hollywood by attempting to resist its hegemony, have recurred at the fringes of cinematic culture ever since. There is a theoretical continuity that runs from the past to the present in the world of radical and underground film. This continuity originates in the Spanish Civil War, and re-emerges through the events and developments around the time of the upheaval in France in 1968, and into the current anarchist tendencies in film and video. It is a discontinuous and disconnected line, emerging in different cultural contexts, but one which is threaded with anarchist theory and practice.

Despite this undercurrent running alongside mainstream film culture, cinema as a monolithic institution is fundamentally unthreatened by anarchist films. Mainstream cinema can easily subsume the spectacle of rebellion displayed in films such as *Zero de Conduite*, the *St Trinian's* franchise, and the Women in Prison cycle, because ultimately they are made in a commercial context. Barry Keith Grant argues that the cult film, of which the Women in Prison cycle is arguably a part, presents a series of transgressions which are made 'safe', either through their production contexts or narratives which, by the end, depict the maintaining of a traditional social order. To move forward and consider how these films can relate to an entity such as an anarchist cinema, one way to overcome the problem is to re-frame a film's context. Because of this, a shift of focus in my analysis is necessary. This

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[3] Pages 161-164 in this chapter discuss the Bristol Radical Film Festival. This work comes from a previously published work written by the author, James Newton. Full citation is Newton, James (2014) "Progressive Spaces and Battlelines: The Bristol Radical Film Festival (3-9 March 2014)", in *Necsus European Journal of Media Studies*, Amsterdam University Press, Autumn 2014.

chapter moves the attention away from the text, and towards the contexts surrounding a film to more fully elucidate the connections between anarchism and cinema.

Production contexts also provide difficulties for modern anarchist film practice. It is in the recent developments of activist filmmaking, an explicitly political entity intended to draw attention to predominantly left wing causes such as union activity, strikes, public protest, and direct action, where the most noticeable inflection of anarchist inspired filmmaking occurs. But because this work is produced and consumed through non-mainstream channels – mostly shot on consumer or pro-sumer technology by amateurs, and distributed via mail order DVD or on websites - the cinematic status quo is little troubled by their presence. In particular, there is very little impact that these films have on the notion of 'cinema' as an institution of filmmaking and exhibition because they deviate too far from an understanding of what cinema is by being produced and exhibited outside of traditional contexts. If these works are ever publicly exhibited they are typically screened in places such as pubs or community halls. This challenges the traditional notion of the cinema space, but as of yet the films do not play to very big audiences or achieve high viewing figures.

An anarchist cinema must find a way of overcoming these obstacles if it is to prove a legitimate and relevant alternative to Hollywood and other mainstream hegemonic film industries. If there is to be a threat to the mainstream then it needs to challenge the hierarchical industry model, whilst also providing entertainment and information to a public in a way that can be financially self-sustaining. This chapter looks at some examples of when this aim has been successfully realised. These moments have, so far, been ephemeral and short lived. Some have proved more successful than others. My intention is to assess how and where these moments have occurred, and how they challenge mainstream cinemas as alternative industrial models and as entertainments. The secondary aim of this chapter is to outline a vision of what an anarchist cinema could be; one which takes the successes of the radical film moments of the past, but which can overcome the problems, inconsistencies, and contradictions that have caused these moments to be isolated and transient. At its heart, this is about the delineation of a cinema which includes films reflecting forms of anarchist theory, but also one which fully considers the cultural aspects of 'cinema' – in particular its social and spatial considerations. Allen Siegel refers to cinema as a 'profitable site of cultural activity' (2003: 144), which is formed 'around a multiplicity of public and private sites of spectatorship' (2003: 145). In *Projected Cities* (2002), where he examines the relationship between film and urban spaces, Stephen Barber's description of cinema in the digital age

borders on the apocalyptic. He writes that 'in their growing dereliction, Europe's cinema spaces comprise zones at odds with the city, edged with corporeal matter: spaces of visual elation and dejection, of memory and oblivion, of sensory nuance and violence' (2002: 168). He positions cinema as a real physical space that hosts a virtual, imaginary space/place on the screen. Like Siegel, he is describing cinema as an entity which is divisive, and built on profit seeking, an entity which establishes discrete zones that govern and control how people use it.

This chapter is about ways in which anarchist and (other) radical groups have used film in ways that have challenged, critiqued, and disturbed these visions of the mainstream cinema space.

Continuities in Radical Cinema.

The fluid and rebounding nature of anarchist theory is reflected in how the tendencies of the cinema of the Spanish Civil War re-emerged in the post 1968 era in France. The reforming of cinema as a practical spatial concept, questions about its 'use' and place in the community, was aligned with an explicitly theoretical underpinning. While the ideas around film generated by the events of May 68 were not all anarchist, they are imbued with a definite anarchic instinct, echoing the ethos of the wider insurrection more generally. Peter Marshall describes the famous slogans and graffiti spray painted on walls around Paris – such as 'neither gods nor masters' – indicated 'a profoundly anarchist sensibility at work' (1993: 547). In *Demanding the Impossible*, Marshall argues that in the uprising of 1968,

> many of the ideas and tactics at the time were profoundly anarchist in character, although those professing them would probably not have called themselves anarchists. The events marked a great resurgence of anarchist theory but they did not lead to an organised social movement. It was as if a sudden libertarian tidal wave had come from nowhere and threatened to wash away the State, only to subside as quickly as it had come. (ibid).

It was a revolutionary epoch, albeit a brief one, that created a feeling of it being a genuine threat to the State. Marshall's history of anarchism reveals how he is not alone in ascribing an anarchic sensibility to the events, and that other authors and historians were keen to notice the connections between what was happening in the streets and the anarchist theories from the past.

> The French anarchist historian Jean Maitron described the events which shook France for six weeks in the spring of 1968 as a definite form of anarchism. Daniel Guerin, whose book on anarchism became a best-seller at the time, wrote in postscript afterwards that the revolution was 'profoundly libertarian in spirit' and that 'all

authority was repudiated or denied'. He was particularly impressed by the call for self-management which echoed in university and factory. In Britain Tom Nairn in his analysis of events declared boldly soon afterwards: "The anarchism of 1871 looked backwards to a pre-capitalist past, doomed to defeat; the anarchism of 1968 looks forward to the future society almost within our grasp, certain of success". (1993: 546, 547).

Some of the main concepts put into practice by the anarchists in Spain were transposed into the context of France during and immediately after the uprising. The most significant of these was that of film as a simple pedagogical tool, but also the promotion of cinema as a space that needs to be made more accessible within a community – a place in which to be entertained, a place in which to socialise, and a place that can be utilised as a method to educate the public.

The combination of film and education after 1968 progressed beyond those of the Spanish anarchists in that they were intended to break down the divisions of producer and consumer. In Spain the anarcho-syndicalism which drove many of the reforms meant that the distinction between those at work and those at leisure was retained. In trying to educate and inform the cinemagoer through the use of films, the cinema of the Civil War did not call for the spectator to view them differently than they would prior to anarchist involvement. The intentions of the National Production Company, set up to 'boost anarchist output' (2009: 60) of films that were either education, entertainment, or a combination of both, reflect how the spectator's passivity was important to the dissemination of anarchist ideas. The audience was not being asked to be active or to revise their understanding of embedded ideology within films, but to instead soak up an alternative political ideology. The intention was to produce and promote anarchist propaganda. By contrast, one of the elements of politicisation in the post 68 period was to examine spectatorship, and how film viewing could be a political act in itself.

Sylvia Harvey, in *May 68 and Film Culture* (1978), describes why this shift was necessary;

> the educational system, in training technicians and not spectators, could only therefore reinforce the existing relations of production and consumption in the cinema. Only through the extension of film education to the majority of the spectators could a new kind of film culture be developed. (1978: 24)

Despite the noble anarchist intentions during the Civil War the distinction between technicians and viewers was mostly maintained. The 'existing relations of production and consumption' were not challenged. So, one of the drives of May 68 was a development

beyond earlier radical left wing interventions into cinema. In Spain the focus was on reforming cinema on an industrial level. In France this was extended to include the spectator and audiences as integral to those reforms.

This examination of the traditional relationships between producer and consumer then led to the questioning of the value of cinema as a space of exhibition. Films began to be screened in workplaces, community spaces, and places of education, in a demonstration of 'an aspect of the desire to produce a new kind of context for the reception of a particular film, and thereby also a new sort of relationship between audience and spectacle' (1978: 25). The use of alternative exhibition sites did three things; it renewed the idea of cinema as having a community focus by bringing film into those spaces where people spent most of their time; it reinforced the notion of film as being inherently pedagogical; and, by breaking down what constituted a traditional screening space, it changed the dynamic of the relationship between viewer and screen.

The re-thinking of the political implications surrounding film was not confined to Europe. The same practices of radical and political cinema in the European traditions was also present in the underground film scene in America. Amos Vogel, whose *Film as a Subversive Art* (1974) thoroughly assesses the ways in which cinema can subvert mainstream codes, conventions, and ideological meaning, created a private members film society called Cinema 16 in 1947 in New York. Cinema 16 was a series of weekly film screenings, made up of rare, underground, or avant-garde and experimental work curated by Vogel himself. In the years that it was active, between 1947 until 1963, Vogel introduced the work of filmmakers 'vital to the postwar avant-garde movement' (Haberski JR, 2007: 95), including Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, and Hans Richter. On one notable occasion, related by Raymond Haberski JR in *Freedom to Offend: How New York Remade Movie Culture* (2007), Vogel screened Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* alongside a print of Georges Franju's *Blood of the Beasts*, one of the films Alan Lovell analyses in *Anarchist Cinema* (1962).

Haberski JR writes that 'existing outside the bounds of mainstream movie culture allowed Cinema 16 to operate in a kind of cinematic vacuum', and 'thus avoided the web of control' (2007: 93) that would have been activated by censors had these filmmakers and their controversial content been screened in any other context. It implies a freedom and unrestrained characteristic of Cinema 16 that borders on the anarchic. Also, Vogel's intent with his curating policy was to create a 'confrontational cinema' (2007: 94), inspiring the

audience to be active rather than passive, and triggering this active spectatorship through programming films which 'balanced provocation and education' (ibid). Scott MacDonald, in *Cinema 16: Towards a History of the Film Society* (1997), likens Vogel's approach to curating his bill as akin to Eisenstein's dialectical editing, his method of 'arranging successive shots so that their graphic and conceptual "collisions" would instigate viewer engagement' (1997: 17). MacDonald continues;

> similarly, at Cinema 16 presentations, one form of film "collided" with another in such a way as to create maximum thought – a perhaps action – on the part of the audience, not simply about individual discreet films, but about film itself and about the social and political implications of its conventional (or unconventional) uses. (1997: 18)

Films would be chosen for their controversy and subversive nature, and would also, according to Haberski JR's account of the period, include films which were 'truly terrible' (2007: 94). These agitational intentions indicate an anarchic tendency to rile up viewers and audiences. The society represents one of the crossovers between film criticism and academic study and the creation of an alternative cinema (in relation to exhibition and distribution). The period of Cinema 16 works as a living embodiment of Vogel's *Film as a Subversive Art*, with the films getting live screenings in front of sizable audiences. Also, Cinema 16 helped to develop courses in film at NYU in 1950 and at New York's New School, reinforcing the educational aspect which stood beside its intentions to provoke.

The attempt by Amos Vogel was to 'create a new cinematic aesthetic' (Haberski JR, 2007: 93) based on challenging the domination of the Hollywood industrial system of controlling production, exhibition, and distribution. He had 'crafted an agenda that pointedly expressed his radical politics' (2007: 111), imbued with the kind of ideologies present in the cinema of the Spanish Civil War and May 68, albeit minus the social and political upheaval raging in the backgrounds to these two eras.

Yet despite a membership of up to seven thousand at its most popular peak, and which enabled it to be financially successful enough to continue on a weekly basis for 15 years, Haberski JR claims that Cinema 16 'really did operate as confrontational cinema' (2007: 104). Vogel's commitment to screening difficult films ensured that these audiences continued to be challenged as spectators, and continued to react by booing, complaining, or walking out – such as the 'four to five hundred' (ibid) who walked out during a showing of *Image in the Snow* (1952) by William Maas.

The fact that Cinema 16 existed as a film society, which involved private membership and therefore an inherent interest on behalf of the patrons in this type of alternative film practice, prompts a question mark over the democratic nature of the event. On the one hand, Vogel could only show the films he did because the private membership status of his audience helped keep censors at bay, and their membership fees ensured that there was a financial support for Cinema 16's continued existence. But it also ensured that the events were not open to public audiences unless they paid in advance and were aware of the nature of the types of films being screened. It implies that the audience were already familiar with the concept of experimental art, and were aware of non-mainstream and avant-garde cinema, even if when confronted with it in an auditorium it proved rather too much for some of them and prompted them to walk out.

Thanks to surveys and questionnaires undertaken by Vogel himself it is possible to understand the demographics of the society's membership. They were mostly young, with 55% being under thirty, and 4% of those attending under the age of twenty. 17% of the members worked in the arts, and 41% were 'professionals or professionally employed' (1997: 22). Also, notable figures such as Marlon Brando, Susan Sontag, Norman Mailer, and Lotte Lenya are on record as having attended, while Vogel claims in an interview with MacDonald that all the Beat poets had been present at screenings at one time or another (1997: 35). The presence of movie stars and fashionable artists among the clientele implies that there was something select about the image of Cinema 16; that it was fashionable among educated, intellectual post war New Yorkers.

While it would be harsh to describe Vogel as operating a dictatorship in regard to his monopoly over the film selection – he had a commitment to the confrontational which is admirably anarchic – the lack of a collective voice in arranging the screenings is a divergence from the anti-hierarchical intentions from much of the other 'alternative cinemas' discussed in this chapter. Filmmakers, for example, were invited to speak at Cinema 16 evenings, but had no involvement in what was selected for exhibition. The lack of their involvement in the arrangements of Cinema 16 maintained a continued separation between the sectors of the industry, with little crossover between those producing the work, and those in control over where it was exhibited.

The later development of the Filmmakers Co-op bridged some of these gaps between the sectors. In 'Film Co-ops: Old Soldiers from the Sixties Still Standing in Battle against

Hollywood Commercialism' (2002), Jack Stevenson details how the Co-op was set up in 1962 in order to protect independent films from the domination of Hollywood. The aim was to do this through the protection of a filmmaker's artistic rights, by encouraging the making of films which challenged conventional narratives, and by attempting to ensure that those films would get some form of theatrical distribution and exhibition. While not anarchist by name, the filmmakers within the Co-op were operating at the margins of Hollywood and hegemonic film culture, and were infused with ideas that were close to those of the anarchist and radical film circles. He writes that;

> the Co-op functioned as a genuine liberation movement. Their actions on occasion took the form of pitched street battles, their members risked jail and their rhetoric was impassioned. They were not rebelling against the kind of entrenched social and political orders that people rebelled against in Europe, but rather were striking out at the omnipresent sense of conformity and complacency that was uniquely American. They were taking aim at the false values fabricated by the corporate mass media which dominated popular culture and which suppressed individual expression through commercial and legal mechanisms. That mass media also, of course, included the film industry. (2002: 182)

While there is a cultural specificity at work here in that the context is believed to be 'uniquely American', one can see how the Co-op formed part of a wider oppositional culture which incorporated a questioning of many established values across politics, media, and art. These ideals drove the American counter culture as much as they did the rebels in the streets of Paris in '68. Also, the attempt at unsettling values of 'conformity' and 'complacency' is a manifestly anarchic one, and continues this spirit of agitation. It revises the aims of Cinema 16 to aggravate and shake up the film industry rather than the audiences.

Within this 'genuine liberation movement' one can see a connection to anarchist film practice and a burgeoning attempt at what Nathan Jun would consider an anarchist cinema. Jun attempts an outline of a 'cinema of liberation', an anarchic takeover of production and exhibition resulting in a lack of hierarchy and which would be minus the element of financial competition which drives the mainstream film industry. Stevenson points out that;

> There was no official ideological slant to the Co-operative. While in practice it represented the works of the 'underground' movement, in theory any type of film could be given life at the Co-op. There were no 'gatekeepers' – nobody passed personal judgement on a film. The stance was adamantly non-selective. The Co-op also espoused non-promotion: no specific film was ever promoted over another, and they were listed in the catalogue in alphabetical order. Only the organisation of the Co-op could be promoted. No competition, no promotion and no value place on profit: Co-ops proudly presented themselves as the antithesis of the commercial film industry. (ibid).

There is a distinctly non-hierarchical structure at work in the mechanisms of the Co-op Stevenson describes. It existed with a lack of leaders and minus dominating voices which should be a hallmark of any anarchist organisation.

These politicised theories of understanding cinema helped create an alternative, political film culture via the education of practitioners and audiences, and facilitated new relationships between films and viewers. The film culture that emerged in post 1968 France both challenged and developed some of the principles of Spanish Civil War anarchist cinema. Recent developments in digital filmmaking have led to yet another renewal and re-investigation of these concepts because the technology has helped blur distinctions between producers and consumers. Cameras and editing software is now so affordable that films can be produced at home with no studio involvement and then distributed via the World Wide Web. In terms of exhibition, many of the same intentions and theories behind the actions in Spain in the 1930s and France in the 1960s and 1970s are at the forefront of organisations such as the Bristol Radical Film Festival, The Chicago Anarchist film festival, and in community cinemas and film societies such as Haringey Independent Cinema in London; especially the belief that film should have a social and community purpose. But also, in these organisations it is not just the screening of films which is important, but the spectatorship of films which educate, and the subsequent discussions and debates that emerge between viewers which facilitates the forming of revised, renewed, and refreshed 'relationships between audience and spectacle'. At these events filmmakers will frequently be in attendance, and may even be involved in organising the screenings; leading to further complications in the traditional relationships which exist between view, producer, and the screen. This merging of producer and consumer has led to a rise in explicitly political filmmaking, distribution, and exhibition.

Anarchist Film Practice.

To find the major trends in anarchist filmmaking practice in the world today one must turn to the numerous video activist groups which have proliferated since these advances in digital technology. Groups such as Reel News and SchMOVIES in the UK have continued the legacy of those anarchists working in cinema during the Spanish Civil War and have emerged out of the politicised invigoration of film and film studies post '68 to self-consciously investigate the relationships between film, cinema, and audience. These continuations exist in the way filmmaking and the political use of film has filtered down to the supposed 'amateur'.

Many of the groups are organised by media amateurs, in that they are not paid by mainstream media organisations, and are engaged in the producing and distributing of political video. In the Spanish Civil War attempts at producing fictional films during the takeover of cinema by the anarchists were undermined by the problem that many were of very low quality (2009: 82). Lessons appear to have been learned from this period in that most of what is produced is non-fiction and documentary, where acting ability and slick production values are less important, rather than substandard attempts at fiction.

By studying the organisation and intentions of video activism in the UK we can better understand the contemporary engagement of anarchism in film. These groups are concerned with politics and film/video, and with using the medium as both a pedagogical tool and as a form of action in itself; as an attacking weapon which exposes corporate and government bad practice or with which to record and document protest and other forms of direct action. Also, one can see the importance that technological advancement brings in that the intentions of May 1968 are now more readily enabled. It is easier to copy, distribute, and exhibit than it was in the pre-digital (and pre-video) era of the 1960s and 1970s. With the use of the internet and web is it logistically possible to reach larger audience numbers without the need to transport a batch of film reels and a projector to a factory or university.

However, in *Reel News in the Digital Age*, Steve Presence reveals that while this is an era of technological opportunity for video activists, it also presents a problem for the idea of cinema as a shared cultural and community space. The benefits of the ability to produce work more readily than before are obvious in that it circumvents the issues of cost and helps to challenge the economic model of traditional film production. Presence refers to this as 'peer-production' (Presence, 2015 a: Forthcoming), where distribution and production is shared communally by using these digital tools.

If the audiences for this type of filmmaking are as dispersed and decentralised as the production process, the concept of cinema as a space – and therefore its benefits to the community - is challenged. The notion of what constitutes cinema has been reconfigured in the anarchic practice of radical filmmaking in the 21st century. For example, Richard Modiano's essay from the *On Anarchist Cinema* anthology, *Cop Watch L.A.* (2009), demonstrates how one political use of video is the act of turning the cameras on the behaviour of the L.A. police department so that any crime, corruption, or community harassment can be recorded. That the anarchist group documented in Modiano's article, Cop Watch, are video

activists is undeniable. They are inherently unruly because they exist to expose and antagonise the police force and the law. They are shot with few formal constraints, and often under stressful conditions as police harassment or arrests take place. They have a genuine political target. How though, should we classify the video shot by a member of the public of the beating of Rodney King by police officers in LA in 1992, or those taken by bystanders witnessing the events leading to the death of Ian Tomlinson in 2010, who died after being struck by a police officer at a London anti-capitalist demonstration? There is little political intent in the creation of these videos, captured by people who happened to be in the right place at the time, but there is a clear political commitment in the releasing of the recordings because the exhibition and distribution of them has been used to hold police forces to account for misconduct. These videos are not shot by anarchists, but the images they captured have an unruly aspect. In both instances it has resulted in trials for the police officers involved which exposed institutional bad practice in their respective forces. Richard Porton can consider an account of *Cop Watch L.A.* as part of an edited collection on anarchist cinema because the organisation self-consciously produces work with its theories in mind.

But to describe *Cop Watch L.A.*'s filmmaking as a form of cinema demands a realignment of what is meant by the term as regards its position in spatial theory, and by what it constitutes as an art form. The word appears to be being used as a catch all description of any aspect of film practice, rather than as a place or form of exhibition. In the digital age sharing platforms such as YouTube should form part of a discussion of cinema, but the question for me needs to be how anarchists are using the technology and to what degree this challenges the accepted definition of cinema as a space.

Certainly, the process of distribution and exhibition is as vital to the video activist as the production process, because it contributes to their political intentions. But it is also vital because there are few organisations that will do it for them - they have to do it themselves or their films may never be shown. In *The Contemporary Landscape of Video Activism in Britain*, Presence writes of SchMOVIES, and another group called Conscious Cinema, that they have 'an emphasis on organising public screenings as a means of stimulating political engagement' and a commitment to 'videos shown in community settings' (Presence, 2015 b: forthcoming), respectively. Space, and how it is used, is therefore integral to an understanding of how the activist groups organise and operate.

Another group, Reel News, are the most prolific video activist organisation in the UK. They release an anthology DVD of activist films, available to paying subscribers before being published on their website and YouTube channel, every month. Yet there is still a commitment to screenings in public and social settings, with monthly events at a pub in Stoke Newington, London. The final screening at their previous regular venue in Brixton was a guerrilla premiere of *Massacre in Vitoria* (2014). The film was projected onto a giant white sheet covering the building development across the road, which was due to be turned into luxury flats (Squat Net, 2014). This part screening/part demonstration against the gentrification of the area reveals an anarchic strain in Reel News that underscores the anarchism present in their films and politics, even if they themselves are 'staunchly anti-sectarian' (Presence 2015 a: forthcoming) and would probably reject the label.

The films released on each DVD are either produced by Reel News themselves, or submitted from external activist organisations or individuals. The films range from straightforward video recordings of moments of direct action to more complex documentaries, but are always highly partisan. Often the monthly anthologies are curated thematically. For example, the September 2008 edition was devoted to films based around climate change. The DVD included *Tipping Point*, an animation produced by Leo Murray of the anti-airport expansion group Plane Stupid, and two films produced by Reel News themselves set in climate camps in the UK and in Paraguay, which documented peaceful demonstrations and direct attempts by protestors to get inside and disrupt power stations.

There is an emphasis on being responsive to events – 'News from the Front Line' is the strapline on the website - with films often produced and released very quickly after the events around which they are based. In the September 2011 release three films included on the disk were made in response to the London riots of August that year, said to have been incited by the shooting of Tottenham resident Mark Duggan. *Rebellion in Tottenham* is a twenty seven minute documentary focusing on the stories of those who live in the area where the disorder originated. The film features a heavy anti-police bias, and the blurb for the film on the back cover claims that 'the police murdered an innocent man', nearly two years before the inquest into the death of Mark Duggan declared his shooting legal. *Emoray Douglas on Tottenham* is an interview with the artist of the Black Panther party on the events in Tottenham and the ensuing riots, whereas *After the Shooting* is a more conventional recording of the vigil that followed the shooting and first night of disorder.

All three films were produced and released within six weeks of the August riots, and so their shared aesthetic of handheld cameras, inconsistent sound recording, and other unpolished qualities can be said to be the result as much from the speed in which they have been assembled as from any artistic decisions. *Massacre in Vitoria* however, represents an artistic development in Reel News in terms of subject and production standards. It deals with the on-going remembrance of an event that took place in Spain in 1976, a massacre that occurred as a result of a clash between striking workers and police. The international focus and quality of imagery and production reflect a shift in activist filmmaking towards more accomplished work with potential appeal to those beyond the already converted.

In *The Contemporary Landscape of Video Activism in Britain* Presence charts the organisational models for some of the various independent media and video activist groups. His analysis is a Marxist one. He claims that Marxism is 'the most useful theoretical framework for thinking about the contradictions involved in what is, broadly speaking, anti-capitalist filmmaking in a capitalist context' (Presence, 2015 b: Forthcoming). However, he also acknowledges that two of these groups, Undercurrents and the Brighton based SchMOVIES, nor 'any other radical video-activist organisation on the left today' (Presence, 2015 b: Forthcoming), are actually making 'Marxist' films. Indeed, he goes on to state that 'anarchism is a more suitable ideological label for SchMOVIES' (Presence, 2015 b: Forthcoming). Presence's justification for approaching his analysis through a Marxist perspective is that his essay is 'a work of historical materialism' and he looks at the two organisations above by 'analysing their historical development in light of changing economic and super-structural (technological, social, political) contexts' (Presence, 2015 b: Forthcoming). But Presence is aware of how SchMOVIES and Undercurrents lack investigations of class in their videos, and that by undertaking a Marxist analysis, by exploring the 'historical and material conditions in which they developed' (Presence, 2015 b: Forthcoming), he exposes the limitations of such a framework. This opens the door to where an anarchist analysis might be a more appropriate way of understanding the politics of these specific organisations. Anarchism becomes a way of understanding SchMOVIES, Undercurrents, and Reel News because it is about agitation and action, in common with the work produced by these organisations, over the underlying theory. Anarchism as a political ideology can help to interpret and understand film when the limits of a Marxist analysis are reached.

As a further example one can look to Conscious Cinema, an organisation which is 'a video-activist newsreel for the direct-action community on subjects ranging from anti-roads protests to Reclaim the Streets actions, struggles against privatisation, and so on' (Presence, 2015 b: Forthcoming). Anarchism can be used as an umbrella term for the differing strands of radical left politics and action, in much the same way to how I used the term in relation to the stock characters present in the Women in Prison film (see previous chapter); anarchism is a way of bringing together the various class, gender, and race based struggles in the characters across the films. To consider video activism under anarchism helps us to place the concerns around media bias of Reel News, the anti-roads and environmentalism of Undercurrents, and Conscious Cinema's concerns over the Criminal Justice Bill within the same traditions of anti-state social justice.

Presence has a lack of interest in 'claiming either Undercurrents or SchMOVIES for any particular 'ism'' (Presence, 2015 b: Forthcoming), and this intention is understandable because he is focusing on providing a recognisable theoretical context to the background of video activism. However, it is important to my research to consider them as part of how anarchism is a relevant and more appropriate way in which to understand certain tendencies present in radical politics and cinema.

The decentralisation of film production in the digital age raises another concern from activist producers which leads us back to the question of cinema and space. The problem is that of making oneself heard in an era where there is almost complete saturation of video content. While the ability to produce and distribute activist and grassroots video has become easier and more cost effective, there is also a problem that much of the work produced can get swamped by the huge range of material available, where there are 'so many voices competing for attention that it has become difficult both for filmmakers to distinguish themselves and for audiences to locate their work' (Presence, 2015 a: Forthcoming). So the importance of cinema remains paramount. While it can be circumvented, the cinema's monolithic power remains fundamentally unthreatened by the video activist groups. Primarily, this is because they are rarely using film to critique cinema, but instead the capitalist economic structure of society which produces it. And also, because the work so easily sits within its own niche, consumed by those who seek it out and who already share its values, there is little of its message that gets spread to different types of audiences.

To counter the problem of getting lost among the competition the organisation of radical and anarchist festivals needs to take place. There is, after all, unlikely to ever be a commercial festival or cinema distribution for radical left video, so the possibilities for creating a sense of cinema must come from the anarchic grassroots themselves.

Anarchist film festivals.

Pietro Ferrua, writing in *On Anarchist Cinema*, provides an analysis of the origins of self-declaring anarchist film festivals as well as his own involvement in organising them. He writes that the 'first festival of films devoted to anarchism took place in Copenhagen in 1979' (2009: 121). This is a full decade after the events of May 68, suggesting a lag time between the politicisation of film and when anarchism felt the need to document its own participation in cinema culture. Even then Ferrua highlights some trepidation about the involvement of anarchist theory in film. He claims that 'we did not boast that our event was the first anarchist film festival anywhere on the globe' (ibid), principally because the event, called the First International Symposium on Anarchism, was 'taking place in academia, financed with grants from a governmental institution' (ibid). Immediately some of the contradictions around anarchism and cinema re-emerge. The academic discipline requires an objectivity which is challenged when something declares itself 'anarchist' due to its political position as being radical, and critical of hierarchy, government, and capitalism. The question of financing and where it comes from also echoes some of the arguments surrounding the Women in Prison film from the previous chapter, that there is an inherent contradiction in accepting money (in Ferrua's example some of the money came from a grant from the French government) from institutions of which the anarchist is critical.

The symposium evidently overcame some of these issues with a semantic shift; 'Instead of saying for anarchism we chose to say on anarchism, which does mean neither for nor against' (ibid), reinforcing the apparently objective nature of the event. The symposium included films which were anti-anarchist, specifically *La bande a Bonnot* (Philip Fourastie, 1968) which takes a pejorative stance towards the activities of the Jules Bonnot gang. Once more the focus of these events is not to celebrate the films, but to use the film to elicit debate and discussion around the issues and themes contained within it.

In fact, there had been a season of anarchist films organised and curated by Alan Lovell in 1962 at the National Film Theatre in London. The season worked as a living embodiment of his *Anarchist Cinema* published by Peace News that same year. In the accompanying booklet

for the NFT season, he succinctly addresses the factor of the misrepresentation of the anarchist as a 'man who throws bombs at things he doesn't like' as a 'popular myth' (NFT Booklet, June-July 1962). However, he also describes his selected films, predominantly made up of those made by Bunuel, Vigo, and Franju, as 'often like bombs thrown at the church, the government, the military and other established forms of our society' (ibid). He alludes to the anarchist spirit in claiming that 'the quality one responds to most in all their films is the sense of what life, at its best, is like' (ibid), rather than just the destructive and antagonistic nature of the anarchist film. Aside from the aforementioned trio of Bunuel, Vigo, and Franju, which form the whole of Lovell's *Anarchist Cinema* publication, the season also included sessions entitled British Anarchism. These featured films from George Brenton, whom Lovell identifies as an anarchist; including *The Vision of William Blake* (1958). So the scope of the season, with its inclusion of British filmmakers, plus a range of Polish and Czech animations, was broader than his *Peace News* volume and indicates that Lovell saw anarchism as a world-wide trend in cinema.

In attempting to justify the relevance of the films he has selected in the programme, Lovell unwittingly reveals the uncomfortable fit, and even the disconnection, that exists between anarchism, cinema, and far left action and theory. He rightly states that 'it has an immediate relevance to the age of totalitarian states and H bombs, of concentration camps and torture, of protests and revolutions' (ibid). So, his version of an anarchist cinema works against a backdrop of the Cold War, but it remains unclear as to why anarchism is an oblique and hidden presence in the later political rethinking of cinema as the 1960s progressed, including the events of and around 1968 in Paris and other associated revolutions and liberation struggles taking place around the world at the time. It is not until the First International Symposium which Ferrura chronicles, a full sixteen years after Lovell's programme and writing, that explicit discussion of anarchism and film takes place.

Lovell's work in the area of anarchist cinema is mentioned only obliquely by Richard Porton in *Film and the Anarchist Imagination*, a query to his understanding of *Zero de Conduite*. His analysis of anarchism and film seemingly has little relevance to Porton's main preoccupation with anarchist representation. Ferrua does not mention Lovell at all. But this may be due to his semantic argument around the word 'festival'. He draws a distinction between what a festival is and what a projection is. He writes of the subsequent growth of anarchist film festivals around the world after the Symposium in Copenhagen in 1979, that 'in most cases, however, they were not festivals, with new films and the presence of

filmmakers, but mere projections of videos' (2009: 124). If the aim is to have a space for debate (as well as a space arranged to be a social and inclusive activity) this is a distinction which is irrelevant. This is particularly the case if one is engaged in divorcing the filmmaker from ultimate meaning in the text, as in the split between the anarchist film, anarchist theory, and anarchist debate, as has happened in the trajectory of this thesis. The presence of the filmmaker at such a festival could lock down discussions onto the filmmaker's intentions and close out discussion. Nevertheless, one can see the tendency of filmmaker involvement in an anarchist themed festival to be a continuing one. The reasons for this might be twofold, however, in that it is more convenient for a radical or anarchist filmmaker to attend because they are so rarely working within the established and mainstream film industry and are likely to have more time available, as much as they are a feature of the festivals due to the definition of the word used by Ferrua.

One successful and long running anarchist themed event was the Chicago Anarchist Film Fest, which ran for thirteen years until 2013. The website now states that they are 'currently in a transitory state' (Chicago Anarchist Film Fest, 2014), and it is unclear when or if it will return. The festival bills itself as a 'home for anarchists, anti-authoritarians, the anarcho-friendly and the anarcho-curious to experience radical cinema from around the world with features, shorts, documentaries, animation, and found footage. Our definition of anarchist film is that which crosses boundaries, takes risks, and subverts passivity' (Chicago Anarchist Film Fest, 2014). This is a vague definition of what constitutes the term 'anarchist film', and resembles Amos Vogel's broad categories for what can be considered subversive in cinema. But within the context of a festival we are asked to consider the films from an anarchist perspective and framework. Anarchism becomes a way of understanding the films within wider political, social, and industrial contexts, even if they struggle to be thought of as anarchist films on their own.

The films of the 2013 festival are mostly shorts headlined by the feature *Ghosts with Shit Jobs* (2012), where the filmmaker Jim Munroe was present for a questions and answers session after the screening. Interweaved into the festival programme is the provision of a space for debate which 'examines the past, focuses on the present, and prepares us for stronger movement building in the future' (Chicago Anarchist Film Fest, 2014), followed by a punk benefit gig. The educational and the social are therefore combined with the screenings as an integral part of the fabric of the festival.

Aside from the specific film festivals devoted to anarchism which crop up and then become defunct as funding or interest dries up, the most consistent celebrations of anarchist thought are the regular bookfairs which take place annually in a number of cities worldwide. According to the website anarchistbookfairs.blogspot, set up 'so that there is less chance of date clashes and better advertising of events', there are forty seven listed, with ten in Britain and Ireland alone. Most are self-described as anarchist bookfairs, while a few list themselves as 'radical' or 'alternative'. The purpose of the bookfairs is to raise funds for various anarchist groups by holding stalls and selling self-produced literature or merchandise, as well as selling books on anarchism and related political and cultural themes.

As important to the bookfairs are the exchanges of ideas through arranged talks, discussions, workshops, and debates. Included as part of the events are film screenings. At the London Bookfair films (or more specifically video projections) have been advertised as part of the event since 1987. Each year, a room is devoted to screenings from around the world. In common with the other radical and anarchist festivals the films screened are mostly either activist video or independent documentaries. In 2012 and 2013 Reel News had ninety minute slots devoted to films made and released under their banner, as well as holding stalls in the main bookfair hall to sell DVDs and other products.

In New York, the Anarchist Bookfair runs a separate one day festival of films (*Anarchist Film Festival*, 2014) each year. Again, the focus is on the non-fictional, but the separation from the main Bookfair allows greater emphasis and attention on the actual films, whereas at the London Bookfair they play on an unattended DVD loop for visitors to drop in and out of. The New York Anarchist Film Festival stresses the importance of film by stating that 'the AFF is a participatory event where the screenings spark vigorous discussion about the possibilities of political change and cultural transformation', and that it 'will be a forum for the frontlines of resistance in the age of murder drones, with nuclear holocaust and ecological catastrophe on the horizon' (ibid). In doing so, the festival organisers are echoing Alan Lovell's words from his NFT programme that a festival of anarchist films has 'immediate relevance to the age of totalitarian states and H bombs, of concentration camps and torture, of protests and revolutions' (NFT Booklet, June-July 1962).

The Radical Film Network.

The anarchist bookfairs act as a worldwide network of associated groups, events, and ideas, and sit within a broader culture of radical and political film screenings. In the UK and Ireland

there has been an attempt at formalising a nexus of political film culture with the recently formed Radical Film Network. The network claims on its website that it is 'for those involved with or interested in the production, distribution and exhibition of politically and aesthetically radical film' (Radical Film Network, 2014). So the RFN has set its net deliberately broad and is aimed not only at those involved in production and exhibition, but also those 'interested in' the area, presumably writers, academics, or consumers.

The network is organised as a hub for the conjunction of any individual or group that aligns itself with the 'radical'. The website continues;

> At present, the primary function of the network is to raise the profile of those organisations involved and help facilitate communication and collaboration among them […] From this primary function stem a number of other activities, including developing exhibition circuits, establishing of partnerships with overseas distributors, or forming working groups to explore issues such contemporary feminist filmmaking or new approaches to radical aesthetics. (Radical Film Network, About 2014)

Because of the loose associations linked to the notion of the radical left, and the non-hierarchical nature of the organising ('the network consists of its members, and as such the role and nature of the organisation rests with those involved' [Radical Film Network, About 2014]), anarchism becomes a way of understanding its formation, even if specific anarchist groups make up only some of the affiliates. Its inaugural academic conference in February 2015, *Political Cinema for the 21st Century*, was arranged by the RFN to provide a 'forum for those interested or involved in political film culture to share their work and debate the past, present and future of radical film in Britain and around the world' (Radical Film Network, About 2014). So once more the provision of a space for debate is integral to the formation of radical film, and this helps create a non-dogmatic and democratic environment which is decidedly anarchist in comparison with other left wing denominations. The areas up for debate are set by the members, and not any higher 'party line'.

The website lists twenty nine affiliate groups working in the UK. These include the aforementioned Reel News and SchMovies, as well as the long running Leeds Animation Workshop and London Socialist Film Co-op. The online archive Christie Books, run by anarchist Stuart Christie, and the organisation Lux, which emerged out of the London Filmmakers Co-op, are also affiliates to the network, so there is a spread of groups associated with radical film culture beyond just production. More impressively, the Radical Film Network currently has thirty one affiliate groups spread internationally across nine other countries, including the Chicago Anarchist Film Festival (which indicates that, despite being

in a 'transitory state' (CAFF website, 2015), still sees itself as active and relevant). The RFN also includes a mailing list for those wishing to be kept abreast of any news and developments across the network, which includes a number of academics working within UK universities in the realm of arts and humanities. Also, several of the affiliate groups are run or co-organised by academics working in subjects within these disciplines, indicating a convergence of formal education centred on films and those producing them. One can see in these networks of groups and individuals involved in production, exhibition, festivals and film training (such as Leeds Animation Workshop) and education both a repetition and a realisation of the intentions of the political film groups in the 1960s, such as The Filmmakers Co-op in the United States and those working in France around and after 1968.

The Bristol Radical Film Festival, one of the Radical Film Network's UK affiliates, best epitomises the characteristics of the network by combining production, exhibition, community film spaces, and the convergence of academia with radical film. The festival, held annually since 2010, is run from a selection of exhibition venues which include 'digital outreach projects, anarchist social centres, drop-in centres for sex workers, political squats, radical bookshops, community bicycle hubs, trade union halls' (*BRFF programme*, 2014: 2). Only on one occasion during the 2014 festival was there a screening in what could be described as a traditionally elitist space, a double bill of *From London to Tehran* (Mania Akbari, 2012) and *Dancing Maria* (Roya Akbari, 2013) which took place at Bristol's art gallery, the Arnolfini. The focus of the rest of the festival was to move away from such elitist spaces and into venues of social and community relevance. For example, the film *Arna's Children* (Julianon Mer Khamis, 2004), a documentary on the experience of a group of children brought up in a refugee camp in Palestine, appropriately took place in Bristol's unofficial Palestinian Embassy and Nakba Museum. These sort of 'progressive' spaces are essential for the festival to be able to maintain its significance as a politically radical force and to reinforce the community spirit it attempts to invoke.

In built into the construction of the festival is its ticketing policy. Ticket pricing is very modest, ranging from several free events to a maximum of six pounds (at the gallery screening above). On the headline weekend at Bristol's Arc bar the programme states that 'no one will be turned away for lack of funds and asylum seekers can come for free' (Festival Programme: 2), a claim also made on the websites of both the Chicago and New York Anarchist Film Festivals. The organisers are clearly making a conscious effort to transcend the often prohibitive costs of traditional film festivals and invoke an inclusive atmosphere.

The festival positions itself within the traditions of a range of leftist political inflections through its selection of films. *The Happy Lands* (Robert Rae, 2012) and *Matewan* (John Sayles, 1987) reflect the historical struggles of workplace unionisation; Franny Armstrong's *McLibel* (2005) is an account of a famous libel case brought by McDonalds against two protestors, and documents the fight against powerful corporations and capitalist exploitation; *Paths of Glory* (Stanley Kubrick, 1957) takes a pacifist stance on militarised conflict; and a showcase of short films from a project entitled Tracing Movements which focuses on the problems faced by migrant workers.

More problematic is the festival's claim to "exhibit works that interrogate political and aesthetic radicalism in new and challenging ways" (*BRFF programme*, 2014: 2). If the content of the films is inspired by far left theory and traditions, many of their aesthetic qualities are conservative or mainstream. This is particularly evident in the budgeted, mainstream *Paths of Glory* and *Matewan*. The most aesthetically radical film screened during 2014 festival week was Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), a film which still retains power with its visual innovation, but one which is now nearly ninety years old. This hardly comes under the concept of aesthetic radicalism in the sense of something fresh and breaking with the past. However, the festival's unique intervention in how the screening is presented is perhaps the radical aspect. This particular screening was free to the public in a non-profit community café, and the soundtrack was improvised and live, mixed at the venue as the film played. Furthermore, in the spirit of green sustainability, the event was powered by people on bikes attached to generators to provide the electricity. The radical aspect comes in the combination of the various elements; film, screening location, it being free to the public, and by its sustainability and by being ecologically sound.

The provision of time and space for discussion immediately after each event gives room for such deliberation of topics and themes to take place. In several of the debates, often between attending filmmakers and the audience, the conversation was lively and politically engaged. For example, following the screening of *On the Art of War* (Luca Bellino, Silvia Luzi, 2012) the debate between the filmmakers and festival crowd combined relevant discussions on the topic of the film (union organisation and resistance among factory workers in Spain), with a critique of the film's representations of class struggle and organisation. The involvement of the audience contributes to the radical aspect of the BRFF because it negates the top down approach familiar from traditional festivals, where audience involvement with the filmmakers is minimal. The BRFF gives its audience an active voice in discussions

around the themes of each film. This particular debate also had an educational aspect, in that much of the discussion centred on work place protest, unionisation, and other forms of worker organisation. However, the pedagogy was in this instance non-hierarchical. Importantly, rather than instructions telling people how to organise politically, the emphasis was on debating ways of being effective with members of the audience leading the conversation. Because the audience was politically astute, and knowledgeable about the issues the film raised, it implies that they already sympathise with radical left wing causes. Because the debates were specifically inspired by the festival it promotes the relevance of film to political issues which can affect people's lives. It reinforces the importance of cinema's social relevance.

If there is continuity in the themes of the selected films from 2014 it would be in their tendency to draw parallels between militarised conflicts and class-based struggles within domestic settings. Screenings of *Paths of Glory* and *Matewan* in parallel sessions demonstrates the conflation of these two themes, linked by their representation of the working classes in violent and organised struggle; in service of the state in the case of the former, and in support of their social class in the latter. Screenings of a double bill of films on the Spanish Civil War, *The Spanish Earth* (Joris Ivens, 1937) and *To Die in Madrid* (Frederic Rossif, 1963), can be said to present a middle ground between these two positions. Both films, one a propaganda film produced during the conflict and the other a later French documentary, are in support of the Republican side of the war, and reflect the international class-based solidarity of many of those who fought for the Republic. Indeed, it reinforces the relevance of the Spanish Civil War with the inclusion of these films, both as a period in radical left-wing history and as a line of investigation of how film and cinema has a community focus.

The theme of conflict prevalent in the roster of selected films extends even to the marketing of the BRFF. The image on their promotional materials is that of an AK47 assault rifle in place of a film projector, with two spinning film reels sitting on top, and a projector lens extending out where the gun barrel would traditionally be. This striking image underscores the festival's metaphor of a cinematic battleground over political ideas, and neatly encapsulates the role of films and filmmaking within current struggles and in those of the past. The icon of the camera as a weapon in class struggle is one which is familiar to grassroots political filmmakers and video activists (hence Stevenson's reference to 'standing in battle' in his account of the Filmmakers Co-op). The twist from camera to projector in the

BRFF poster underlines the idea that it is the festival itself which can be a politically radical force, rather than the films.

That the festival understands this radical political power is not limited to the screening of films is apparent in both its ancillary activities and organizational roots in academia. The festival ran a workshop entitled The Languages of Video-Activism. Here, two producers of activist video in Spain, Concha Mateos and Luis Lanchares, explored the potential of aesthetic tendencies in activist video. This part screening/part training event reveals an emphasis on the need for film education to extend beyond its study within universities and into work and social spaces, mirroring once more the concerns of film culture in the post '68 period. Crucially, those running this session were not only producers of activist films but also academics, so a bridge is forged between academic research and the struggles of political activism, indicating one of the most important and powerful aspects of the festival.

The BRFF is organised by staff and students from the film studies department at the University of the West of England (UWE), and so the whole festival becomes a junction between academia, film practice and consumption, and political activism. It demonstrates ways in which academia can move beyond the study of film and into an active engagement with the politics of cinema exhibition. Each of these aspects of film culture is brought together in the structure of the festival; in the combination of the films and debate that is fostered in the screening venues. The separations that can exist between production, exhibition, the public consumption of film, and that of the discipline of film studies in academia, are bridged. The BRFF draws connections between them. Indeed, the study of film and its place sociologically and politically is a process which is opened up to the public in the structure of the BRFF. Rather than being hidden away in academic film studies, on university campuses and at conferences, the live questions on film, such as its potential as a democratising force and the possibility of cinema as a social and active community space, become the focus of the event.

Another affiliate in the Radical Film Network is the Tolpuddle Radical Film Festival, whose inaugural event took place in 2014. It runs alongside the annual Tolpuddle Festival, which is self-described as 'one the key summer events in the annual calendar of the UK Left' (Tolpuddle Radical Film Festival, 2014). Each year stalls, live music, speakers, and debates follow a rally in honour of the Tolpuddle martyrs arrested and deported to Australia for forming a trade union in 1834 (Tolpuddle Martyrs, 2014), and who form the subject of Bill

Douglas's film *Comrades* (1985). The Tolpuddle Festival specifies its politics as socialist and trade unionist, but its Radical Film Festival can also be understood through anarchism. The film festival runs at the fringe of the main events. Films are screened in a mobile cinema, a van converted into a small cinema, another redefinition of the notions of a traditional screening space. The festival also runs a competition which calls for short films which 'are rebellious, angry, radical, revolutionary, socialist, anarchist, militant, progressive or subversive' (Tolpuddle Radical Film Festival, 2014). The term 'socialist' is a direct nod to the politics of the main festival, and the word also accurately sums up the themes of the professional films being shown as part of the film festival; such as Ken Loach's *Which Side are you On?* (1985), and *Salt of the Earth* (Herbert J. Biberman, 1954). In contrast, the competition is clearly requesting films which have a more anarchic tone, as if the point of the shorts is to be more confrontational than the feature films and to shake up the audience in brief bursts of less than thirty minutes of screen time.

The competition aspect is an anomaly in the arena of anarchist festivals. Here, the description of anarchism becomes inconsistent, as the concept of competition implies hierarchy (people who decide what films are worthy) or a lack of support and solidarity, notions which are at the forefront of the anarchist film festivals where competition would be seen as potentially divisive. By using anarchist analysis to examine this organisation, such inconsistencies are revealed.

The Anarchism of the Exploding Cinema.

One radical and long running series of events which can be understood by its anarchic elements is the Exploding Cinema. These events, which screen short films in public houses (and occasionally other venues) in London, have been happening since 1991. In the language used on its manifesto and website, and in the DIY ethos and aesthetics of its advertising, it is defiantly punk in outlook, with an anarchist emphasis on being anti-hierarchical.

> LISTEN !!
>
> ALL YOU NO BUDGET FILM MAKERS, VIDEO SCRATCHERS
>
> AND UNDERGROUND MEDIA SLACKERS
>
> The British media industry is an incestuous slag heap and the only way to the top is by climbing up on the heads of your friends. At the top of the heap the fat cat media executives are hauling in the cash whilst at the bottom the rest of us are kept broke and paranoid and then they have the nerve to steal our ideas and tell us that it's really 'happening' to make films on the dole.

> The 'Independent' media administrators drivel on about 'access' and 'cultural democracy' but they've got their industry organised like the New Model Army with their gaffers, grips, script girls and focus pullers.

> And wise up creatures ......the media industry learned how to defuse and appropriate underground film in the seventies, now the only radical media project is to build a totally integrated industry of our own...... (Exploding Cinema, 2015)

The call for 'a totally integrated industry' separate from the mainstream is ambitious, and probably fanciful, but is in line with the intentions of the anarchists working in Spain in the Civil War, and with the drives of those ideals of an alternative cinema from 1968.

The Exploding Cinema is organised collectively and bases its principles on the following terms; open access, democratic, common ownership, non-profit making, and unfunded. These ideals are drafted into a carefully worded constitution on the website, where it also 'opposes state funding for film production' as 'undemocratic, elitist and harmful' (Exploding Cinema, 2015). These principles of anti-state collectivism are common to any anarchist group or collective, whether working in film or for any other cause.

Crucial to these values, and in contrast to the competition in the Tolpuddle Radical Film Festival, there is no policy on what can or cannot be shown. If a film is submitted it will be programmed onto the next available bill. Not only is this following through the principle of being open access, but it also demonstrates a commitment to a lack of censorship – either aesthetically or in terms of the ideas contained in the films. Again, this stands starkly as an opposite to the requirements of the other anarchist or radical screenings/festivals around the world, where the films are selected on the basis of their thematic appropriateness. Included in this is an influx of films submitted to the Exploding Cinema which are fictional and narrative works. While any films are shown if submitted the proportion of fictional work to non-fictional or documentary is far higher than in the other radical left screenings and festivals discussed in this chapter.

Because the filmmakers are frequently present at Exploding Cinema events, questions and answers sessions with the audience immediately after the film are encouraged. The subject and imagery is defended or justified by the filmmaker, rather than the curators of the event. At least theoretically, the organisers do not have to justify their selections of films. Any questions, queries, or objections to the films being shown can be levelled at the filmmaker themselves by members of the audience. The organisers can avoid problematic interrogations

over film selection by invoking Exploding Cinema's democratic policy of screening whatever gets submitted. This is in contrast to Amos Vogel, who took on responsibility for all films screened at Cinema 16, and so would find himself defending his decisions on the grounds he was showing films which were challenging to the status quo or otherwise subversive. Haberski JR (2007) shows how a Cinema 16 screening of Nazi propaganda film *The Eternal Jew* (Fritz Hippler, 1940) caused much consternation, with Vogel exhibiting the film with programme notes written by Siegfried Kracauer, who was seen as an acceptable authority due to him being the author of *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947). Vogel would eventually include Nazi propaganda movies as a chapter in his *Film as Subversive Art*, and explains that the film is 'the most subversive […] ever made against a particular race' (1974: 179) and 'one of the most dangerous films ever produced' (1974: 180) due to its fervent anti-Semitism. Its screening at Cinema 16 in 1958, accompanied by Kracauer's notes, 'became an intellectual exercise' (Haberski JR, 2007: 97), where audiences are asked to view the film within a particular social and educational context.

The idea of the exhibition of film as an 'intellectual exercise' is resisted by the organisers of Exploding Cinema because there is little information about each film bar the title and the names who made it listed in the event programmes. Many of the films shown at Exploding Cinema are not explicitly political, and so the radical aspect is in the concept and ethos of each event, rather than in the content being shown. There is a freedom and a lack of dogmatism to the Exploding Cinema where the anarchism threads through the organisational principles behind it. Diverse films are encouraged, and there is an anarchist essence to it being non-curated, where in the other examples from this chapter, the curating of a bill of thematically linked films is integral to their radical status.

The Exploding Cinema has recently become part of the Radical Film Network. But it claims an aggressively outsider status and antipathy towards the London Filmmakers Co-op, from which Lux (one of the affiliates of the RFN) was born out of. In the history section of its website it states that;

> THE place in London for experimental film at the time was the London Filmmakers' Co-op, but it seemed to have lost its collective ideals of 20 years previously and now seemed rife with nepotism, self-interest and a distinctly 'insider'' policy in their programming. Moreover, rather than having a broad approach to alternative film practice (i.e. in the spirit of the underground) it was subject to a particularly arrid notion of 'high art' - it saw experimental work as necessarily theory based and 'difficult'. Audiences for such shows were minimal, the atmosphere was akin to a particularly

oppressive church, the work was invariably funded (and strangely arrogant in its presumption of the work the audience was 'expected' to do), the experience was overall disappointing. (Exploding Cinema, 2015)

The Exploding Cinema's agitational stance extends to what it says is a stale and elitist avant-garde scene, and bristles against work which is both mainstream and allegedly oppositional. It positions itself as part of a connection of underground film groups; stating that in the 1990s 'a NO WAVE of new cinema groups has emerged inspired by the Exploding Cinema' (Exploding Cinema, 2015). Included in these groups are The Halloween Society and Junk TV, who are still active in producing and exhibiting youth and community video in Brighton. The Exploding Cinema also claims several more groups, which appear to be either defunct or where information on them is not readily apparent online. There are also, according to the website, two other Exploding Cinema groups in Frankfurt and Amsterdam.

In the tirades which form the manifesto of the Exploding Cinema one can see an echo of the sort of language being used in the Cinema of Transgression, the underground film scene lasting from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s in New York. In Jack Sargeant's *Deathtripping* (1999), a highly detailed account of the scene, including interviews with some of its main filmmakers such as Richard Kern, Beth B, and Lydia Lunch, he reprints the manifesto of the Cinema of Transgression, written by another filmmaker and the founder of the movement, Nick Zedd. In a selection of quotes from the manifesto there is a similarity in the expression of revulsion towards mainstream film and the bourgeoisie taste of the regular avant-garde;

> We who have violated the laws, commands and duties of the avant-garde; ie, to bore, tranquilize and obfuscate through a fluke process dictated by practical convenience stand guilty as charged […] we refuse to take [the] easy approach to cinematic creativity; an approach which ruined the underground of the sixties when the scourge of the film school took over…we propose that all film schools be blown up and all boring films never be made again. We propose that a sense of humour is an essential element discarded by the doddering academics and further, any film which doesn't shock isn't worth looking at…(1985, quoted in Sargeant, 1999: 77).

While Exploding Cinema stops short of calling for films which deliberately transgress notions of taste and value, by aligning itself with a purity of purpose – to create a cinema not restricted by conventional and institutional approaches, and by being completely open as regards lacking any form of censorship – it encourages the submission of films which deviate from the mainstream and which have not found a comfortable home elsewhere, either at regular festivals or in the film events of the radical left.

The PhD thesis of Dr Stefan Szczelkun, entitled *Exploding Cinema 1992 - 1999, culture and democracy*, uses the group as its subject, and links it to both the underground art scene emerging out of the 1960s, and with other collectives of working class artists – such as Working Press books, of which he had formerly been a part. Szczelkun's study includes a semiotic analysis of the programmes produced for each show, and reveals how the DIY punk spirit and anarchist organisation extends through the event to the supplementary materials, in particular in the programme booklet given to audience members on admission. The programme, which indicates the collective's 'visual precepts', is created in a 'rough paste up 'zine style […] with rich background collages and minimal film description' (Szczelkun, 2002). The design is visually reminiscent of British punk 'zines and album sleeves, and are produced with each member of Exploding Cinema involved in their creation.

In putting on most of their events in pubs the Exploding Cinema also challenges the traditional idea of the cinematic space, but more so than the others outlined in this chapter, because there is an attempt at the shows to alter the room so that it less resembles a theatre auditorium. Aside from the projection of the films onto an erected screen somewhere near the front of the stage (if there is one), the room is redecorated in white sheets onto which can be projected images and video footage not related to the main films. This 'use of slides and loop film projections' creates in the Exploding Cinema a 'hybrid fusion of projection, performance and social space' (Szczelkun, 2002), compounded by the addition of a master of ceremonies to introduce each film, and occasionally bands playing to intersperse the show.

Remarkably, given how ephemeral other underground and radical scenes and festivals have proven to be, the Exploding Cinema has remained a consistent figure in the underground film scene. The loose associations of filmmakers that made up the Cinema of Transgression in New York was short lived and subsequently fizzled out. Other anarchist festivals, such as the one run out of Chicago, have not lasted, or are subject to hiatuses. The showing of films at bookfairs is a growing feature because they are supported by the long standing and more robustly structured main bookfair events. The Exploding Cinema has remained successful in its principles whilst maintaining its independence and singular vision, and has recently had sell out shows and advises booking tickets in advance, indicating an on-going public interest that is enough to sustain its existence.

The strength, I believe, is in its loose, anarchist structure; located in the temporary, and in the impermanence of the events it puts on. The film shows aim to be every month but they

historically have had no regular venue and frequently switch to different sites. There is little attempt to be fixed, in terms of the themes of the films shown or in the venue. The Exploding Cinema embraces its inherent anarchy and fluidity, rather than attempting to claim a consistency of space or argument.

Clashes, Contrasts, and the Anarchist Cinema.

There is inconsistency in the approaches and rationales between the grassroots and radical filmmakers. All consider themselves radical in some way, and attempt to claim the ground for themselves, in contrast to that which is staid, mainstream, and hegemonic. But the acknowledgement of the importance of space is consistent. To be successful in their aims, they recognise the need to incorporate a public place of exhibition, one which can combine the social and educational.

In the recent grassroots and activist circles, the true political films, there is a lack of space for the screening of either art films – too open for debate and middle class, or fictional films which are unruly – because they come with taste and cultural baggage. (The Exploding Cinema includes unruly films, but one senses that they have a rejection of the art film due to its alleged 'safety' and preponderance of middle class elements surrounding its consumption). In these combinations we can identify another radical trend, that of the combinations of these elements.

Joan Hawkins' *Cutting Edge*, in exploring the links that exist between the avant-garde and art house cinema and the horror and exploitation film, examines the shared aesthetics of both examples of high and low culture, as well as factors such as marketing and audience response and taste. Her examination of 'the degree to which high culture trades on the same images, tropes and themes that characterize low culture' (2000: 3) draws attention to some of the ways anarchism reveals itself in cinema, and particularly how it traverses differing strands of film, and how it can be found in a combination of theory and popular film genres.

Hawkins is correct in indicating the way 'low cinematic genres […] often handle explosive social material that mainstream cinema is reluctant to touch' (2000: 6-7), exposing the level of politicisation of the exploitation film emerging from within the films themselves, and the study of them in academic and critical circles. One can see this in how Roger Corman weaved contemporary social issues into his exploitation output in films such as the Women in Prison cycle or in a film like *The Intruder* (Roger Corman, 1962), which dealt with the social

anxieties of race and civil rights. Also, in the American filmmaking Co-ops Jack Stevenson refers to the content of the films as being very broad, and included experimental films, short films, and others containing 'pornographic content' (2002: 182). According to Stevenson, directors who had made some of their films available to the Co-op included John Waters, Paul Bartel, and Paul Morrissey. One can see Hawkins' claim for the crossovers between art film and exploitation laid bare. Both Waters' and Morrissey's work traverses each tradition. Morrissey made his films through a connection with Andy Warhol, but his *Flesh for Frankenstein* (1973) and *Blood for Dracula* (1974) are pure exploitation cinema; with an emphasis on sex and gore. And, in the case of *Flesh for Frankenstein*, it was made in 3-D, at that stage a format still associated with gimmicky, low culture fare. John Waters' films defy genre definition, but the grotesqueness and B movie allusions in films such as *Multiple Maniacs* (1970), *Pink Flamingos* (1972), and *Female Trouble* (1974) put them firmly as part of an exploitation culture. Their knowing, reflexive edge, plus the deliberately transgressive elements, meant they would be appreciated by the cult critic and find a home among art house and cine-literate audiences. Paul Bartel's career began by directing exploitation work such as *Death Race 2000* (1975) for Roger Corman before he became a regular cameo actor in films like the pseudo-anarchic *Rock and Roll High School* (Alan Arkush, 1979), and as the manager of the cinema attacked by the eponymous critters of Joe Dante's *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* (1990).

Another specific example Hawkins uses is the proliferation of paracinema mail order catalogues in the 1980s and 1990s. These catalogues would advertise movies on home video which could primarily be classed as belonging to 'trash' or, according to Jeffrey Sconce's definition in 'Trashing the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style' (1995), 'paracinema'. However, alongside movies from a raft of low genres – as well as horror and exploitation films B movies and other low budget product would be advertised – were what would be defined as art house, and/or European films. Hence, Hawkins notes how;

> in *Luminous Film and Video Wurks Catalog 2.0*, for example, Jean Luc Godard's edgy *Weekend* (1968) is sandwiched between *The Washing Machine* (1993) and *The Werewolf and the Yeti* (1975). *Sinister Cinema*'s 1996-1997 catalog, which organizes titles chronologically, lists Godard's *Alphaville* (1965) between *Lightning Bolt* (1965) and *Zontar, the Thing from Venus* (1966). (2000: 4)

Paracinema catalogues therefore clearly stood in opposition to notions of inherent elitism in art and culture. They reflected a desire among audiences and viewers of such material to

cross boundaries of taste, and not be held by prevailing notions of what is a 'good' film, or a 'high quality' piece of art. The only criteria was that the films were made outside of mainstream cinema, and therefore stood in opposition to its culture. This tendency among certain filmmakers and audiences to combine high and low culture currently has no home in the recent radical/anarchist festival and screening circuits (though, as we can see from Lovell's programme from the NFT, it was present in the past). The domination of video activism and documentary amongst current radical and anarchist film circles has (despite the principled stand the individual films and filmmakers take) removed some of the anarchic fun from cinema in place of excessively worthy causes and approaches

Anarchists should acknowledge more openly the anarchic potentials of exploitation films and other low culture genres, even if ultimately they choose to turn away from representations within them that they do not like. Anyone with an interest in anarchism and film should recognise that in many cases the anarchic in cinema has been found in these marginal genres and areas of film, in the avant-garde or exploitation genres.

The idea of mainstream professional work being of high quality, and having standardised production values, is challenged because much anarchist filmmaking is by non-professionals. In addition to this, the documentary and activist video complexion of the majority of the films that are produced contributes to these alternative standards. That is to say many of them are inscribed with hand held, shaky, occasionally out of focus shots and have sound encumbered by wind noise due to a lack of professional sound recording or post-production sound design. This rough, amateur aesthetic is the standard format of the radical filmmaking circuit. However, the lack of fictional films and a fear of crossing the boundaries of the politically correct (however admirable this intention might be), mires the films in a safe zone un-befitting of truly anarchic product. They are too easily marginalised due to not being widely seen, and so prove little threat to mainstream film culture or politics. Politically radical the content of the films may be, but they are seldom dangerous or unruly, even if they depict disorderly happenings or politically transgressive acts (such as direct action, protest, strikes etc). This explains Presence's use of Marxism as his theoretical framework by which to understand the groups working in this arena, despite his acknowledgment that many of the groups are established under an anarchist influence, because the formal aspects rarely match the anarchist content.

Hawkins notes that the low culture genres' focus on affect is that which distinguishes them from the intellectual intent of the art film, whilst also recognising the cross over potential of several films such as *Eyes without A Face*, *Carnival of Souls* (Herk Harvey,1962), and *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, 1968). At present anarchist cinema falls uncomfortably between these two strands. If a film is too base, too focused on affect, it can become the victim to the criticisms by the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War – that of the low culture nature of much Hollywood product. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Women in Prison film and the *St Trinian's* films also fit this criticism, despite both featuring an array of attacks on the enemies of anarchism and the presentation of strategies, however crudely depicted, for alternative social structures. These films also appealed to the 'anarchic' in their formal aspects, containing powerful images relevant to anarchist theory.

There are more overtly anarchist films than these, such as *Winstanley* (Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo, 1975) or *Born in Flames* (Lizzie Borden, 1983). *Winstanley* depicts in stark and poetic black and white the life and struggles of the founder of the English 17th century Diggers, Gerrard Winstanley, to live life off the land self-sufficiently in a proto-anarchist commune, only to be crushed by the forces of the State. Borden's film illustrates an alternative future where women organise non-hierarchically to commit acts of direct action in advancement of feminist causes. They may have a coherent grasp of anarchist theory and history, but their lack of intention to cause emotional or visceral 'affect' means that they are unlikely to break from their art film and elitist trappings. This risks alienating the mass working classes so important to anarchist theory. Populist and intellectual approaches to producing film are both valid, and have strengths and drawbacks. But the chasm between them cannot be breached unless one accepts the uncomfortable contradictions. Neither approach is perfect. Neither fits a description of anarchist cinema devoid of contradiction or failings. So, the programming of both types of films together would become a way of forging an anarchist cinema; one which moulds popular film with the intellectual. They should also be screened in a space designed to be social, and community focused, with the intention of invoking discussion and debate.

There is a concerted lack of effort to produce an interpretable image in current video activist filmmaking, as if to avoid the image being manipulated or understood in a way its creator does not want. This is a legacy of film education, and reflects an increasing sophistication in audiences, prompted in part by the work undertaken by groups involved in

politicising spectatorship in the post May '68 period. As audiences understand filmmaking and the process of spectatorship they become more able to contextualise their interpretation of images and resist dominant or intended meanings.

The images presented in the activist films act as a reflection of events; they document, they act as evidence – as in the *Cop Watch L.A.* group or the videos of Rodney King or Ian Tomlinson being attacked. But the interpretable image does not need to be treated with suspicion or feared when placed in the context of a festival. Ferrura has already demonstrated that a film which is apparently anti-anarchist can form part of a festival of anarchism and film, and Lovell's season at the NFT contained films which belong to other diverse cinematic traditions and contexts, and where his understanding of the films as anarchist was sufficient to include them. The anarchic content, and any contradictions in representation or production background, are contextualised on a bill of films. By curating films together on a bill under the banner of anarchism increases their potential for unruliness because they have broken free from their origins – they are un-shackled and ready for re-consumption.

An Anarchist Cinema.

There is a distinction that needs to be drawn between an anarchist film culture and an anarchist cinema. The difference is one of permanence. There can be a permanent anarchist film culture which exists through the networks facilitated primarily via the World Wide Web, a virtual extension and development of the underground scene prior to widespread use of the internet. This culture will produce and share a continuing hub of anarchist films – whether they are professionally made documentaries or even fiction films, activist videos, or scenes and clips of incidents and events, such as *Cop Watch* videos and those like them. This culture incorporates individual filmmakers, film groups, community groups, and organisations devoted to exhibition and distribution.

An anarchist cinema, however, implies the inclusion of a permanent space, a building in which to watch films and socialise. The anarchist cinema of the Spanish Civil War, for example, was doomed to be a temporary experiment, predicated almost entirely on the outcome of the war – the anarchists would had to have 'won' (seeing off Communism as well as Fascism) for it to continue to thrive. Unless an anarchist society exists then any incarnation of an anarchist cinema would be temporary and exist outside of mainstream culture as an underground alternative. But until there is a formation of a society based on the underlying

theories of anarchism, then the temporary should be embraced and not resisted. An anarchist cinema should be an impermanent, disruptive part of this broader anarchist film culture.

Embracing the temporary means a re-thinking of the term 'cinema'. The spatial issues of what constitutes cinema also need to be considered. The cinema has been taken on a direction away from its working class, anarchic roots in music hall theatre. The subversion and anarchy remains on the screen in films which are unruly or propagate anti-State politics, but it has been shut down in the auditoriums of mainstream cinema houses. Lee Grieveson's *Policing Cinema* (2004) reveals how the cinema from its first beginnings became a facilitator of both burgeoning, and existing class, conflict. He writes that 'labourers and their kids watching movies of burglary; of violence against police authority, and of strike action in the potentially autonomous and oppositional public sphere of the nickelodeon was clearly regarded as troublesome by middle class elites' (2004: 17). This unruly atmosphere has been softened in the modern day cinema by the victory of regulation over the disorderly behaviour of audiences. Talking and noise are discouraged, only food and drink purchased in the cinema is allowed, and seats can now be booked far in advance. The increased comfort of experience and the cost associated with modern cinema going indicates a gentrification of it as an attraction. The sharp, anarchic edges that were formerly present in cinema have been diminished and it has been redesigned as a respectful place; reflecting a view of film as either a serious art form, or as a place of high quality, expensively designed and created entertainment in the form of Hollywood blockbusters. Rather than being a place of conflict, it has been recast as somewhere to offer respect to filmmakers for their hard work. The Exploding Cinema talks of the 'oppressive church' of shows dedicated to the art scene of the London Filmmaker's Co-op (Exploding Cinema, 2015), where the atmosphere was of reverence for the theory based work on display. But in mainstream cinemas, there is an equally oppressive atmosphere tied up with commerce and worship for the movies from Hollywood.

Stephen Barber writes of the commodification prevalent in film theatres in a passage that is as poetic a denunciation of the modern cinema space as is Amos Vogel's celebration of the art form as a perfect vehicle for subversion (see pages p51 and 52 of this thesis). Barber writes;

> inside, the air stank of rancid meat and stale sugar as the population of that autonomous city endlessly filed down corridors towards the web of miniscule cinema spaces. The time of each film in its unique projection was set in tension with a multiplicity of

temporally shifting, ocular demands on those human figures in their state of perpetual transit. The presence of film had become enclosed within a set of impenetrable consumer carapaces, until it formed an ephemeral caprice within that powerful system of attraction and repudiation which focused the eye and body on everything except the film…I met identical architecture and blank faces…in these brutal multiplexes, the space of cinema stood infinitely removed from its former inhabitation of the city's central boulevards, where it had determined its spectators' intimate visual rapport with that place. (2002:164/165)

Barber is lamenting the passing of what Vogel describes in his eulogy to the vibrancy of the film medium and its relationship to enthusiastic spectators – the idea of cinema as a magical place which enraptures audiences (whatever the truth in reality of that relationship), to one which is built on total passivity in the face of a 'brutal' experience. Whether the atmosphere in modern cinemas is one of reverence or passivity, neither would be welcome in an anarchist cinema. But both of these examples demonstrate how the cinema building is still vital to the experience of the film as text. It gives another indication that we have to look beyond the text to that which surrounds it.

Because there is no fixed cinema devoted to anarchism, alternative spaces have to be found. Currently, and in the past, these spaces have included mobile vans, public houses and bars, and the walls of luxury flats. An anarchist screening may well take place in a conventional and traditional venue, with regular seating and a fixed screen and projector, but it just as easily can be arranged with the use of a digital projector attached to a laptop or other device. Anarchist direct action is ready to strike where and when it feels it is necessary, and an anarchist cinema must be ready to do the same. And this can be achieved by understanding the political and anarchic potential of the temporary.

The radical cinemas I have discussed in this chapter need to be collated and their strengths brought together in much the same way as the theory of anarchist cinema propagated by Lovell, Porton, and Jun needs to be aligned and considered as part of the same network. The different anarchic strands of radical, underground, and political film cultures should be converged, into which a viable, successful, and anarchic cinema culture can be developed. The Radical Film Network is an attempt to create such a culture, but it has gaps with its lack of fiction film, and its ignoring of the radical potential for populist or exploitation cinema which blocks its truly anarchist potential.

The programming of a bill of films as part of an anarchist cinema would include those that create anarchic clashes. Films could be divisive or inconsistent in their ideas and imagery. To pluck three films from this thesis, one could imagine the programming on the same bill the following; *Zero de Conduite*, Jean Vigo's renowned progenitor of the anarchist film; *The Pure Hell of St Trinians*, the playful and anti-authoritarian second sequel in the series, which sees the school girls burn down their school within the first moments; and *The Big Bird Cage*, the wildly inconsistent, offensive example of political exploitation cinema. These films share a semblance in both content and form, but are from such differing production contexts as to make them an uncomfortable, difficult, unruly fit on a single programme. In doing so the films themselves would provide the anarchy needed to generate debate. And because they are obliquely built around the spectacle of rebellion and anarchy the discussions generated could also be about the role of film in an anarchist society, and the nature of what constitutes anarchist film and art. This is in addition to the regular debates around the subject of a film which commonly take place in radical and anarchist festivals. The aesthetics of a film would be considered and discussed as well as its subject. In this, film studies as a discipline would have a place among grassroots, radical, anarchist, politics. Crucially, any conversations around the subject of anarchism and film could then take place among those not formally educated in the study of cinema and art. The propensity for elitism of film studies in academia would be challenged. Any debates would be enlivened by the inclusion of grassroots filmmaking and activist video, playing alongside professionally made genre pictures. The effect of these combinations - of the entertaining and the serious, and the professional with the amateur - would be democratising and ultimately anarchic.

Anarchist and radical film festivals should critique the nature of cinema as well as society. In their organisation and construction they need to pull traditional notions of cinema apart, re-examine them, and re-construct cinema and film according to relevant aspects of anarchist theory. They are non-hierarchical in organisation; thematically and aesthetically radical in terms of the films screened; and they break down the traditional relationship between viewer and screen. What is needed is for these aspects to be acknowledged more by those who attend the events and those filmmakers who have their work screened; rather than just writers, critics, and academics working within the discipline of film studies.

In an era of increasing fragmentation in the exhibition of the moving image (including the proliferation of mobile devices being used to watch films), there is still a need for the social connections the cinema can bring. The anarchist cinema has to be found in a form of

recreation of the cinema and its space. But it must, like anarchist theory, be ready to be fluid, continually shifting and adapting, retreating where necessary only to return when needed. It must be revolutionary, but difficult. It must be anarchic.

Conclusion – Paths into the future

Michael Denning, in *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (2004), sees the merger of political theory and film as part of a wider 'cultural front' that combines artists, academics, and activists. He looks at the role of cultural studies as an academic discipline and how it can link beyond universities and have real world relevancy. Denning begins by examining the shift towards the concept of globalisation in the period roughly between 1940 and the late 1980s, 'when we imagined that the world was divided into three – the capitalist First World, the Communist Second World, and the decolonizing Third World' (2004: 2). The ushering in of globalisation, Denning claims, marked the recognition of new social classes, and new formations of the working classes, which came under increased and renewed attacks from the right wing.

Denning charts how cultural studies became detached from these developments, largely by becoming a discipline which increasingly would have relevance only to itself within academic institutions. Central to this issue are the 'tenured radicals', those academics who became institutionalised despite maintaining supposedly far left wing positions. He outlines how cultural studies, and whatever social critique or use it has, became primarily a marketing tool for universities; just another course to be sold to potential students. The central debate surrounding this is how the institutionalisation of those academics that harbour left wing, feminist, or any other kind of inclusive positions, has only the trappings of radicalism; that the necessities of academia and academic life mean social change (the purpose of the beliefs themselves) becomes secondary. The conclusion to this issue is not clear cut. Denning highlights how the 'problem' of left wing intellectuals holding tenure is often a question of whether 'for the right, it has corrupted the universities; for some on the left, it has corrupted the left' (2004: 130). Whatever the conclusion to this argument, it still stands that what was once potentially radical has become just an alternative viewpoint to debate within academic circles.

Derek Nystrom in *Hard Hats, Rednecks, and Macho Men* (2009), provides an example of the disconnection between cultural studies and political relevance. He writes of the 'gaps' (2009: 5) in the way cultural studies and film studies explored the topic of class in the 1970s, despite a number of high profile American films of the decade centring around white, working class male protagonists. Part of the reason for the gaps, Nystrom asserts, stemmed from the predominance of psychoanalytical theory in film studies, and later the rise of

feminist criticism, which dominated 'ideological and cultural analysis' (2009: 6). There was, Nystrom contends, 'no theoretical revolution in class-based theory in film studies to match what was happening in gender-oriented film theory' (2009: 7). This created a wedge between a film's subject and film theory; a crack through which politically infused films slipped through. One of the 'problems' of cultural studies comes in the separations between identity politics and class. It creates divisions in academic disciplines which hamper the potential for social change to arise out of research. It detaches itself from the real world because most people are formed out of more than one aspect of identity; they are black, gay, working class etc.

In the Women in Prison movie these elements are brought together in the intersectionality of the rebellious gangs, and it is in this sort of union that Denning sees the potential for cultural studies (and associated disciplines) to be made radical again. He demonstrates how the discipline can be re-politicised with a process that would work around three 'moments'. The first would be 'cultural resistance', in the form of subcultural activities and communities which are 'analogous […] to organised political struggle' (2004: 164). The second would be through 'cultural justice', the 'self-organisation by artists, intellectuals and cultural workers' (ibid), incorporating identity politics and liberation struggles (of minority groups or women). Finally, Denning discusses cultural revolution, 'the formation of a new culture' (2004: 165); those rare moments which 'may take generations to come to fruition, as new forms and media are invented' (2004:166).

His study describes this as a 'cultural front'; an explicitly political call for a return to the democracy of 'the social movements of working people that have been the driving force of the modern democracy around the world' (2004: 266). The 'cultural front' he demands would;

> depend not only on the self-organisation of the downsized and subcontracted culture industry workers, but on the solidarity across tiers of writers and artists, teachers and professionals, joining with the part-timers, the casual workers, the immigrants in sweatshop restaurants and garment factories across the nation. (2004: 233)

This would be an alliance between those involved in the culture industries, which would include academics, and those new formations of the working classes which emerged in the era of globalisation, and which are divorced from old fashioned images of the working classes drawn mostly from before the Age of Three Worlds. He concludes by observing that 'artists have long been responsible for the stories and pictures by which we see the world; it

is they who can redraw the maps of class and work and workers that we all carry around unconsciously' (2004: 234) and that this will 'allow us to see new forms of struggle and solidarity in places we never thought to look' (ibid).

Denning's proposal suggests not only alliances between the different people working within the culture industries, but also encourages co-operation between academic disciplines. This would entail a more anarchic approach, divorced from hierarchical judgements surrounding methodology, and with more acceptance of different schools of thought and action.

A movement like the Radical Film Network (as analysed in the chapter *Anarchism and the Cinematic Space*) presents an attempt at formalising this type of cultural resistance. It is comprised of the alliance of 'artists, intellectuals and cultural workers' and attempts to reach out to the community through the myriad screenings, festivals, and production opportunities it arranges via the various groups, individuals, and companies which comprise the network. A form of anarchist cinema exists as a tendency in the Radical Film Network, and anarchism provides a theoretical framework through which to understand the production and distribution contexts that emerge from it. But explicit references to anarchism are still few and far between. Part of this is the lack of existing research into what constitutes anarchist cinema. Anarchism has not been formalised as a method of production, as a theory in the study of cinema, or as a viewing practice (the anarchic viewer). This needs to happen for anarchist cinema to make its presence felt within the RFN and in the wider cultural front surrounding it.

However, it is necessary for anxieties over anarchism to remain so that it retains a power that comes from its status as being the outsider of radical politics. Whatever strength an anarchist cinema has must come from both its theoretical assertions and from an underlying spirit. This spirit needs to resemble that of the early cinema, with all its unruliness and sense of danger that made it a disreputable form of entertainment. It needs to be continually anarchic. My viewpoint here could have relevance to the future of the Radical Film Network. That it originated in academia (it has been funded through support from the Centre for Moving Image Research (CMIR) at the University of the West of England) raises the question of what happens if or when the funding is no longer available. Will the networks that have been built between those individuals and organisations involved continue to exist? At the conference organised by the RFN, *Political Cinema in the 21st Century* (Feb 7th 2015),

the future of the network was one of the main focus points. A number of non-hierarchical (and anarchist) models were suggested.

But the threat of impermanence can be utilised as a strength if one embraces the anarchic elements; it means any future organising continues to have fluidity, and it retains its ability to spring up in different places and times. If there is a permanent cultural front it should not lead to a loss of vibrancy, or it risks becoming stale. If it is to embrace its anarchist elements then it should remain dangerous and disruptive. It should unsettle mainstream films, production practices, and viewing methods.

In uncovering fresh ground in the relationship between anarchism and cinema I have not attempted to provide any sort of definitive canon of anarchist films. On the website Christie Books, which provides links for books and other material related to anarchism, there is also a huge selection of films and television documentaries available to stream. This includes fiction films by the likes of Luis Bunuel and Jean Vigo, but also work by contemporary documentary filmmakers such as Adam Curtis, whose material is tangentially related to the anarchism through its critique of social structures. As a functioning canon of anarchist film and television, the Christie Books list is useful for helping to identify which films may relate to the history of anarchism. But it only considers the representation of anarchist ideas, or those which have a connection to anarchism through their analysis in academia (such as films by Bunuel, Vigo, and the Marx Brothers). David Weir's recent book on Vigo (2014) foregrounds the director's anarchism, but once again centres the topic on that one man. Vigo remains the face of anarchist cinema. Weir does not attempt to build an image of what an anarchist cinema could be. By concentrating his analysis on Jean Vigo, any anarchism contained in his work remains enclosed by the specific filmic, political, historical and geographical contexts. An anarchist cinema needs to be open to a wider range of films, situations, and readings. It needs to be less predetermined. Films need to be able to be 'released' from their original contexts and used more freely to help to delineate what an anarchist society could look like.

My analysis has focused on providing new ways of thinking about the interplay between anarchist theory and cinema. In drawing attention to the 'anarchist content' in films such as the *St Trinian's* series or the Women in Prison cycle, work has gone towards demonstrating a political relevance to film studies by broadening the elements that constitute a 'political' film. In assessing the organisational models surrounding political film culture and the ways of

viewing movies, by using anarchist theory I have demonstrated methods of 'solidarity and resistance'.

Throughout this thesis there have been a number of continuities presented; the spectacle of rebellion and the bringing to life of anarchist ideas on screen in the *St Trinian's* franchise and the Women in Prison cycle; the combination of film and education which was seen as a necessary component of political cinema from the 1930s Spanish Civil War years and through the political developments of May 1968 and beyond; and the prospect of anarchic interpretation and engagement by looking to the margins of the screen and resisting dominant readings. This has circumvented some of the contradictions of anarchist cinema by moving beyond textual film analysis to a critique of productions contexts and cultures. The distinction, it must be underlined, is that there are inherent problems defining an anarchist film, but there is such a thing as an anarchist cinema. Any inconsistencies in theory or approach are as much a part of an anarchist cinema as they are a part of anarchist politics. What links these continuities is that they are imbued with the spirit of anarchism - the anarchic. It is a spirit which runs as an undercurrent through the films, the production practices, and the audiences; and in revealing this I have charted an existing anarchist cinema culture. This culture has been present since cinema's beginnings as an institution of art and entertainment. It has been my purpose to uncover elements of this hidden history of a cinema which is anarchic, and articulates the concerns of anarchist political theory.

The individual movies, the cycles, the moments in wider culture such as criticism, academia, or festivals which have been explored throughout, unveil the springing up of the green shoots of an anarchist cinema. These cinematic and cultural moments are in many cases disparate and unconnected, not yet formed into a whole. It has been my aim to make connections between them, to create a web reflecting the concerns of political anarchism while also exhibiting an anarchic and oppositional stance towards mainstream film culture.

In relation to examining anarchist theory there is much more to do. This thesis has mapped out the ground by connecting what has been written before, and has laid out avenues and methods by which the integration of anarchism and cinema can continue. The establishing of a canon is a future possible path, one which updates the Christie Books list to include areas covered here. But whatever routes the research into anarchist cinema takes from here it must be fluid to account for the nature of anarchist theory. It should be at once changing and hidden, searching in places and illuminating areas that are not immediately obvious. At the

same time it needs to stay firm and fixed - and remain a passionate defiance against the State and the hierarchical authority which flows from it.

Previous chapters have provided a loose set of criteria needed for an anarchist film and an anarchist cinema. But there cannot be a single, definitive checklist – otherwise it risks becoming a set of dogmatic rules that one must pass in order to qualify. Instead, anarchist cinema needs to be free and agitational, continually questioning the values of the liberal and the conservative alike. But to do this effectively, it must be a combination of the different aspects of cinema – film, consumption, and study.

There does not have to be consistency with these connections between anarchism and the arts. Like how Peter Marshall, in *Demanding the Impossible* (1993), links a series of historical moments as anarchic, connected by shared concerns or impulses, anarchist cinema needs to be understood as a currently unformed, inconsistent, and even incoherent, entity. Nathan Jun, in *Towards and Anarchist Film Theory*, looks forward to the day when an anarchist cinema exists as a coherent, self-conscious alternative to a mainstream cinema which is driven by capitalist businesses. He contends that filmmakers in the current industry are powerless against these commercial forces to create anything genuinely subversive. Instead, he looks to a future where the clear divisions between filmmaker and audience have been eroded and a 'cinema of liberation' (2010: 157) stands as a viable alternative to the dominant mainstream. We are clearly not at that stage yet. But some of the moments of anarchist cinema discussed here, including the *St Trinian's* movies and the Women in Prison cycle, emerge from capitalist production origins. These films are contained by the mainstream and commercial contexts in which they were made. But within them there are extraordinary moments, worth examining for what they reveal about anarchism and its relationship to society. These moments are unveiled by my anarchist interpretation. So, while I agree with Jun's desire for a future 'cinema of liberation', I have also demonstrated how the anarchist cinema is one which currently exists, but which is hidden and consists of embryonic progenitors which have risen from unlikely places.

My task has been to connect the possible utopian future anticipated by Jun with the present and the past, to discover where an anarchist cinema has existed, where it comes from, and where it might exist in today's contemporary cinema culture. The anarchist cinemas presented here could either develop into a consistent oppositional cinema, or continue to reside at the margins and in the shadows. The same applies to political anarchism. Its

relevance and vitality ebbs and flows at different moments in time, in diverse venues and locations, as an aggressive challenge to mainstream political developments. The anarchist impulse will continue to be an ever present factor boiling under the surface of both cinematic culture and politics.

In the 'epilogue' to *Anarchism*, George Woodcock declares that the movement, in reference to the one originated by Mikhail Bakunin, 'has failed' (1962: 443). But he puts the date of this failure, 'its real death' (ibid), as being in Spain in 1939. For Woodcock, this was where the beginning of the process of 'defeat after defeat and…the slow draining of hope, almost to nothing' (ibid). However, of course, this date is also significant because it marked the beginning of something else – the coherent attempt to combine anarchist theory with film practice. It was the true beginnings of the anarchist cinema, which built on the unruly elements of cinema's past. If the movement as it existed in its original incarnation had died, it was resurrected in part as a cultural form. The legacy of Bakunin's movement is found in the different groups and individual anarchists involved in political action today. The legacy of the Spanish Civil War resides in the moments from cinema culture charted throughout this thesis. For anarchism and the anarchist cinema, the future depends on the symbiosis of this culture and political action.

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