Mobilizing Passions: Ideology, Incoherence, and Fascism in Cinema

Jesse Cohn*

> There is no Power that does not have a need to justify itself, and thus for ideology… which is simply the detached form [*forma desapasionada*] of justification…
>
> — Agustín García Calvo, "Qué es el Estado?"[1]

> The "mobilizing passions" of fascism are hard to treat historically... [Historical] fascism was an affair of the gut more than of the brain, and a study of the roots of fascism that treats only the thinkers and the writers misses the most powerful impulses of all.
>
> — Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*[2]

The German *Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft* or UFA studio conglomerate, according to the anarchist filmmaker and critic Mateo Santos, was "born under the sign of Mars," a product of the First World War effort that was directly financed by the arms manufacturer Krupp. Years after the defeat, however, UFA's film production was still deeply infused with nationalism and militarism, Santos writes: "the celluloid used in the Neubabelsberg Studios has always smelled of gunpowder."[3] Indeed, much of Santos' study, *El Cine Bajo la Svásti*

---

*Jesse Cohn is Associate Professor in the Department of English and World Languages, Purdue University Northwest, and he serves on the board of the Institute for Anarchist Studies. His works include *Hot Equations: Science, Fantasy, and the Radical Imagination On a Troubled Planet* (University of Mississippi Press, 2024), *Underground Passages: Anarchist Resistance Culture, 1848-2011* (AK Press, 2015) and *Anarchism and the Crisis of Representation: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics, Politics* (Susquehanna University Press, 2006). His current interests include New Materialisms, affect, fetishism, and pluriversality as well as the science fiction and fantasy of contemporary Black and Indigenous writers.

ca (1937), is dedicated to understanding not the direct operation of the German and Italian film industries as fascist propaganda mills, but the international "fascist influence" in moviemaking, an influence that he claims can also be felt in the powerful *yanqui* cinema of the interwar years. We should not be surprised by this, he argues, because "behind each State, of whatever type, there is always a potential or latent dictatorship": capitalism is always already "class dictatorship."[4] So it is that under the nominally democratic Weimar regime between the wars, German public appetite for war and martial discipline was stoked by UFA and other studios as well, to the point that "[f]ilms apparently alien to politics carried the fascist virus in their action and in their images."[5] This article is dedicated to Santos' epidemiology.

I am unsatisfied with many accounts of how fascism operates, how ideology operates, and how fascist ideology in particular operates, all the more so in the context of cinema. My intention is to bring some critical tools to bear on the question of fascism in film — namely, *affects* (the near-instantaneous precursors of emotions) and *affordances* (properties of objects that emerge in encounters) — that are more appropriate to anarchism than to any variety of Marxism. Whereas Marxist film theory tends to ascribe a certain structural coherence to ideology, I argue that if we pay attention to the *incoherence* of fascist ideology, we can learn something about the sources of its power. An analysis of three films will illustrate.

In search of fascist ideology

One of the dominant conceptions of fascism, modeled on the experience of its seizure of State power in Europe, depicts it as a populist movement culminating in a radical break with the normal operations of the modern, democratic State. Traditions of Black struggle teach us that this obscures the extent to which that experience of upheaval represents a continuation of the norm, an expansion of the policies honed in the colonies and routinely exercised on the non-white populations "at home" to govern the lives of white citizens as well.[6] However, what can be said about the system of thought associated with this project? It is utterly unsurprising to find that the most popular

and prolific fascist ideas consist of white supremacy and other forms of hegemonic thought. At the same time, as Robert O. Paxton notes, there is something elusive about it, something that resists being captured at the level of thought at all.

Contemporary antifascist accounts of fascism often characterize it as a movement (or movements) driven by an *ideology* (or ideologies). However, this conception of ideology is often left somewhat undertheorized. The classical Marxist understanding of ideology as "false consciousness" — ideas about the world that have been systematically distorted in favor of the ruling class — suggests that the bearers of such ideas are necessarily "unconscious" of their origins.[7] More often, one speaks of fascist ideology in a sense closer to Lenin's usage: ideology considered as an organized system of political thought that can be consciously adopted, whether for better (in the form of "socialist ideology") or worse (as "bourgeois ideology").[8] Both the older concept of ideology as false consciousness and the subsequent "neutral" concept of ideology as systematic political thought present some problems when we try to apply them to historical and contemporary experiences of fascism.

On the one hand, fascism appears as a *repetitive* phenomenon: it has certain hallmarks and preoccupations, what William Gillis calls its "timeless ideological content." On the other hand, this repetition is marked by constant variation: it is "not a precisely defined ideology."[9] Fascism occupies a "far right" position on the classical spectrum of modern political thought and at the same time — not completely without accuracy — characterizes itself as "*ni droite, ni gauche*": neither "right" nor "left," at once ferociously conservative in its aims and revolutionary in its means.[10] "More than perhaps any other mode of politics," cautions Mark Bray, "fascism is notoriously difficult to pin down" — and after the historic defeat of the Axis powers in World War II, it is even more so.[11] Entrepreneurial fascist ideologues constantly produce newer, ever-weirder and more esoteric belief systems in spiraling constellations without any concern for consistency.

If it is nearly impossible to characterize fascism as an "ideology" in the sense of a coherent system of political thought with consistent

aims, it is much easier to represent it as an "ideology" in the sense of false consciousness. For the more reductively economistic styles of analysis, fascist beliefs, whatever their particular content, always mask the same underlying cause: the defense of capitalism. The global economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s, this analysis would suggest, created economic pressure, pain, and anxiety; rather than allow this raw energy to mature into anger and explode in the form of a direct attack on capitalism, fascists, now as then, provide scapegoats (the usual pariah groups) and channel the energy into wars and genocides. A similar train of events characterizes the second rise of far right populism and fascism in the wake of the global triumph of neoliberalism between 1980 and the present. The fascists' true political project, then as now — i.e., shoring up the power of the ruling class — may be disguised as populism, but the populace has been deceived, tricked into betraying its own true (i.e., economic) interests. Witness the faux populism of ex-US President Donald Trump, which employs all the devices of scapegoating in a veritable theater of white supremacist cruelty, selling a myth of national greatness to the masses while passing enormous tax breaks for the wealthiest citizens.

However, such economistic models seem to fail to account for the facts, at least in the current crisis: Trump's base is disproportionately well off, whereas those experiencing the greatest economic pressures (people of color broadly, and women in particular) tend to be his favorite antagonists.[12] Moreover, no matter how morally shocking or irrational the cruelty becomes, Trump's base remains enthusiastically loyal.[13] Can this be only because they are consumers of right-wing media, victims of its systematic distortions of reality? More psychoanalytically informed Marxist analyses of fascism, from Wilhelm Reich on, have maintained that there is no deception, no false consciousness involved: fascism succeeds because some substantial portion of the people really want it (even if their desire for fascism is the product of sexual repression, for instance). Again, fascist ideas are a mask for repressed psychic forces which, having been channeled into a project of social repression, become increasingly distorted and anti-human.

Such revised analyses clearly have some advantages. Nonetheless, they too are hobbled by a fixed and narrow idea of the "human" which carries its own oppressive normative baggage: thus, for Reich, it is apparent that under fascism, "[t]he natural sexual strivings toward the other sex, which seek gratification from childhood on, were replaced in the main by distorted and diverted homosexual and sadistic feelings."[14] Sexuality, on this account, is "natural[ly]" good, only becoming "distorted" by repressive social institutions — a view not far from Rousseau's state-of-nature theory, which was roundly rejected by Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and other anarchists. Moreover, the phenomenon of "repressive tolerance" observed by Herbert Marcuse in the 1960s and 1970s — and perhaps adumbrated by anarchist critics like Rothen and Longuet in the 1930s, concerned as they were by the sale of commodified, spectacularized "sex-appeal" in Hollywood — radically undermines the Reichian model: "Thus we are faced with the contradiction that the liberalization of sexuality provides an instinctual basis for the repressive and aggressive power of the affluent society."[15] Indeed, fascism's renaissance is taking place in a strange resonance with the culture of online disinhibition and omnipresent porn (sometimes preaching abstinence from it, often inspired by it).[16]

Anarchism and film theory

In a corner of the lengthy entry for the term *spectacle* in the 1934 *Encyclopédie anarchiste*, the Swiss anarchist Edouard Rothen (1874-1937) writes a miniature critical history of cinema. As "one of the greatest and most beautiful discoveries of the 19th century," Rothen argued, it had "suffered the fate of all the discoveries of science; the invention which was to serve for the good of men has been employed against them." For a brief historical moment, in spite of its spectacular use as a public attraction and novelty, cinema had still served something like its original purpose "as a means of observation and scientific realization," documenting the real world: scenes of life in foreign lands, news of the day, and so on. Having thus enjoyed "a more direct relationship with life than that of the theatre," the medium had since deteriorated: "The cinema's error began when it

undertook to become theater and to present… dramatic or comic plays." Apart from the frequently debauched nature of these entertainments—pre-Code Hollywood seems to have especially horrified Rothen—the real sin of this "cash-box cinema" was its fidelity to the ruling class:

[I]t is employed in all bourgeois, conservative, patriotic, religious, political, financial propaganda… earn[ing] a lot of money for all the pimps of the "Social Order." It is even, today, the main instrument of this "public good" in that it exercises its influence on the crowd more directly than any other.[17]

As this might indicate, from early on, anarchists were interested in the film camera's capacity for transcending space and time, suggesting a communicative and educational role, making it both a product of and a vehicle for science, but at the same time wary of its capacity as what might be called a vehicle for ruling class ideology, a means of ideological production.

The history of the concept of ideology within anarchist thought — "within" deserves scare quotes — is long and complex. There is a very short entry for *idéologie* in Faure's encyclopedia, unsigned, which notes the use of the term by the "conventionally-minded" to designate styles of politics deemed too idealistic, but ultimately defines it as nothing more than the (salutary) notion of systematized thought: in this positive sense, "anarchists… practice ideology — or the science of ideas — because they believe that ideas must not be abstract things but observations and speculations based on experience and reason."[18] This is more or less faithful to the term's original coinage by Destutt de Tracy; it entirely ignores the sense of the word as "false consciousness" so richly developed within the Marxist tradition. That usage is simply absent from international anarchist discourse in the so-called "classical" period (by convention, 1840-1939). At the same time, as historians like Pierre Ansart and René Berthier have documented, concepts of false consciousness are present in the anarchist tradition from the very beginning.[19] Often, as Augstín García Calvo observes, this is expressed in forceful criticism of the institutional roles of education, culture, and media in justifying the power of the powerful.

Four decades after the publication of the *Encyclopédie anarchiste*, the French anarchist Jean-Marc Raynaud, who signed his articles for *Le Monde Libertaire* and other publications as "Mato-Topé" (borrowing the name of a famous Mandan chief of the 19th century), published an incisive critique of the then ascendant field of Marxist film theory. Writing for *La Rue*, house organ of the Groupe Libertaire Louise Michel, he takes up the contention of Jean-Patrick Lebel ("the Party's own ideologue in cinema") that "film is clearly a scientific invention, not a product of ideology," turning this into a question: "Is cinema the result of a scientific discovery or is it an ideological invention?"

He continues:

> Making cinema a breakthrough in science means anchoring it in the infrastructure, since science itself is deemed to belong to this domain as a directly productive force. Conversely, as an ideological invention, cinema would clearly belong to the superstructure.
>
> For a Marxist, it is essential to know the place of an institution in the Marxist topography to know its nature. There cannot exist any institution located hovering between the summit and the base… [For Althusser,] there is an epistemological break between science and ideology in the genesis of Marx's thought which would have accomplished this fundamental scission by abandoning philosophical speculation in order to enter into scientific discourse on the occasion of the writing of *Capital*. Marxism will thus accede to the status of a science and at the same time escape from ideology.[20]

For Lebel, "[F]ilm is clearly a scientific invention, not a product of ideology, since it is founded on a real body of knowledge and on the properties of matter which it activates" — the physics of light, the chemistry of photographic film, the biology of the human eye; "the proof is that it functions, and that by activating a certain matter in order to film a material object, it produces a material image of that object." Consequently, while the technology and techniques of cinema are subject to capitalist abuse, they are not in and of themselves

"ideological."[21] The revolutionary task would then be to fill the ideologically neutral form of cinema with radical content.

Conversely, for Comolli and Narboni, contributors to *Cahiers du cinéma* during the "red years" of 1968-1973, "[c]inema is ideological through and through, from its invention yesterday to its proliferation today," because its entire historical purpose has been to shore up the reigning ideology by creating an "impression of reality" which is nothing more than the product of an ideological "code of realism [*vraisemblance*]":[22]

Clearly, the cinema "reproduces" reality; this is what a camera and film stock are for — so says the ideology. But the tools and techniques of film-making are a part of "reality" themselves, and furthermore "reality" is nothing but an expression of the prevailing ideology. Seen in this light, the classic theory of cinema that the camera is an impartial instrument… is an eminently reactionary one. What the camera in fact registers is the vague, unformulated, untheorized, unthought-out world of the dominant ideology.[23]

Under the terms of this hypothesis, the revolutionary task is not only to film revolutionary content but to tamper with the codes of cinematic realism themselves, producing films that resist ideology through experimentation with form.

We can see in retrospect, then, that the position articulated by Rothen is (ironically) more analogous to that of Lebel, the Communist Party ideologue, than that of the heterodox Maoists Comolli and Narboni. That Rothen was articulating a theory of cinema (scientific, documentarian, pedagogical) widely held by anarchists can be seen in the literature of his contemporaries from Buenos Aires (Alfonso Longuet) to Barcelona (Mateo Santos) to Brazil (João Penteado) and beyond. It can be further verified by a cursory look at the history of anarchist cinematic practice through the end of the "classical" period (and the end of Rothen's life).[24] Even more so than melodrama and satire, reportage and documentary became the most favored genres of anarchist filmmaking, the kind of content seen as typifying "social cinema." The first anarchist film production of the Spanish Revolu-

tion, accordingly, is Santos' *Reportaje del movimiento revolucionario en Barcelona*, filmed during the street battles of July 19-24, 1936, and projected in Barcelona's theaters just three weeks later.[25]

For Mateo Santos, like Edouard Rothen, "The cinematographic camera, when it captures the news… lacks a brain, it does not understand ideologies and feelings; it only has eyes and ears to faithfully reflect on the screen the image and the voice it has captured."[26] Indeed, *Reportaje* unfolds in what Joan Ramon Resina calls an "ecstatic witnessing."[27] However, Santos acknowledges that power can be exercised over the film and, potentially, its audience by the process of selecting shots and rearranging them for effect — the power of "montage":

Of course, the camera can stop seeing and hearing something of what is happening in front of it, and the montage can suppress part of the reality captured by the camera, not only for convenience of technical and artistic optical adjustment, but even for the preferences and sympathies of those who manipulate the celluloid. But in any case, the story of any event taken by the movie camera will always be more truthful and spontaneous than the one made by the journalist and photojournalist.[28]

But the fate suffered by Santos' own film stands as an historical lesson in the power of montage and the potential treacherousness of the cinematic image. As Joan Ramon Resina and Ameya Tripathi have shown, *Reportaje*'s most powerful images — footage of the raid on the Salesian convent and the exhumation of the mummified corpses of monks and nuns with bound hands (taken as signs of torture) — were easily turned against their makers. For Santos and his comrades, these sights were a shocking visual proof of the inhumanity of the Catholic Church, crying out for justice. They belonged to a narrative that the film's original audience already possessed: this institution, the author of the Inquisition, had to be dethroned, publicly exposed, permanently removed from power over the life of the people. When Nazi agents acquired a copy of the reel, however, these images, removed from the continuity of anarchist narration, subsequently became fascist propaganda.[29]

From the standpoint of the kind of Saussurean and Althusserian theory of cinema that had become, by the end of the 1980s, nearly hegemonic in film scholarship,[30] this outright inversion of meaning seemingly should not be so easy to accomplish: an ideology is a *structure*, signifiers arranged into a whole constituted by binary oppositions and chains of association that lock their respective meanings in place, and thereby capable of serving in a society as, in Marta Harnecker's metaphor, "*the cement that holds the building together*."[31]

For Robin Wood, some central binaries of US capitalist ideology are:

rich	poor
employers	employees
men	women
whites	nonwhites
straights	gays
adults	children

The second term in each binary, of course, is what semioticians call the "marked" term, subordinate, within the dominant ideological code, to the normative, "unmarked" term; each pair appears to mirror the logic of the others, so that A is to B as C is to D, in a self-confirming, potentially endless repetition, representing "interlocking structures of power/domination/oppression."[32] In any given film, ideology is reflected in the way the narrative and montage establish contrasts and continuities between their signifying elements.

In the exhumation sequence in *Reportaje*, after establishing shots of the convent, the camera eye poses a sharp contrast between the background, in which the gateway to the convent darkly frames forth the corpses propped up for display, and the foreground, where a crowd is assembled with raised fists; the voiceover, between "*la iglesia católica*" and "*clamores de indignación popular*"; the larger narrative, between

the darkness of religious ignorance and the light of a newly enlightened people. In the Swiss fascist film *La Peste Rouge* (1938), the same footage appears, *unaltered* — only now, as part of a far-right narrative about the terrifying spread of "red barbarity" across Europe, it appears a shocking visual proof of the horrors of godless Communism, fully justifying (albeit after the fact) the fascist revolt in the south.[33]

The will to power in the material world

Of course, such "strong" conceptions of ideology and meaning-making in film are by no means the only ones on offer. The open Marxism of theorists like Stuart Hall tries to explain how ideology can also operate in ways that are *not* so rigidly predictable — for instance, accounting for the ways in which active audiences can decode the same ideologically-encoded text to produce "oppositional" or "negotiated" meanings not in line with the text's "dominant-hegemonic" interpretation; subsequent researchers such as Shangwei Wu and Tabe Bergman have even tried to account for the possibility of audiences operating from a hegemonic position (like the fascist watching *Reportaje*) to produce an *oppositional but hegemonic reading of an oppositional text* (like that represented in *La Peste*).[34] Thus, a structuralist-style grid of possibilities emerges:[35]

Dominant-hegemonic encoding		**Encoding positions**		
		Negotiated encoding (partly critical text)	**Oppositional encoding (radical text)**	
Decoding positions (text-relative)	**Text-accepting position**	Text-acceptance of dominant- hegemonic text	Text-acceptance of negotiated text	Text-acceptance of oppositional text
	Text-negotiation position	Negotiation of dominant- hegemonic text	Negotiation of negotiated text	Negotiation of oppositional text
	Text-oppositional position	Text-oppositional reading of dominant-hegemonic text	Text-oppositional reading of negotiated text	Text-oppositional reading of oppositional text

Figure 1: Grid of Possibilities

This clearly allows for greater complexity than Hall's original model, but even such a revisionary schema suggests that textual meanings are structured in such a way that oppositional reading is simply a matter of reversing the ideological polarity of signs: "Evil, be thou my good," as Milton's Satan says. But even this may not be enough to predict the full range of possible misreadings, misinterpellations, and so on.

One dark possibility the fascist appropriation of anarchist film suggests is that, as Nietzsche would have it, the meaning of any text is simply determined not by features of the text itself but by the will to power that has captured it.[36] "But," Gilles Deleuze warns, "*the thing itself is not neutral* and will have more or less affinity with the force in current possession."[37] This formulation is a little too vague to be much comfort: in what way is a given instance of film "not neutral," and how does this "affinity" manifest itself? Two somewhat more helpful concepts illuminate this question: *affordances* and *affects*.

A number of anarchist scholars have recently turned to James J. Gibson's concept of affordances, already popular among media scholars, as a means of theoretically clarifying how technologies can have both effects (which entails treating the technology as determining its uses) and uses (which entails treating the uses of the technology as determined by users).[38] Affordances are emergent properties of objects, potentials that only emerge (become actual) in relation to something else, in an encounter. Emergent properties aren't completely unpredictable — a screwdriver will not suddenly manifest the property of smelling like a rose or acting as propellant — but they can't be completely known in advance, either; the screwdriver may be used to drive screws, but it may also open cardboard boxes, weigh down a piece of paper on a windy day, deliver a fatal stab wound, and so on. Likewise, the various features of a piece of media like the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (the shot of the Monolith towering over the apes, the famous match cut linking the most primitive tool to the most advanced, the image of the Star Child floating in the void, etc.) have properties that can be named, known, and therefore anticipated but never finally enumerated with any certainty. They are open to appropriation by audiences or individual viewers: e.g., for some, they repre-

sent a vague but powerful notion of human self-transcendence, while for others they signal the futility of human efforts to progress and make sense of the universe.[39] At the same time, they are more open to certain kinds of certain kinds of interpretation than others: there are observable patterns in the ways in which the movie has been received and interpreted.

Theories of affect have developed along at least two distinct lines, one stemming from certain heterodox traditions in the field of psychology, the other from Spinoza. The Spinozan understanding of affects, which has enjoyed a wide reception in anarchist theory, suggests, in the words of Nick Montgomery and carla bergman, that

things are defined not by what they *are* but by what they *do:* how they affect and are affected. To attend to affect means becoming attuned to the relations and encounters that compose us, right here and right now.[40]

On this understanding, "joyful" affects are those which accompany "an increase in one's power to affect and be affected," whereas "sad affects" are "those which reduce our power to act."[41] Both are relational phenomena, emerging — like affordances — in encounters with others. Anarchist theorizations of affect thus emphasize their relational quality and thus their *transmissibility* from person to person (such that we are subject to "affective contagion").

The second model, which has not been widely adopted by anarchists, conceives of affects as the changes in the body in which what we experience as feelings, emotions, and moods originate. Affects occur prior to our conscious awareness of them, before we know or can name or interpret them, but — like affordances — they are not purely indeterminate. This understanding of affect departs from the Freudian model, in which affects originate as "a kind of undifferentiated intensity" prior to their being "given form and content by the ideas or objects to which they [are] attached"; similarly, it departs from the currently hegemonic model of cognitive psychology derived from the work of Stanley Schachter, which treats them as mere "states of physiological arousal" which are only assigned meanings after the fact (and

are thus subject to arbitrary "reinterpretation" through culture or professional intervention).[42] In this respect, Tomkins resists the Western tendency, beginning with Aristotle, to divide reality into meaningful "form" (morphe) and meaningless, undifferentiated "matter" (hyle) — the "hylomorphic schema," as the Deleuzians call it. *This refusal is also to be found at the roots of anarchism*: matter, Bakunin insists, is "not at all this inert substratum… this uniform, formless, and abstract matter of which positive philosophy and materialist metaphysics tell us."[43] More could be said about the authoritarian implications of hylomorphism, but for now, we should note that the form/matter distinction is also at the heart of Comolli and Narboni's film theory, with "form" as (once again) the privileged term.

Taken together, the concepts of affordances and affects — taken together, *affective affordances*[44] — provide a more realist and materialist basis for the theorization of the ways in which our desires can be and are articulated around social institutions and political projects that thwart them — as Spinoza put it, "Why do men [sic] fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?"[45] As such, they further enable anarchists to avoid some of the traps and dead ends into which Marxist theorizations of ideology as deception by illusory representations — in Althusser's words, "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" — have led.[46] In particular, they will serve us well when it comes to the analysis of contemporary and historical fascist movements which elude the assumptions of such representational theories of ideology. Examples taken from media, and particularly cinema, will clarify this advantage.

Affective affordances in three films

Just as Hall attempts to anticipate all the possible modes of ideological reception, so Comolli and Narboni attempt to anticipate all the possible positions that a film might assume in relation to ruling class ideology:

(a): "films which are imbued through and through with the dominant ideology in pure and unadulterated form," i.e., compliant with the ideology in both form and content;

(b): "films which attack their ideological assimilation" by treating "a directly political subject" via "a breaking down of the traditional way of depicting reality," i.e., resistant to the ideology in both form and content;

(c): films whose "content is not explicitly political, but in some way becomes so through the criticism practised on it through its form," i.e., resistant to the ideology in form if not necessarily in content;

(d): films with "an explicitly political content" which nonetheless conform to the dominant modes of realism, i.e., resistant to the ideology in content but not in form.

Four permutations would seem to be all that the combination of two terms would structurally allow. Categories *(f)* and *(g)* recapitulate categories *(d)* and *(b)*, respectively, but for nonfiction films. Nonetheless, they acknowledge, there is also another category of fictional film,

(e): "films which seem at first sight to belong firmly within the ideology and to be completely under its sway, but which turn out to be so only in an ambiguous manner."[47]

For Comolli and Narboni, the *(e)* film "cracks… apart at the seams" because it is in a real sense at war with itself, "corrod[ing] the ideology *by restating it*"; it fails to cohere as a balanced, symmetrical structure of signs.[48] Simultaneously both/and and neither/nor, the *(e)* film operates in a manner structurally similar to fascist ideology,

not hiding but displaying and redoubling its own contradictions and *gaining in strength as it does so*. It threatens to bend the left-right political spectrum into a horseshoe, where radical critique of oppression unpredictably slips into a perverse intensification of the oppressive forces and vice versa.

It is at this impossible junction that we find a group of films that might seem to have little in common apart from their debt to noir and their exploration of a certain kind of masculine subjectivity, a subjectivity that is also "cracking apart at the seams." Three obvious exemplars, appearing at twenty-year intervals, form a trilogy of some of the most powerful mainstream films of the past half century, a period during which fascism has moved out of its postwar eclipse to find its power newly globalized: *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Fight Club* (1999), and *Joker* (2019).

In the opening sequence of *Taxi Driver*, it is night in New York City, and the steam rising from manholes combines with the distortion of light caused by raindrops on the taxi's windows to create the impression that reality outside the cab is in a state of disintegration, melting, dissolving. Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro) is "unworlding," losing his reality, even as he tries desperately to maintain a grip on it: "I just can't get things organized. Little things, I mean. Like my room, my possessions."[49] He blames others for his problems: when he's not vituperating against "whores," "fairies," and "junkies," he feels excluded from the world, from "the others, so cold and distant," "God's lonely man." He singles out Betsy (Cybill Shepherd) as an emblem of purity: "She appeared like an angel out of this open sewer. Out of this filthy mass. She is alone: They cannot touch her." But neither can he: his attempts to talk to Betsy — and even to his fellow cabbies — are erratic, abortive, a collection of fragmentary monologues. His one attempt to ask for help from a male coworker just elicits confusion: "I don't even know what you're talking about." Betsy, as an other, exists merely as a representation (of the unattainable good, of his own desire) for him; this traps him in the morass of rivalry in which, as Silvio Gallo notes, "the relationship with the other is always conflictual" — or, per Sartre, "hell is other people."[50] Through the windshield of Travis's cab, and even more so on his apartment's black-and-white TV screen,

other people only appear as framed images, representations.

The plot, such as it is, is tragic: Travis Bickle, Vietnam veteran, never finds a way to relieve his loneliness and pain. Instead, he becomes increasingly unhinged, self-isolating, lost in his obsession with sleaze and crime, and filled with rage. A chaotic descent into madness leads to a shootout in which he massacres pimps in a tenement brothel in an attempt to kill himself and free Iris (Jodie Foster), a child sex worker. Shot, bloodied, Travis seems to expire before the eyes of the cops; a long overhead tracking shot takes us away from the scene of his death, out into the street, not unlike the famous closing shot of *Chinatown* (1974)... But our sense of an ending is mistaken: the filmmakers supply a kind of second ending in which Travis survives, Iris is returned to her parents, the press hails him as a hero, and ultimately, Betsy looks up to him rather than down on him. If the first ending of the story seems to invite us simply to pity Travis Bickle as a poor "sicko," the second ending suggests that the real "sicko" is the society that heroizes his vigilantism. Yet both of these nominally preferred or hegemonic readings of the film are consistent with a liberalism that the film itself seems to mock. We seem left to make up our own minds about the meaning of a scenario of such disturbing ambiguity.

For Robin Wood, *Taxi Driver* belongs to a trio of iconic 1970s films whose "interest lies partly in their incoherence." The reason he offers for this incoherence is that capitalist ideology is undergoing a serious crisis in this period, as capitalism is contested by a variety of social movements and the US is defeated in Vietnam — *yet that ideology is still so strong* ("virtually unshaken") *that no real alternatives can emerge*.[51] Ideology is once again the very principle of stability, yet it is also so shaky that it can no longer successfully narrate reality. Perhaps, as in the previous crisis period, fascism is what appears when an old world is dying and a new one cannot be born? For Wood, however, American capitalism relies on "an ideology that, far from being monolithic, is *inherently* riddled with hopeless contradictions and unresolvable tensions."[52] Here, the structure *itself* is the source of the shakes — an interesting idea, but begging the same question about the source of the stability.

The failure of *Taxi Driver* to cohere ideologically doesn't prohibit it from having effects that could be called ideological, but which might be better identified as *politico-affective*. Fascism, as we have already observed, draws its strength *from* its very ideological incoherence: the story can keep changing, like QAnon's predictions, as long as the central affects of "Fear–Terror," "Shame–Humiliation," "Contempt–Disgust" and "Anger–Rage" predominate.[53] A film as disjointed as *Taxi Driver* affords many such politico-affective moments, beginning with the casual humiliation of the Vietnam veteran applying for work:

> PERSONNEL OFFICER
>
> (thinks a moment)
>
> How's your driving record?
>
> TRAVIS
>
> Clean. Real clean.
>
> (pause, thin smile)
>
> As clean as my conscience.[54]

A "thin smile," "smiles perfunctorily," "smiles slightly," "disarming smile," "sly smile": the stage directions and De Niro's acting keep performing a happy if hollow affect belied by what Amy Taubin succinctly describes as his "affectless voice."[55] That insistent, almost whining or droning voiceover *describes* Anger–Rage in such a way that the viewer is led to *imagine* viewing everything through the wash of that affect, like the seemingly constant nighttime rain streaking the cab's windows. And so, Taubin argues, we are inevitably drawn into "complicity" with "a racist, misogynist psycho-killer."[56]

Even the scenes where we briefly cut away from Travis' point of view fail to cohere into an equally compelling narration; as Travis remarks, "There is no escape."[57] Travis' first attempt to emplot his otherwise empty, repetitive existence is the doomed "romance" plot with Betsy. We are allowed to glimpse how alternately charming and terrifying Travis might seem from Betsy's perspective, but Shepherd's performance is almost equally affectless (as Wood comments, she presents "a figure of almost total vacuity whose only discernible character trait is opportunism").[58] There ensues an abortive "assassination" plot, as Travis stalks the similarly vacuous presidential candidate Palantine (Leonard Harris). Then there is Iris, object of Travis' third attempted emplotment (the "rescue" plot). Iris' point of view independently of Travis appears only when she is in the arms of her pimp, Sport (Harvey Keitel), which presents the only scene of any real emotional warmth in the film: a quiet moment between a salesman and his favorite merchandise. Although the "rescue" plot is the one that the newspapers adopt within the diegesis of the film, none of these emplotments develop into anything like a coherent alternative from the audience's perspective; as we began, we are left trapped in the cab with Travis, looking into — and through — his eyes.

There is no such thing as an affective affordance independent of the relation between object and subject, of course; the right kind of viewer has to come along to make the politico-affective magic happen. But this is not a matter of mere personal idiosyncracy: according to Tomkins, wide swaths of the population share the same underlying "ideo-affective posture" (or, significantly, "script") — that is, "a set of feelings and ideas about feelings which is more *loosely* organized than any highly organized ideology" (emphasis in the original).[59] "Vigilante movies" like *Dirty Harry* (1971) and *Death Wish* (1974) had been steadily growing in popularity, and *Taxi Driver*'s first audiences are reported to have clapped and cheered at the climactic scene of Travis' massacre.[60] One moviegoer was so moved that he returned fourteen times: this, of course, was John Hinckley, Jr., aimless young man, oil industry scion, gun collector, new recruit for Lew Rockwell's American Nazi Party, and stalker of Jodie Foster (reenacting the "romance" and "rescue" plots). Hinckley's obsession with Travis Bickle became evidence for his successful insanity plea at the trial for the attempted

murder of Ronald Reagan ("assassination" plot).[61] Hinckley, having read the film without any protective lenses of irony or moral judgment, *not entirely unlike other viewers*, identified completely with the film's killer.

Whereas Travis Bickle, like Sartre's famous description of the religious zealot who goes swimming just so he can be "infuriated" by the sight of women in bathing suits,[62] immerses himself in the world of all-night porn theaters that he decries as filthy, in David Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999), part-time projectionist Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt) instead has as his favorite diversion the insertion of an individual frame of pornography into a children's adventure film — a subliminal drop of toxicity that disturbs theaters full of kids without anyone being aware of why: "One-twenty-fourth of a second. That's how long the penis flashes up there. Towering, slippery, red and terrible, and no one knows they've seen it."[63] The film we're watching, Fincher suggests, is likewise a tiny subversive provocation inserted into the otherwise anodyne stream of Hollywood motion picture product. Roland Barthes might have called this the homeopathic dose of critique, inoculating us against anything more far-reaching.[64]

Fight Club, though another neo-noir, is distinct from the "vigilante movie" and its historical mise-en-scène; at the end of the millennium, any alternative to the City (even the communes in Vermont that Iris had dreamed of running away to) is gone, and there is no longer any "away" to run. We are trapped in the Baudrillardian simulacra of late capitalism: "Everything is a copy of a copy of a copy."[65] The material brutality of capitalism, with its spreadsheet morality, is hidden within its statistical tables, as Jack well knows:

> JACK (V.O.)
>
> You take the number of vehicles in the field (A) and multiply it by the probable rate of failure (B), multiply the result by the average out-of-court settlement (C). A times B times C equals X. If X is less than the cost of a recall, we don't do one.[66]

> If there are underground tremors, rumors of discontent, they are muted by IKEA catalogs and their promise of easy luxury, the sound of the Washington Consensus and the record-setting Stock Exchange. At least, so it seems — until the citadels of Capital start literally imploding around us.

And so it is that we find ourselves occupying the point of view of Jack (Ed Norton), crushed in the embrace of Bob (Meat Loaf), face pressed into what Jack's voiceover tells us are Bob's "bitch tits," as (according to the stage directions) "Bob weeps openly."[67] The main problem with late capitalism, the movie explains, is that it's emasculating: without a great depression to survive or a great war to fight, men are left only with work and shopping to give life meaning. The only question left, apparently, is the one Jack levels at Bob: "Are you really a man?"[68] The way to find out, obviously, is to really beat the shit out of someone and be beaten in return, entering the masochistic bonds of an all-male brotherhood. Once again, the intensity of alienation and commodity fetishism appear as a crisis — if not yet a crisis of capitalism, then a crisis of masculinity.

In a sharp observation on the politics of affect, Silvan Tomkins writes: "if you believe it is *distressing* to see an adult cry rather than *disgusting* to see an adult cry, you also believe human beings are basically good rather than evil… [and] that the promotion of social welfare by government is more important than the maintenance of law and order."[69] *Fight Club* invites us to feel disgust at Bob's crying, to ask "Is that what a man looks like?"[70] For all its anarchistic gestures, then, is this secretly a "law and order" film? Consider its body politics: if the contemptible form of being a man is to be so fat as to have "bitch tits," the form of manhood held up for our admiration is the physique of Brad Pitt's wiry, ripped torso — not unlike the self-disciplined body that Travis Bickle creates for himself through painstaking exercise and injunctions that "[t]here will be no more pills, no more bad food… no more destroyers of my body. From now on it'll be total organization. Every muscle must be tight."[71] The fascist body must be

proven over and over, shown to be invulnerable to pain (Travis holds a hand over a flame; Tyler administers a lye burn to Jack's hand). Reluctance to undergo pain, of course, marks a man as "a pussy."[72] The cruelty, as antifascists have had to point out again and again, is the point.

But the movie is full of other politico-affective affordances, too. Isn't it, after all, about the process of breaking away from sad affects, finding excitement and joy in collective action against the system? The glee with which the Space Monkeys demolish the props and properties of consumer capitalism invites affective contagion. The specter of class consciousness reappears as Tyler threatens the police commissioner:

> We're the people who do your laundry and cook your food and serve your dinner. We guard you while you sleep. We drive the ambulances. We process your insurance claims. We control every part of your life. So don't fuck with us.[73]

And as many have pointed out, those half-naked, sweat-glistening male bodies at the fight club are also available as objects of gay desire (not incidentally reflecting the positionality of the narrative's original author, Chuck Pahlaniuk) — even if, here as in hegemonic Hollywood film, "homoerotic desire… signals destruction, despair, and tragedy."[74] The simultaneous invocation and repudiation of queer desire is an explosive combination; in spite of the distortions of Reich and Relgis, as Judith Halberstam reminds us, there is a real history of queer presence in fascist movements, where a persecution of queer people has not always been incompatible with participation in queer practices.[75]

How straightforwardly can *Fight Club* be read? Its departures from the codes of Hollywood realism are frequent, and everything takes on a satirical thrust. At the same time, it continually makes gestures in revolutionary and even utopian directions:

> TYLER
>
> The world I see — you're stalking elk through the damp canyon forests around the ruins of Rockefeller Center. You wear leather clothes that will last you the rest of your life. You climb the wrist-thick vines that wrap the Sears Tower. You see tiny figures pounding corn and laying strips of venison on the empty car pool lane of the ruins of a superhighway…[76]

Yet the contents of these flashes of radical dreaming are so often just more of the same hegemonic straight cis masculinity, the same misogyny ("A generation of men raised by women. Look what it's done to you"), the same authoritarianism ("The first rule of Project Mayhem is you don't ask questions")… Is this not the hallmark of fascist aesthetics: the representation of a violent reimposition of norms as radical and revolutionary?[77]

The famously contradictory critical response afforded *Fight Club* is even more pronounced in the case of our third exemplar, Todd Philips' *Joker* (2019). Sean Redmond attributes its "'split' reception" to the contradictions of the film itself: "the film's textual and ideological operations… are built or seeded on ambiguity or ambivalence."[78] On the one hand, as Jeffrey Brown argues, "The radical decision to depict the origin of the Joker in *Joker*, without including Batman in any way, changes the typical superhero-based film by removing the hegemonic device inherent to most tales."[79] In that surprising void (*Joker* appears at the very peak of the hegemony of the Hollywood superhero film), the audience is set free to pay attention to the horrific social conditions of Gotham City that produce an Arthur Fleck (Joaquin Phoenix) and motivate his transformation into the Joker; even more subversively, the propagation of this gesture into a climactic riot of Jokers "suggest[s] that the disenfranchised can resist consenting to be dominated."[80] The Joker's mask was to be found worn at Black Lives Matter protests the following year.[81] Nevertheless, Fleck's "deformist masculinity" enjoys a troubling relationship with the "conformist masculinity" from which it is systematically excluded, one with even

more disturbing real-world resonances: his capacity for enacting violent revenge for his exclusion by the world places him in immediate conversation with the contemporary figure of the far right "incel."[82] Persecuted by teenagers of color, rejected and ignored by Black women in his loneliness and need, Fleck is more than capable of reproducing the white supremacist violence and cruelty of the system. Feminist critics such as Stephanie Zacharek were quick to predict that the Joker would be "adopted as the patron saint of incels."[83] Indeed, incel viewers seem to have found the figure of Todd Philips' Joker "an emblem of the toxic rage inside, a transmissive object that can communicate the poisonous incel self-experience."[84]

What kinds of affect does *Joker* afford? Clearly, the narrative arc is strung tautly between shame/humiliation (abjection) and rage (revenge). However, Sean Redmond is not alone in noting the "indescribable joy" on Fleck's face as he dances on the steps, transformed into a creature of terrible grace: is this not a scene of "becoming capable of feeling or doing something new," one of the hallmarks of joyful affect? And what is the scene of his triumph, standing atop a ruined cop car in the center of the riot, if not a vision of "the growth of shared power"?[85] Indeed, it is hard for me not to be carried away by the joyous affects that permeate those two scenes in *Joker*. Are these radical moments?

Whatever joy is, it is not essentially good nor incapable of being recuperated for potentially fascist ends. "The Nazis at the Nuremberg rallies were filled with joyous affect," John Protevi acknowledges,

but this joy of being swept up into an emergent body politic was *passive*. The Nazis were stratified; their joy was triggered by the presence of a transcendent figure manipulating symbols — flags and faces — and by the imposition of a rhythm or a forced entrainment — marches and salutes and songs. Upon leaving the rally, they had no autonomous power… to make mutually empowering connections. In fact, they could only feel sad at being isolated, removed from the thrilling presence of the leader. They had become members of a society of the spectacle, to use Guy Debord's term: their relations with others were mediated by the third term of the spectacle the others had attended

(the in-group) or had not attended (the out-group).[86]

For Protevi, joy becomes politically radical when it is "*active* joyous affect."[87] But what happens when that affect is screened and commodified by Hollywood? Does it not become spectacular, productive not of active agents but of passive spectators? Is the basic form of the spectacle altered when, like Santos' *Reportaje*, it is produced, distributed, and consumed within the *Sindicato* Único *de Espectáculos Públicos* (the theater and film industry branch of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT union in revolutionary Spain), as part of an autonomous proletarian "public spectacle"?

But maybe here we are asking the wrong questions again, or at least the wrong questions about affect. Where fascism eludes the traps set for it by cognition, affect precedes them. We make and remake ourselves in and through the media that surrounds us and that we seek out — it is very difficult but necessary, here, to avoid the kinds of description of this ongoing process that posit the viewer as sovereign consciousness, instrumentalizing film for its pre-existing purposes like an Unmoved First Mover, and at the same time to avoid describing the equally naive representation of the viewer as an empty screen waiting to reflect whatever it is shown. If filmmakers bear their share of responsibility for the politico-affective affordances of their visions, audiences also go to the movie theater (or, more often now, stream content to their devices) in search of the affects they crave. How to feel, now, at the end of the world as we know it, is a question that is almost impossible to even ask, given how thoroughly life and work under late capitalism demand first that we modulate our affects, keeping them to ourselves — not breaking down in sorrow, laughing in incredulity, or erupting in fury, at least not on the clock — when it does not demand that we continually share and like them through its preferred monetized platforms. We need practices of filmmaking and film viewership that afford and cultivate the kind of attunement to our own feelings and the feelings of others that would be characteristic of the society that can be glimpsed, if only in its historical possibility, in the twenty-one minutes and thirty-eight seconds runtime of *Reportaje del movimiento revolucionario en Barcelona*.

Conclusion: for antifascist struggle

My exploration of fascist affective affordances in these three films is perhaps inconclusive, in need of further study and elaboration.[88] What I hope is sufficiently persuasive here, first of all, is the sense that the very incoherence of these films is a hallmark of fascist discourse. Secondly, the fact that fascist discourse doesn't have to cohere with itself, that its very incoherence is indeed a source of its power, is of importance for anarchists organizing against fascism. Finally, I hope to have shown not only that a concept of affective affordances provides a stronger alternative model to concepts arising from the Marxist tradition, but that it is in fact a model *proper to the ontology of anarchism*, that it stands in affinity with anarchism's materialism and realism. Even in our dreaming of and working toward a more beautiful world, we are on some level respecters of the world's reality, where the fascists dream of a world that bends to the will to power of the charismatic leader, the engineer, the master race.

Notes

1 García Calvo, Agustín. "Qué es el Estado?" *Amor y Rabia*, no. 74 (Aug. 2018): 4, 21.

2 Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2007), 42.

3 Mateo Santos, *El Cine Bajo la Svástica: La Influencia Fascista en el Cinema Internacional* (Ediciones "Tierra y Libertad," 1937), 3.

4 Santos, *El Cine Bajo la Svástica*, 17-18.

5 Santos, *El Cine Bajo la Svástica*, 5.

6 Jeanelle K. Hope, "The Black Antifascist Tradition: A Primer" in *No Pasarán: Antifascist Dispatches from a World in Crisis*, Shane Burley, ed. (Chico: CA: AK Press, 2022), 67-68.

7 Engels to Mehring 1893, cited in Sidney Hook, *Toward the Understanding of Karl Marx: A Revolutionary Interpretation* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1933), 282.

8 Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?: Burning Questions of Our Movement* in *Lenin Collected Works: Vol. 5* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 384.

9 William Gillis, "Review of Shane Burley, *Fascism Today: What It Is And How To End It*," *Center for a Stateless Society*, 31 (Jan 2018): https://c4ss.org/content/50454

10 Shane Burley, "Introduction: What Is Antifascism?" in *No Pasarán,* 9; Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

11 Mark Bray, *Antifa: The Antifascist Handbook* (New York: Melville House, 2017), xiii.

12 See, for instance, Nate Silver, "The Mythology Of Trump's 'Working Class' Support," *FiveThirtyEight*, 3 May 2016: https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-mythology-of-trumps-working-class-support/. See also, Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu, "It's Time to Bust the Myth: Most Trump Voters Were Not Working Class," *Washington Post*, 5 June 2017: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/05/its-time-to-bust-the-myth-most-trump-voters-were-not-working-class/.

13 See, for instance, David Norman Smith, "Authoritarianism Reimagined: The Riddle of Trump's Base," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 60:2 (2019): 210–23, and Caroline Vakil, "Why GOP Voters Are so Loyal to Trump," *The Hill*, 30 Apr. 2023: https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/3978590-why-gop-voters-are-so-loyal-to-trump/.

14 Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Mary Higgins, ed. (London: Vincent R. Carfagno, Souvenir, 1972), 192. Sadly, this particular psychologization of fascism is to be found among postwar anarchists as well: notably, Eugen Relgis' *Las aberraciones sexuales en la Alemania nazi* (1949) vaguely but insistently identifies fascism with "abnormal" expressions of German sexuality, from "virile, excessively masculine" men to "virilized women" and "pseudo-Amazons." See Relgis, *Las aberraciones sexuales en la Alemania nazi* (Ediciones Universo, 1949), 9, 13.

15 Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 9.

16 See Jacob Johanssen, *Fantasy, Online Misogyny and the Manosphere: Male Bodies of Dis/Inhibition* (London: Routledge, 2021).

17 Edouard Rothen, "Spectacle," in *L'Encyclopédie anarchiste Vol. 4*, ed. Sébastien Faure, (Editions de la Librairie Internationale, 1934), 2650, 2655.

18 "Idéologie" in *Encyclopédie anarchiste: Vol. 2*, 936.

19 See Pierre Ansart, *Proudhon's Sociology* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2023), chapter 5, and René Berthier, "Actualité de Bakounine," *Les éditions Alternative Libertaire* (11 May 2001).

20 Mato-Topé, "Quand Les 'Cahiers du Cinéma' Faisaient de la Politique: Ou Anatomie d'un Rapport Idéologies Marxistes/Théories Cinématographiques," *Bibliolib* (1 Oct. 2006): http://bibliolib.net/article.php3?id_article=513.

21 Lebel cited in Mato-Topé; Daniel Fairfax, *The Red Years of* Cahiers du Cinéma *(1968-1973): Ideology and Politics: Vol. 1* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), 151-52.

22 Mato-Topé, "Quand Les 'Cahiers du Cinéma' Faisaient de la Politique."

23 Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," *Screen* 12:1 (1971): 29.

24 For a fuller view of this history, see Richard Porton, ed., *Arena One: On Anarchist Cinema*, PM Press, 2009, chapters 1-4, and Jesse Cohn, *Underground Passages: Anarchist Resistance Culture, 1848-2011* (San Francisco: AK Press, 2014), part 4, chapter 4: "The Stuttering Image: Anarchist Cinema."

25 Ameya Tripathi, "Mateo Santos and the Documentary of Occupation: 'Cine Social' in the Spanish Anarchist Revolution" in *The Space Between: Literature and Culture 1914-1945: Vol. 16* (2020): https://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-space-between-literature-and-culture-1914-1945/vol16_2020_tripathi.

26 Mateo Santos, "Periodismo Ultramoderno," *Popular Film* 10:483 (1935): 1.

27 Joan Ramon Resina, "Historical Discourse and the Propaganda Film: Reporting the Revolution in Barcelona," *New Literary History* 29:1 (1998): 78.

28 Santos, "Periodismo Ultramoderno," 1.

29 Joan Ramon Resina, 75-76.

30 David Bordwell, "Historical Poetics of Cinema," in *The Cinematic Text: Methods and Approaches*, ed. R. Barton Palmer, (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 385.

31 Marta Harnecker, "The Ideological Structure," *Theoretical Review* no. 14 (1980), 32.

32 Roman Jakobson, "Verbal Communication," *Scientific American* 227:3 (1972): 76; Robin Wood, "Fascism/Cinema," in *Sexual Politics and Narrative Film: Hollywood and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 17-18.

33 Frighteningly, the digitalized copy of *La Peste Rouge* that can be found on the internet is billed by the "American Patriot" account that has posted it as "Based Uncensored Truth."

34 Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory* 34:6 (2006): 691; Stuart Hall, "Encoding/De-

coding," in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, edited by Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 128–38; Shangwei Wu and Tabe Bergman, "An Active, Resistant Audience — but in Whose Interest?" *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 16:1 (2019): 110-11.

35 Diagram by Sven Ross, reproduced in Wu and Bergman, 112.

36 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 51.

37 Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2006), 4, italics mine.

38 See, for instance, Ben Brucato, "Toward a Peak Everything: Postanarchism and a Technology Evaluation Schema for Communities in Crisis," *Anarchist Studies* 21:1 (2013): 28–52; Michael Truscello and Uri Gordon, "Whose Streets? Anarchism, Technology and the Petromodern State," *Anarchist Studies* 21:1 (2013): 9–27.

39 Lester Del Rey offers a striking example of the latter interpretation. See Lester Del Rey, "Review of *2001: A Space Odyssey*" in *Galaxy Science Fiction* 26:6 (1968): 193–94.

40 Nick Montgomery and Carla Bergman, *Joyful Militancy: Building Resistance in Toxic Times* (San Francisco: AK Press, 2017), 277-78.

41 Montgomery and Bergman, 29-30; Gilles Deleuze cited in Montgomery and Bergman, 54.

42 Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 12; Stanley Schachter, "The Interaction of Cognitive and Physiological Determinants of Emotional State," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology: Vol. 1*, Leonard Berkowitz, ed., (Cambridge, MA: Academic Press, 1964), 71.

43 Bakunin cited in Daniel Colson, *A Little Philosophical Lexicon of Anarchism from Proudhon to Deleuze*, trans. Jesse Cohn, (New York: Minor Compositions, 2019), 144.

44 Joel Krueger and Giovanna Colombetti, "Affective Affordances and Psychopathology," *Discipline Filosofiche*, 28:2 (2018): 221–47: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv8xnhwc.14. Krueger and Colombetti further define these as "people, places, and things [perceived] as affording regulative opportunities to amplify, suppress, extend, enrich, and explore the phenomenal and temporal character of our affective experiences." See Krueger and Colombetti, 224.

45 Spinoza cited. in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 38.

46 Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (New York: Verso Books, 2014), 256.

47 Comolli and Narboni, 31-34.

48 Comolli and Narboni, 33.

49 Krueger and Colombetti, 232.

50 Sílvio Gallo, "Eu, o Outro e Tantos Outros: Educação, Alteridade e Filosofia Da

Diferença," *Anais Do II Congresso Internacional Cotidiano* (2008): 3. Gallo adds: "[I]s it possible to think the other in a different way, not as representation? Yes, you can think of the other as difference" (8) — precisely what both excites and disgusts Travis.

51 Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan… and Beyond* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2003), 42, 61-62.

52 Wood, "Ideology, Genre, Auteur," *Film Comment* 13:1 (1977): 47.

53 Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 185.

54 Paul Schrader, *Taxi Driver*, shooting script, 1976.

55 Schrader, *Taxi Driver*, 3, 24, 27, 42; Amy Taubin, *Taxi Driver* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 41.

56 Taubin, *Taxi Driver*, 50, 6.

57 Schrader, *Taxi Driver*, 100.

58 Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 46.

59 Tomkins, 763.

60 Laurent Bouzereau, *Ultraviolent Movies: From Sam Peckinpah to Quentin Tarantino* (New York: Citadel Press, 2000), 43.

61 See Robert G. Meyer and Christopher M. Weaver, *Law and Mental Health: A Case-Based Approach* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013), 120-126.

62 Jean-Paul Sartre, "Portrait of the Antisemite," *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (Devon, UK: Meridian Books, 1956), 282.

63 Jim Uhls, *Fight Club* shooting script, 1998, p. 34.

64 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1991), 40-41.

65 Jim Uhls, *Fight Club* shooting script, 1998, 12.

66 Uhls, *Fight Club*, 23.

67 Uhls, *Fight Club*, 2.

68 Uhls, *Fight Club*, 70.

69 Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 765, italics mine.

70 Uhls, *Fight Club*, 47

71 Schrader, *Taxi Driver*, 58.

72 Uhls, *Fight Club*, 38.

73 Uhls, *Fight Club*, 83.

74 Thomas Peele, "*Fight Club*'s Queer Representations," *JAC*, 21:4 (2001): 864; see also Andrew Slade's "To Live Like Fighting Cocks: *Fight Club* and the Ethics of Masculinity," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 28:3 (2011): 230–38: https://doi.org/10.1080/10509200802640988

75 Judith Halberstam, "'The Killer in Me Is the Killer in You': Homosexuality and Fascism" in Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011),146–72.

76 Uhls, *Fight Club*, 87.

77 Uhls, *Fight Club*, 33, 94.

78 Sean Redmond, "That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore: A Critical Exploration of Joker: Introduction." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 19:1 (2021): 2: https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2020.1864197

79 Jeffrey Brown, "A City without a Hero: *Joker* and Rethinking Hegemony," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 19:1 (2021): 11: https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2020.1864177.

80 Brown, "A City Without a Hero," 12-13.

81 Brown, "A City Without a Hero," 16.

82 Misha Kavka, "A Tale of Two Masculinities: Joaquin Phoenix, Todd Phillips, and *Joker*'s Double Can(n)on," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 19:1 (2021): 31, 38; Caroline Bainbridge, "Cracking Up: *Joker* and the Mediatisation of the Arse-End of the World," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 19:1 (2021): 59-60.

83 Stephanie Zacharek, "The Problem with *Joker* Isn't Its Brutal Violence. It's the Muddled Message It Sends About Our Times," *Time*, 2 Oct. 2019: https://time.com/5688305/joker-todd-phillips-review/

84 Bainbridge, "Cracking Up," 60-61.

85 Montgomery and Bergman, *Joyful Militancy*, p. 238.

86 John Protevi, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 50-51, italics mine.

87 Protevi, *Political Affect*, 51, italics mine.

88 I am no psychologist, certainly, and my grasp of Tomkins' vast theoretical apparatus, itself in need of scientific testing and updating, could be questioned.