

Punk Cinema

by Stacy Thompson

*Abstract: Despite the casual use to which the term “punk cinema” has been put since the inception of punk rock, the concept, as reimagined in this essay, denotes an identifiable aesthetic, bolstered by a correlative economics. Adherents of this model demand of cinema what punks have demanded of music—that it encourage production, in any medium. Punk cinema employs an open, writerly aesthetic, engages with history, and critiques its own commodification. It can be negatively defined as non-Hollywoodized, where a Hollywood aesthetic demands a closed, readerly text unconcerned with history and obfuscating its position within the relations of production. Punk films, such as *The Punk Rock Movie* (Don Letts, 1978) and *Rude Boy* (Jack Hazan, 1980), foreground their conditions of production, which stand as material signifiers of the possibility of making music or film, participating in critique, or doing both at once.*

As with any cultural movement that has enjoyed some longevity, competing definitions of punk abound, with some individuals swearing fealty to one or another, while other self-proclaimed punks cordon off the term as “that which cannot be defined.” At one end of the continuum is the suburban youth who works for his spending money at the Hot Topic store in a mall, wears the store’s apparel, and sells major label-produced CDs by Blink 182 and the White Stripes. This youth’s cohort includes everyone who encounters punk primarily through videos on MTV and VH1. At the other end of the spectrum are “genuine” punks who play in anarcho-punk bands, listen solely to independently produced anarcho-punk, steal or panhandle their means of subsistence, squat in abandoned buildings, and eschew most forms of commodity exchange. Those in the first group define punk in terms of a loosely construed aesthetic, while those in the second define it in terms of its economics—its production and reproduction.

“Punk cinema,” loosely imagined, seems to describe a particular aesthetic that mimics punk music’s speed, frenetic energy, anger, antiauthoritarian stance, irony, style, anomie, or disillusionment. It is in this sense that Darren Aronofsky characterized his latest film, *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), as “a punk movie.”¹

I wish to propose a more dialectical approach, one that grasps the aesthetic of punk cinema that has emerged from and been informed by “punk economics.” Punk rock’s aesthetic does not pass into punk cinema unchanged; rather, punk’s

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concern with economics becomes the obverse of punk's aesthetic. Any attempt to articulate the logic of punk cinema's aesthetic must therefore attend to the assumptions about—and commitments to—the particular modes of production that punk cinema bears.

A do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic figures as one of the constitutive and liberatory elements of punk that evolved from this dialectical relationship between aesthetics and economics. For the term "punk cinema" to carry some weight, to describe something more than a consumable style, it must bear, aesthetically and economically, a filmic version of punk's democratizing dictum, most famously expressed in a set of diagrams in the December 1976 issue of *Sideburns*, a fanzine (or 'zine) devoted to the Stranglers. The diagrams demonstrate how to play three guitar chords—A, E, and G—and alongside them runs text that reads: "This is a chord. This is another. This is a third. Now form a band."² In short, anyone can produce punk, and should. In its best moments, musically and filmically, aesthetically and economically, punk reminds us that rather than one giant, linear feed pipe with Time-Warner-AOL-Verizon-Microsoft-Disney-McGraw-Hill at the production end providing all of our consumables, we need to become producers ourselves, to lay out our own rhizomes of converging and diverging pipes. We need more little pipes, not a single monstrous one.

What Is Punk Cinema? According to this working definition, for music to be punk, a band must be capable of producing, distributing, and performing it with little or no specialized training, without prohibitive financial investments, and without ties to corporate investors. In other words, the band's music may not be produced by one of the five major labels responsible for roughly 80 percent of the music produced in the U.S. In 2004, the "big five" are Time Warner, Sony, Seagram, Bertelsmann AG, and EMI. These labels bear a profound stigma within this conceptualization of punk because of the degree of ownership and control they exert over the bands they place under contract. Once a band has signed with a major, that label owns all the band's output and exercises "creative control" over the band's sound as well as how it is packaged, promoted, and distributed.

Proof of punk's stringency about—and attention to—what does and does not qualify as punk within this definition appears in every issue of *MaximumRockNRoll* (*MRR*), the most influential, widely read, internationally distributed punk rock 'zine, with a circulation of roughly twenty-five thousand. The "Ad Criteria," which appear on the first page of each issue, have changed little since publication began in 1982. In the August 2002 issue, they read, "We will not accept major label or related ads, or ads for comps or EPs that include major label bands."³ Not only does *MRR* refuse corporate advertising money, but it will not review music produced by corporate labels or interview bands signed to the major labels or any of their affiliates.

Attending strictly to economic or production concerns does not produce a satisfactory definition of punk rock, however, because any number of bands and even whole subgenres of rock—the early 1990s "lo-fi" music of Sebadoh, Guided by Voices, and Daniel Johnston to name but one—have practiced DIY economics without obtaining or even desiring punk status. Excluding aesthetics might leave

us in the potentially awkward position of affirming that the Grateful Dead was one of the most financially successful punk bands following its formation of an independent record label, Ice Nine, to publish the group's music and books.

Pinning down a "punk aesthetic" has proven a slippery business, to which the work of Dick Hebdige, Lawrence Grossberg, Tricia Henry, Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons, and Greil Marcus, among many others, attests.⁴ The best efforts isolate one punk scene, usually the late-1970s British Scene, and attempt to articulate its major formal patterns or problematics. Grossberg, for example, describes the aesthetic of the British Scene as "critical-alternative," in contrast to "critical" rock, which "affirms and valorizes only its own negativity," and "alternative" rock, which "mounts an implicit attack on dominant culture." But while the Sex Pistols fit nicely within the "critical-alternative" category, Grossberg categorizes the Ramones as "experiential-alternative," because the band's music "valorizes its own affirmation of change and movement."⁵

Perhaps the distance between New York and London is responsible for this lack of correlation, but the point is that a single aesthetic, however broadly imagined, cannot be made to encompass the range of punk bands in existence. Rather than attempting to stretch a wide enough net in which to catch punk aesthetics, I want to return to my focus on the interrelatedness of aesthetics and economics and propose that what the cinema accepts from punk is the mandate to express that relation as an element of its aesthetic. When punk passes into film, it demands of film that it offer up material traces of its production, that it open itself up to its audience as an "open" text by pointing out how it came to be, rather than reifying its means of production and thereby folding in on itself as a "closed" text.

A cognate of this aesthetic and economic model could embrace only those films made without any support—in terms of production, distribution, or exhibition—from the eight major studios that dominate the film industry today (Columbia/Tri-Star, Warner Bros., Paramount, Universal, MGM, Twentieth Century Fox, New Line Cinema, and Disney).⁶ Additionally, punk filmmakers, like punk musicians, would produce their work with little or no specialized training and without prohibitive financial investments. Their work would have to reflect these material concerns aesthetically. Thus, the filmic version of the *Sideburns* diagrams might read: "This is a camera. This is film stock. This is a subject. Now shoot a movie."

This push for democratization, and the economic prerequisites that it demands, disqualifies numerous films that might otherwise be considered punk cinema (according to the more conventional definition of this term that I am trying to supplant). The pace, violence, and irony of *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994), for example, correlates with hundreds of punk songs—The Eyes' "Kill Your Parents," for example, with which the film shares a similar theme—but Warner Bros. produced the film, owns it, and exercised control over its creation. The film also employs a panoply of technically sophisticated practices that potentially stand between spectators and their desire to make their own movies. Similarly, Alex Cox's *Sid and Nancy* (1986) takes the Sex Pistols and Nancy Spungen as its subjects but was bankrolled by MGM and maintains the high gloss of a Hollywood product,

and Julien Temple's *The Filth and the Fury* (2000), a documentary on the Sex Pistols, is a New Line Cinema production with the veneer of a big-budget film.

Within the parameters of the definition of punk cinema that I am proposing, the major Hollywood studios stand in as the filmic analog for the major labels of the recording industry. Both perform gatekeeping functions as defined by the dominant aesthetic and economic model. Consequently, the studios' usual products signify the antithesis of punk film.

The Punk Marquee: What's Showing? Up to this point, I have been arguing that the economics of punk inflect a film's aesthetics in identifiable ways; in fact, the two definitions converge in order to buttress and extend one another. But what does this process produce? What do the results look like?

Many early punk films had punk itself as their subject, such as Amos Poe's *Blank Generation* (1976), a documentary in which punk bands perform at Max's Kansas City and CBGBs, two of the pivotal nightclub venues in the New York punk scene of 1974–76. Gina Marchetti notes that in two of Poe's films, *Blank Generation* and *Night Lunch* (1975), the audiences at the shows appear in the films as characters of a sort. She adds that *Blank Generation* "is actively engaged, through point-of-view camera positioning and handheld, dance-like camera movement, in the punk performance. The filmmaker becomes part of the punk crowd, part of the punk event."⁷ The barrier between producer and consumer becomes permeable, so that viewers become not punk musicians but performers nevertheless, and the camera and its operator become part of the audience to the point of dancing with the fans. *Blank Generation* is also a low-budget enterprise that was made independently of the Hollywood studios.

Unlike *Blank Generation*, in which the filmmaker becomes a fan, in *The Punk Rock Movie* (1978), the fan becomes a filmmaker. Don Letts, a Rastafarian DJ at the Roxy club in London, shot the film. Jon Savage writes: "Caught up in the general sense of empowerment, the DJ picked up a Super-8 camera."⁸ The film is formally similar to *Blank Generation* in that it is composed almost entirely of footage of punk bands rehearsing and performing. Letts shot most of *The Punk Rock Movie* from the audience's point of view; the camera was handheld (no Steadicam); available light was used almost exclusively; and the camera seems to follow Letts's shifting attention as he focuses on lead singer Wayne County, pans to a guitarist, zooms in on the guitarist's hands or face, zooms out, pans left to take in part of the audience, and so on. The sound is not professionally mixed but includes the ambient sounds in the club. For one scene, Letts shot a close-up of Wayne County's face while standing close to one of the speakers. The sound of the bass guitar thus drowns out the other instruments, and the vocals are barely audible.

Letts almost completely eschews narrative. There is no voice-over, and neither subtitles nor intertitles inform the viewer of when or where each scene was shot or who is performing. The film's sole organizing principle is the punk song and the English punk scene of 1976–78; each scene begins with a British Scene band beginning to play at the Roxy. When the band finishes its song, the scene is over and there is a direct cut to the next band and song. Letts offers no real context

in which to place the music or bands. The film appears to be simply a conglomerate of crudely filmed pieces of random concert footage, which in one sense it is.

The open formal structure of *The Punk Rock Movie* does not foreclose possible readings or meanings to the extent that commercial, hence nonpunk, narrative films do, whether they are documentaries or not. Consequently, the film disrupts the division of labor that other movies establish.⁹ Letts's film militates against the aesthetic conventions of narrative Hollywood films, which attempt to guide readings along carefully described channels, pushing the labor of reading toward the pole of pure absorption and away from active construction of the text. In Letts's case, the filmmaker ceases to be the creator of a univocal meaning, and much of the labor of interpretation falls to the viewer. The film opens itself out, encouraging and prodding the spectator to shift from the position of a passive (to a greater or lesser degree) recipient to that of an active producer of the film's possible significations. The viewer controls the instruments for producing meaning, instruments that Hollywood filmmakers usually reserve as their own property, for their own use. Letts's film is therefore "writerly" rather than "readerly" in Roland Barthes's terms, and it functions as Barthes imagines the literary work does that makes "the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text."¹⁰

Walter Benjamin theorizes this shift from consumption to production through his concept of the "mimetic faculty." If punk initiates movement over that divide, it is in part because of a process similar to what Benjamin describes when he proposes that the means by which certain cultural artifacts are produced bear with them the power to "stimulate" and "awaken" the "mimetic faculty" that lies dormant in a group of potential producers, of not-yet-producing producers.¹¹ As the example of Letts's film demonstrates, it is entirely possible that the means of producing mid- to late-1970s British and American punk—the DIY approach—generated a social and cultural charge that emerged from rock music and fashion to infuse a group of filmmakers who translated, and are still translating, punk's noncorporate, DIY logic into their own medium.

Aesthetically, Letts's film bears material traces of its low budget as well as the director's inattention to professional production values. These traces combine and contribute to an aesthetic that communicates a version of Benjamin's mimetic function, an implicit message that not only can anyone interpret this film and become a producer of thought, interpretation, and critique, but anyone can become a producer, make a film, pick up a camera, and start shooting without concern for the codes of Hollywood editing, lighting, mise-en-scène, narrative structure, directing, and producing. The film stands as material proof that a fan need not remain wholly bound to consumption but can partake actively in the scene; in Letts's words: "[The Clash's] DIY ethic inspired me to pick up a Super 8mm camera and record what was going on at that time."¹² Letts's example also indicates that the mimetic function is not limited to a particular medium but jumps between media. Inspired by a shift in the means of representation in one medium, music, Letts translated that shift to another medium, film.

Thus far, I have drawn examples of punk cinema solely from documentary-style films that take punk rock or punks as their subject. However, for the purposes of the

definition I am proposing here, punk cinema need not concern itself with punk per se. A question immediately arises: if punk cinema does not take punk as its subject, then should, for example, California Newsreel or Andy Warhol films be considered punk cinema? What about the French New Wave? Are *Dutchman* (Anthony Harvey, 1966), *Sleep* (Warhol, 1963), *Paris Belongs to Us* (Jaques Rivette, 1960), and other avant-garde films examples of punk cinema?

To grant punk cinema greater efficacy as a descriptor, it is necessary to articulate further the aesthetic to which the term refers. Grossberg's categorization of a subsection of punk as "critical-alternative" serves as a starting point, although both halves of his category might be tightened. Punk cinema's aesthetic can be understood as "critical" not only in Grossberg's sense of affirming "its own negativity" but also because of what it negates or critiques—the capitalization of film through commodification. This critique assumes an "alternative" form that "mounts an implicit attack on dominant culture"¹³ (so long as we sharpen Grossberg's "dominant culture" and read it as the dominant Hollywood aesthetic—the closed form or readerly text).¹⁴

Before turning to an example of this dominant aesthetic, I shall first examine the film *Rude Boy* (Jack Hazan, 1980). By resisting Hollywood's aesthetic as well as its dominant economic model, *Rude Boy* is punk because it resists its own circulation as a commodity. So that punk cinema might figure more clearly against the background of the major production companies that it opposes, I will subsequently interrogate the commercial studio film *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999), which initially seems to resist the Hollywood aesthetic but, finally, violently capitulates to it.

At the Bijoux: *Rude Boy*. A series of documentary-style films emerged during the first several years of punk rock's history. The documentary form prevailed in films about punk for several years, although fictional films as well as hybrid documentary-fictional films soon arrived on the scene. In fact, the hybrid form has achieved popularity as a subgenre of punk cinema. Produced by Jack Hazan and David Mingay and released by Buzzy Enterprises Limited, *Rude Boy* is a fairly early example of this subgenre. The film was produced independently of the major film production companies and without any financial assistance from either the Clash (its nominal subject) or CBS (the Clash's record company). Hazan claims that the film cost about 500,000 pounds, or about US\$1 million to produce, reasonably cheap by Hollywood standards in 1978 but still prohibitive for many would-be independent punk filmmakers.

In addition to the producers' DIY economic approach, Hazan and Mingay cleave to an aesthetic that suggests that anyone can make a movie. Shot between 1977 and 1979 and released in the spring of 1980, the film employs many of the formal elements of *The Punk Rock Movie*. The producers devote significant screen time to concert footage of the Clash, some of which is shot with a handheld camera (but not a Steadicam), from the point of view of the audience. As the main character, Ray Gange (who plays himself), begins working for the Clash as a roadie, shots are incorporated from behind the stage. All of the nonconcert footage is shot using a stationary camera that never tracks. The camera waits for the actors to

enter the scene before panning or tilting to follow their movements. Like Letts's film, neither a voiceover nor text orients the audience as to the film's time period or location. The sound has been professionally mixed but was recorded on location rather than "foleyed in" subsequently.

The film sporadically documents two years in the life of Ray Gange, starting when he is a twenty-year-old London punk and Clash fan who cheats the dole by moonlighting at a pornography bookstore in London. Gange's friends include Joe Strummer, the Clash's lead singer, and Johnny Green, the Clash's road manager, who offers Gange the job as a roadie. The film shifts back and forth between Gange's fictional life and concert and studio footage of the Clash, although it also combines the two: Gange appears in the crowd at several "real" Clash shows; chats with Joe Strummer about politics on two occasions when Strummer, as himself, explains his political stance (and Gange expresses either his own, a fictional one, or some hybrid of the two); and speaks to the crowd at a Rock against Racism (RAR) concert (historical, not fictional) in support of the Clash and to quell angry National Front supporters.

The film blurs the line between documentary and fiction, which makes it reminiscent of *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* (1979), in which Julien Temple splices documentary footage of Sex Pistols concerts together with a fictional detective story in which Steve Jones, the lead guitarist for the Pistols (playing himself), searches for the band's manager, Malcolm McLaren, in order to solve the "mystery" of what happened to the money the Pistols supposedly accrued as a band.

In *Rude Boy*, the blurring between fiction and documentary serves two purposes. First, the film places punk within the context of "official History" (with a capital "H"); in the first few minutes of the movie, Gange spits on a parade in honor of Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee as it passes beneath the housing project where he lives. The film also includes newsreel footage of Margaret Thatcher "making inflammatory calls for law and order"¹⁵ as well as documentary coverage of Socialist Workers Party members clashing with members of the National Front.

Commenting on history since the emergence of capitalism as the dominant mode of production, Guy Debord writes: "History, which had hitherto appeared to express nothing more than the activity of individual members of the ruling class, and had thus been conceived of as a chronology of events, was now [under bourgeois rule] perceived in its general movement—an inexorable movement that crushed individuality before it."¹⁶ Debord's comment resonates with Fredric Jameson's dictum that postmodernism characterizes "an age that has forgotten how to think historically."¹⁷ It is against such seemingly limited possibilities, and in the hope of retaining the notion of a history that can be participated in, that *Rude Boy* foregrounds, at one end of the political continuum, royalty marching past with pomp and circumstance and, at the other, a left-wing political party agitating against fascism. Together, these events constitute a History that becomes both the royal backdrop against which the history of punk plays itself out and the socialist history into which the Clash attempts to intervene during the RAR concert.

Rude Boy endeavors to construct a piece of "punk history" and to underscore the effects of punk on official, bourgeois History and vice versa by imagining punks

as capable of producing both types of history. This desire might explain the predominance of the documentary in both early and contemporary punk cinema, which includes numerous documentary or semidocumentary films¹⁸ that record punk as such and thereby establish a space for the subgenre.

Through the conflation of fiction and history, *Rude Boy* also opens up the possibility that anyone can become involved in history. For the first third of the film, the camera follows Gange around London as he works in the bookstore, tangles with the police, and hangs out with friends, including Strummer. Although nothing distinguishes Gange from his working-class friends, he finds himself employed by the Clash after he publicly supports the band at the RAR concert. Gange's spontaneous, literal entrance onto the stage corresponds with his involvement in the larger political issues with which the Clash is embroiled. The film constructs punk history as a gateway into official History, an entrance that can open at particular, rarified moments and allow punks to pass through.

If this historical trajectory is part of a "positive" agenda for punk cinema, then *Rude Boy* also negatively forecloses some of the same options that it proffers. Gange takes to drinking heavily and Green fires him, partly for his alcohol use and partly, as the road manager explains, because the band is becoming more "professional" (which seems to mean that it is downsizing its crew and cutting loose all hangers-on). Gange drinks more heavily after that and becomes a leech, coming to Clash shows when he can and, in one scene, watching young roadies setting up equipment and bemoaning how old they make him feel. In one of Gange's final scenes, Strummer asks him, "What are you going to do with yourself, anyway?" to which Gange replies, "I don't know." Rather than providing any sense of closure, the film leaves Gange at this point. Presumably, the Clash will continue touring.

For all the film's attempts to link the band with the ongoing racial and political clashes and violence occurring in London in the late 1970s, *Rude Boy* stops well short of ever suggesting that any identifiable effects resulted from the particular intersection of punk, race, and the politics the film chronicles. Gange's fate is equally indeterminate; if anything, he seems slightly worse off at the end of the film than at the beginning, and there is no reason to believe he has learned anything much from his experiences with the Clash except, perhaps, that even punks expect their employees to work and that heavy drinking makes that expectation difficult to fulfill.

As with *The Punk Rock Movie*, *Rude Boy's* readerly narrative adheres to an aesthetic that situates the spectator as an active interpreter of the text by foregoing narrative expectations—for closure, especially—that major Hollywood studio films have fostered in their viewers for decades. Additionally, *Rude Boy's* narrative moves slowly and meanderingly, without the linear structure and clear teleology that Hollywood cinema compulsively repeats. Over the course of the film's two hours and ten minutes, little actually happens in commercial film terms: Gange works in a bookstore and talks to Clash members; he works for the Clash for a time; and the Clash fires him. It is difficult to imagine this story being successfully pitched to Warner Bros. Savage described it as "not much of a story, and the device [the pseudo-documentary format] is often labored,"¹⁹ while Michael Watt in *Melody Maker* commented that "the lack of dramatic climaxes makes for odd viewing in a

film with a rock background” and added that the Clash found the film boring upon first viewing it.²⁰ What the critics at *Melody Maker* and the members of the Clash were responding to, with surprise and boredom, is what could be considered *Rude Boy*’s “negative success” at refusing to proffer the usual pacing and narrative structure of the dominant Hollywood aesthetic.

It might seem logical to assume that when punk filmmakers translate punk’s aesthetic into their own medium, the movies will be paced like punk rock, which is frequently frenetic, raw, and repetitious. But this assumption discounts punk’s concern with resisting the economics of mainstream music or film and with adopting an aesthetic that rejects the easy commercialization and corporatization of their products. These forces wrest ownership over the process of production away from the producers themselves. Furthermore, the major labels and major Hollywood studios serve as industry gatekeepers, deciding which bands and films to invest in and which to relegate to obscurity. Accepting this role would foreclose upon punk’s constitutive drive to democratize access to production. A new slogan would have to be coined: “This is a chord. This is another. This is a third. Now make a demo and send it to the major labels.” The point is that much punk cinema, including *Blank Generation*, *The Punk Rock Movie*, and *Rude Boy*, militates against the Hollywood aesthetic and, consequently, its own commercial “success.” Not only is *Rude Boy* lengthy and not telos-driven, but Hazan and Mingay devote considerable time to concert footage and to songs in their entirety. These narrative devices grind the plot to a halt at steady intervals. In some cases, the Clash songs comment on events in the film—Gange is especially taken with Mick Jones’s “Stay Free” and its parallels with Gange’s life—but other songs—“Garageland” and “I Fought the Law”—seem to have been included for their own sake.

Several scenes and shots that are not driven or necessitated by the plot slow the film’s tempo. In one of the final scenes, Johnny Green and a roadie enjoy a relaxed discussion about past roadies with whom they have worked. Their talk could serve as a cautionary tale for Gange, but Green has already fired him at this point, so he is not in the room when the discussion occurs. The film also follows Gange as he sets up the Clash’s equipment, walks around London, and pursues two women with whom he has brief sexual encounters. Rather than advancing the plot or mimicking the pace of punk rock, these scenes do the opposite, thereby failing to fulfill the expectations of Hollywood cinema, which usually eschews any scene that does not move the narrative forward. No doubt there are economic reasons. Gilles Deleuze writes that cinema “lives in a direct relation with a permanent plot, an international conspiracy,” and, further, that “this conspiracy is that of money; what defines industrial art is not mechanical reproduction but the internalized relation with money.” He adds that money “is the obverse of all the images that the cinema shows and sets in place” and concludes that “this is the old curse which undermines the cinema: time is money.”²¹

Hollywood cinema seems ever more intent on packing more bona fide occurrences into the time (money) it has available, while punk cinema, in opposition to this money-event ratio, stretches events and thereby demonstrates that money is not imperative, that it can be “wasted,” that it does not drive the film. Resisting the

dominant aesthetic of the major labels, punk rock sped up the pace of rock, but punk's shift from music to celluloid demanded an inverse logic: the Hollywood aesthetic—linear, teleological, and fast-paced—had to be diverted, rendered open-ended, and slowed down. In punk cinema, scenes that do not advance the narrative signify a lack of concern with money and therefore with the commercial market. But it is because of this lack of concern that punk cinema will continue to be made despite that market.

In the Mall Cineplex: *Fight Club*. Numerous films exhibit an aesthetic that approximates if not the speed and rawness of punk rock then its ideological commitments and, in particular, its anticommercial, anticommodification edge. David Fincher's *Fight Club* stands as an example of a film that features neither punks nor punk rock but nonetheless espouses a nominally anticommercial ideology. One of the film's two protagonists, Tyler Derden (Brad Pitt), offers denunciations, manifesto-style, that correlate closely with some of punk rock's and punk cinema's commitments. In 1990, Ian MacKaye of the band Fugazi hoarsely and repeatedly screamed, "You are not what you own," the final lyric of "Merchandise," the punk band's paean to anticommercialism.²² Tyler comments to *Fight Club*'s narrator, Jack (Edward Norton), "The things you own end up owning you," and later speaks directly to the camera: "You are not your job. You're not how much money you have in the bank. Not the car you drive. Not the contents of your wallet." Not dissimilarly, in *Rude Boy*, Joe Strummer tells Gange that he has spent a lot of time thinking about the differences between the political Left and Right and that there's "nothing in" the Right's desire for plenty of disposable income and luxury goods. If you succeed as a member of the Right, he tells Gange, one day "some guy is gonna come to your country mansion and blow your head off." The implication is that the guy will be right to do so. An army of such shooters springs to life in *Fight Club* as the soldiers of Project Mayhem, Tyler Derden's anarchist army, plots to free the world, or at least the U.S., from commercial, corporate control.

Fight Club was released on October 15, 1999, right before the demonstrations at the meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle. Nevertheless, Project Mayhem's activities seem to foreshadow the anarchist Black Bloc's violent acts against the state in Seattle, Quebec, Prague, Genoa, and other cities since 1999. Near the film's conclusion, Jack discovers that Project Mayhem is divided into autonomous cells capable of acting without direct orders from above. As viewers, we watch as the army's soldiers perform acts of vandalism directed against corporate America: the side of a skyscraper is set ablaze, a window displaying computer hardware for sale explodes, and a piece of "industrial art"—a metal globe, invoking globalization—is blown free of its base and subsequently rolls through the front window of a "franchise coffee bar," presumably a Starbucks—a target of the Black Bloc in Seattle—and in the film's last scene, skyscrapers housing the U.S.'s major credit card companies are demolished. The participants in Project Mayhem, the movie suggests, are American men, primarily urban whites in their twenties and thirties who, exhausted with working as "white-collar slaves" and estranged from their natural, violent, masculine, "hunter-

gatherer,” and warrior impulses, turn first to fight clubs—which host bare-knuckle, no-holds-barred fights between consenting adult males—then to organized anarchy as ways to reestablish their masculinity and ground their lives epistemologically, two aims the film conflates. A symbiotic relationship obtains here: to regain a traditionally phallic masculinity becomes synonymous with situating oneself as an agent capable of acting violently upon the world. Directly opposed to this sought-after agency is corporate America, which emasculates the men who serve it, rendering them impotent, passive consumers, as exemplified early in the film by Jack’s appreciation of creature comforts, including duvets, a knowledge Tyler reads as symptomatic of his loss of masculinity and meaningful existence.

The anarchic cells of Project Mayhem multiply rapidly and spread across the U.S., suggesting that millions of potential members are working at boring, emasculating, unethical corporate jobs. Jack investigates accidents for one of the “major” car companies and applies “the formula” to determine whether the company should recall faulty parts (it does so only when it will cost less to issue a recall than to pay for the lawsuits that would otherwise ensue). Beneath the starched shirt of corporate America lies the force that will explode it—violent, anarchic, hyper-masculine desires waiting for a spark in the form of a charismatic leader. Tyler Derden embodies that spark, despite the efforts of the corporate drudge persona—Jack—to disavow those desires.

Fight Club’s anticorporate, anticommercial stance correlates nicely with punk’s, even down to the film’s invocation of anarchism. Numerous punk bands have aligned themselves with this political position, beginning with Crass in the late 1970s and continuing through contemporary “anarcho-punk” bands such as Aus Rotten in the 1990s. Anarcho-punks have also participated, sometimes as members of Black Bloc groups, in anti-WTO protests in Seattle, Washington, Quebec, Prague, and Genoa. In short, punks share two characteristics with the anti-WTO protesters that are invoked *avant la lettre* in *Fight Club*: passionate constituents and a fundamental desire to alter qualitatively the management of the global economy.

The film’s conclusion, however, radically forecloses the anarchist, social, and punk possibilities that its ideological positioning has forced open. Jack and we, the viewers, gradually apprehend the extent of Project Mayhem, and this understanding parallels our discovery of the split nature of Jack/Tyler’s subjectivity—that Jack and Tyler embody the super-ego and id of a single person. When the film is poised to unleash Tyler’s anarchist project along a narrative axis concerned with social aims—the destruction of the material foundations of credit for millions of people—this narrative line grinds to a halt and, in an ingenious but violent twist, the film redeploys its narrative along the axis of the individual and personal, that of the Jack/Tyler conflict.

Just before the first building collapses, Jack confronts and kills Tyler, the externalized element of his psyche invested in leveling the economic playing field in the U.S. Project Mayhem soldiers then present Marla (Helena Bonham Carter), their captive, to Jack. The film’s concern with world-historical issues, with the split between corporate America and the employees-turned-anarchists who would destroy it, is suddenly displaced onto the split within Jack between the warring halves



Figure 1. In David Fincher's *Fight Club*, Tyler (Brad Pitt, left) and Jack (Edward Norton) embody the id and the superego of the film's narrator/hero. (Warner Bros., 1999).

of his psyche and, after this conflict is resolved, onto his relationship with Marla. From the moment of Tyler's death, the social considerations that the film has raised serve, literally and figuratively, as a backdrop against which Jack reaffirms the primacy of conventional, heterosexual romance. While the first building is falling, Jack turns to Marla, takes her hand, and says, "I'm sorry . . . you met me at a very strange time in my life," an apology that removes the event occurring before them from the realm of world history and recasts it as merely a transitional stage, albeit an odd one, in Jack's life. The film seems to be acting out a compulsion—the Hollywood film market's, I suspect—to reject all of the more radical ideological options it has unleashed, but the accumulated force and the social imaginary's demand to see these options expressed demands the drastic plot contrivance of splitting Jack into two partial subjects, one committed to a social plan and one (suddenly and inexplicably) committed to a heterosexual romance, so that the romantic can kill off the revolutionary.²³

This shift in Jack's commitments is all the more surprising considering the explicit homoerotic charge that *Fight Club* carries. Midway through the film, with Jack as his audience, Tyler bathes and waxes poetic about absent fathers, explicitly verbalizing the film's underlying logic: "We're a generation of men raised by women; I'm not sure another woman is what we need." The fight clubs enact a simple and familiar substitution demanded by this logic and its clash with the opposing force of Hollywood's usual prohibition against gay sexuality; for gay sexuality, framed as

a form of intimacy, violence is substituted, with each fight cathected for its participants and concluding with an embrace. In a conventional Hollywood homophobic staging of homosocial and homoerotic desire, men can touch one another intimately only with their fists.²⁴ It is not difficult to imagine a homoerotic subtext for the particularly savage beating Jack inflicts on Angel Face (Jared Leto), after which Jack mutters, "I just wanted to destroy something beautiful."

What was beautiful? There are at least three possibilities. Angel Face himself could be the object of Jack's desire. Sexual relations between Jack and Angel Face might also figure as beautiful for Jack but vanish as an option as Jack mutilates Angel Face's beauty, thereby removing homoerotic temptation and the likelihood of Angel Face ever reciprocating Jack's feelings after such physical abuse. The scene preceding Jack's fight with Angel Face establishes a connection between Tyler and Angel Face that invokes Jack's jealousy. Thus, the beautiful thing that Jack must destroy might also be the intimacy Jack suspects is burgeoning between Tyler and Angel Face. Again, the film substitutes male-male violence for (or as) male-male intimacy.

Although intensely homoerotic collectives of men do not automatically necessitate misogyny, *Fight Club* pairs the two, rendering all the more peculiar the dismissal of homosex in favor of the creation of a heterosexual couple. After Marla spends her first night with Tyler, he assures Jack that he does not love her and that she's just a "sport fuck," a comment that does little to dispel the overt homoerotic bond between Tyler and Jack. In fact, it is difficult not to read the film's portrayal of heterosex as parodic and patently ridiculous, forced into the film to satisfy an audience or a film industry assumed to harbor heterosexist expectations. Fincher presents us with a long list of filmic clichés that occur during Tyler and Marla's sexual encounters: the bed, walls, ceilings, and floors shake rhythmically; plaster falls from the ceiling; lights flicker on and off; Marla shrieks and moans incessantly; heavy objects hit the floor; the walls pulsate in Tyler's bedroom; and, as an added touch, Tyler appears at the door of his bedroom wearing only a dish-washing glove. Apparently, he and Marla engage in heterosex so voracious that any household implement might become cathected through it.²⁵ However, the surplus of clichéd signs suggests the exact opposite of sexual pleasure—a lack of genuine eroticism or jouissance. Tyler clearly treats heterosex as a fight but one that pales in comparison to fight club meetings, where much more is at stake. And Marla, the only female character with any significant screen time, is less a character than a narrative necessity to satisfy the Hollywood aesthetic: the creation of a heterosexual couple, Tyler-Marla and then Jack-Marla. The film's radical reinscription within one male of the dominant homoerotic relations that seemed to obtain between two males serves to dissolve the force of those relations and in combination with the closing down of the film's political tendencies proffers the viewer a tightly bound readerly text, bereft of its writerly potential.

I do not mean to argue that *Fight Club* successfully or completely shuts down the destructive or homoerotic impulses it fosters but that the emphasis on the Jack-Marla relationship in the final frames serves to rob the demolition of the credit card company skyscrapers and the film's explicit homoeroticism of their

power. As the final skyscraper tumbles, while Jack and Marla hold hands, a few frames of film depicting a penis—the same penis, it would seem, that Tyler was splicing into Disney films earlier in the movie—appear just before the credits roll. The film has prepared us to understand these images in light of Tyler's earlier contention that they leave their mark on an audience even though they pass so quickly that they cannot enter our consciousness. The same logic now seems to apply to Tyler himself. He has been killed off and thereby sublimated, driven into the unconscious where he belongs but from where he will haunt Jack. The film thereby reasserts the dominance of the conscious mind and superego over the unconscious and the id, while simultaneously demanding that viewers cathect through the Marla-Jack heterosexual relationship all the desires that viewers were formerly encouraged to invest in the film's overt homoeroticism and its anticorporate, anticommercial, anticonsumption problematic. Apparently, these sublimated desires cannot be definitively banished (with Tyler's death) but will rear up occasionally like so many flickering images of a penis, seen but not acted upon. Nevertheless, through proper repression, these desires can be kept from impinging upon normative, personal concerns. *Fight Club* thus becomes a cautionary tale about the danger that ensues when the superego fails to keep the id in check, or the political unconscious (to use Jameson's term), and cannot quell its collective social desires that are radically homoerotic, anticorporate, and anticapitalist in nature. In *Fight Club*, only a psychotic break—Jack's internal bifurcation—can free nonindividuated desires from the repression necessary to keep them dormant. This logic further demonizes homosexuality and social aims in favor of individuated, personal goals by situating the former in the domain of psychosis.

In fact, *Fight Club* prepares us to reject our earlier investments in its homoerotic and anarchic trajectories well before its concluding scene. Early depictions of fight club "meetings" suggest the emergence of a growing collective of disenfranchised male corporate drudges, as well as members of the working class (the manager of a bar provides the original fight club's first venue), whose physical acting out of homoerotic desires establishes a community and collectivity that they have lacked in their work lives. During the first half-hour of the film, Jack seeks this sense of community in healing groups, which often foster physical and emotional intimacy between men. ("Remaining Men Together" is the motto of a testicular cancer support group he attends.) Similarly, the acts of vandalism and the destruction of property that take place early in *Fight Club* occur against a backdrop of the approving tones of Jack's voiceover and of the Dust Brothers' mid-tempo, up-beat soundtrack, featuring their trademark hybrid of hip-hop and rock. But by the time a member of the Project Mayhem army, Robert Paulsen (Meat Loaf Aday), is killed while destroying a piece of "corporate art," Project Mayhem has grown into a protomilitary, crypto-fascist movement whose members shave their heads, dress identically, give up their names, and follow Jack/Tyler's commands unquestioningly and unthinkingly ("The first rule of Project Mayhem is you don't ask questions about Project Mayhem"). In a disturbing scene, Jack discovers members of a chapter of Project Mayhem in a city far from the first fight club's origins chanting words he spoke to the original group a few days earlier ("He

has a name. His name is Robert Paulsen.”). The group has adopted the words as pure dogma without any concern for—or even comprehension of—the context in which they emerged. The scene thus prepares the ground for the film’s shift in focus from the social project that has clearly become fascistic to Jack’s concerns as an individual.

Since September 11, 2001, it has been difficult to view the final scene of *Fight Club* without associating Project Mayhem’s “controlled demolition” with terrorism. The images of imploding and collapsing skyscrapers eerily presage the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. More forcefully than the film ever could, knowledge of this world-historical event encourages the viewer to link the film’s social aims with those of terrorists, despite the real differences between the New York and Washington, D.C., attacks and Project Mayhem’s operation, which, although it destroys the computers and buildings that house the U.S.’s credit system, results in no loss of life.

There is one further compromise in *Fight Club*’s ideological commitments that stands as a limit case for the Hollywood film aesthetic in general: the film refuses to critique film itself. After moving into a house without a steady supply of electricity, Jack admits that “by the end of the first month, I didn’t miss TV,” but this is as close to an interrogation of visual media as the film comes. *Fight Club* never proposes that Hollywood film, or *Fight Club* itself, cannot resolve or fulfill the desires it sets in motion. The film’s corporate means of production prohibit it from making a series of statements such as “don’t watch this movie, don’t buy this movie, don’t pay for this movie, don’t go to movies,” or even “don’t go to Hollywood movies,” and this prohibition serves as one of the limits to the film’s anticommercial bent.

Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that *Fight Club* managed to achieve both cult status and commercial success. Although the film did not recoup its costs at the box office, Katherine Nilles notes that it “has found renewed life among college students.” According to VidTrac, a trade association that tracks VHS and DVD rentals in the U.S., in December 2000, *Fight Club* was the seventy-fifth most popular video of the one thousand videos the group tracked. Elita Bernardo, a VidTrac employee, notes that “that’s pretty good since [the video] came out in April [2000].” She adds that most videos disappear from the top one thousand rentals by the eighth month after their release.²⁶

Nilles interviewed several undergraduates from various universities about the popularity of *Fight Club*. One, David Meldman, commented, “It’s very relevant to my life growing up in suburbia. . . . Society tells us that the idea is making as much money as possible, not to do something you’re moved to do. It’s refreshing to see something that says there is something more out there.” Meldman has seen the film six times. He explains why: “I don’t see capitalism and materialism changing, so its issues will stay with us.”²⁷

Read symptomatically, Meldman’s comments suggest that whatever desires *Fight Club* might awaken quickly become channeled into repeated viewings of the film. Rather than moving consumers to become producers, the film’s material effect seems to be not just consumption but repeated consumption of the

same Hollywood commodity, a decidedly nonpunk cinema activity. The question is not why the film has not inspired the creation of anarchist cells, for, as Walter Benjamin makes clear, cultural production does not represent a method of resistance or revolution but contains within itself a different possibility, that of producing production.²⁸ What is it, then, about the film's logic that prevents it from invoking the mimetic faculty common to Benjamin's writings and to punk?

This logic lies not in the film's aesthetic and ideological aims, regardless of whether their anticommercial, anticonsumption elements can be recuperated, but in the material conditions of the film's production. To begin with, the film was produced by Twentieth Century Fox and cost \$63 million to make, a prohibitive amount of money for any DIY enterprise. To make such a film, one must have corporate backers and major-studio production elements that call its DIY and punk cinema status into question. Further, the film bears legible aesthetic signs of its cost, particularly in its computer-generated graphics and animation. The French company BUF Compagnie created six three-dimensional computer-generated special effects for the film. For five of the effects, BUF created images that seem to have been shot by a microscopic "virtual camera" that enjoys an amazing freedom of movement. In scenes interspersed throughout the film, the virtual camera follows the train of Jack's thoughts as he narrates them: it tilts down through the interior of an office building, granting the spectator a cross-section of the building while passing through the ceiling of story after story before stopping in the parking garage beneath the building and zooming in on a van; it pulls up and back from the bottom of Jack's wastepaper basket, snaking around pieces of trash as it does so; it zooms in for a seemingly impossible close-up on a gas stove burner around which it tracks a complete circle; it tracks across the top of the stove and behind the refrigerator, before tracking down the wall in the one-inch gap behind the refrigerator and zooming in on the refrigerator's compressor spark just as it ignites; and, finally, it zooms in on a homemade bomb and tracks along individual wires in the bomb's network of fuses.

The BUF Web site notes that, surprisingly, the wastepaper basket sequence was one of the most expensive to render into 3-D images, requiring in some instances as much as thirteen hours of work for a single frame.²⁹ Taken individually or as a group, these special effects signify to viewers that production of this film lies beyond not only their financial means but probably their understanding as well. Rather than suggesting that the viewer can enter into the critique of commodity culture that *Fight Club* launches, the special effects and the aesthetic that they produce deny that possibility by obfuscating and mystifying their means of production. The film's production and the film as a product are thereby reified while viewers are shut out as participants in the expensive economy of signs in which the film traffics.

This logic is also evident in the film's early pairing of special effects with an ostensibly critical ideological stance: as the viewer watches Jack moving about his condominium, he comments dryly, in a voiceover, on how his life's desires have become identical to those suggested to him by the Ikea catalog of home furnishings ("I'd flip through catalogs and wonder, 'What kind of dining set defines me as



Figure 2. The American male hero as urban guerrilla, terrorist, and punk. Jack and Tyler go underground in David Fincher's *Fight Club*. (Warner Bros., 1999).

a person?"). As he speaks, Jack's apartment assumes the look of a life-sized page from the catalog, with the catalog's descriptions of the items Jack owns floating in the air beside them. Oblivious to these descriptions, Jack walks about the apartment. In this case, the special effects both reflect the film's ideological critique—Jack's life has become a page from an Ikea catalog, a glossy ad for something other than itself—and stand as a sign of the material prohibition against engaging in that critique. How are such effects accomplished? Who has enough money to create such effects?

The lengthiest special effect in the film is at the beginning: the virtual camera traces a pathway literally through Jack's brain, dodging between dendrites before eventually emerging out of his mouth and traveling up the barrel of a pistol. The film is front-weighted with effects: the "brain trip" and Ikea effects (which BUF did not produce) as well as three of the BUF effects occur within the first half-hour, which is also the most critical of "corporate culture." BUF's final effect—Tyler's death by gunshot—occurs in the film's last scene, and a non-BUF special effect—five skyscrapers implode and collapse while Jack and Marla watch—concludes the film. This structuring of effects creates early on an impression that the film's economy of signs is doubly out of the viewers' reach—in terms of both money and intelligibility—and leaves viewers with this sense as the film's credits begin to scroll.

In sum, *Fight Club* critiques *for* its viewers, providing them with consumable criticism and a readerly text, as it also forecloses on the option that they could mount their own analyses. The film produces a reified system of signs with which to interrogate corporate and consumerist America, but the very production of this

economy of expensive and technologically sophisticated signs bars viewers from engaging in the conversation.

Denouement. Despite the casual use to which the term “punk cinema” has been put since the inception of punk rock, the concept, as I have reimagined it here, denotes an identifiable aesthetic, bolstered with a correlative economics. Adherents of this model demand of cinema what punks have demanded of music—it should encourage production, in any medium, through both aesthetic and economic means. Punk cinema employs an open, writerly aesthetic; it engages with history; and it critiques its own commodification. It can be negatively defined as non-Hollywoodized, where a Hollywood aesthetic demands a closed, readerly text unconcerned with history and obfuscating its position within the relations of production. Unlike *Fight Club*, punk cinema is independently produced and renders its means of production—the material conditions of its possibility—intelligible and accessible through its aesthetic. Punk films, such as *The Punk Rock Movie* and *Rude Boy*, foreground their conditions of production, which stand as material signifiers of the possibility of making music or a film, of participating in critique, or of doing both at once.

Notes

1. Jeff Stark, “It’s a Punk Movie,” www.dir.salon.com/ent/movies/int/2000/10/13/aronofsky/index.html.
2. For a reprint of the diagrams and text, see Jon Savage, *England’s Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1992), 280.
3. *MaximumRockNRoll*, August 2002, n.p.
4. Helpful texts that examine the English punk scene’s aesthetic include Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979); Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons, *The Boy Looked at Johnny: The Obituary of Rock and Roll* (London: Pluto Press, 1980); Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Savage, *England’s Dreaming*. For descriptions of the New York punk scene’s aesthetic, see Patricia Henry, *Break All Rules!: Punk Rock and the Making of a Style* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research, 1989); Clinton Heylin, *From the Velvets to the Voidoids: A Pre-Punk History for a Post-Punk World* (New York: Penguin, 1992); and Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: An Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Grove Press, 1996).
5. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself*, 46–47.
6. James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 254.
7. Gina F. Marchetti, *Film and Subculture: The Relationship of Film to the Punk and Glitter Youth Subcultures* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research, 1984), 60.
8. Savage, *England’s Dreaming*, 328.
9. What I see happening in punk cinema echoes Tony Bennett’s commentary on *The Voyeur* (Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1958), which Bennett says calls “into question the fixed division of labor between writer and reader which the traditional novel proposes” and exposes “the conventions whereby the relationship between the roles of writer (the

- issuing source of meaning) and the reader (the passive recipient of the offered meaning) is constructed.” However, I disagree with Bennett’s positing of a “passive recipient,” a move that forecloses the possibility of resistant readings occurring in spite of a book or a film’s proffered meanings. Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism* (New York: Methuen, 1979), 52.
10. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 4.
 11. Walter Benjamin, “On the Mimetic Faculty,” in Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 333–36.
 12. “The Clash—Live,” www.hiponline.com/artist/music/c/the_clash/.
 13. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself*, 46.
 14. The film as an easily consumed commodity might serve as a synecdoche for late capitalism’s logic of commodification. The closed Hollywood film encourages passive reception and an almost simultaneous reaching for the next commodified text. The open form invites lingering over the commodity and rereading it. Where time equals money, time that the audience spends thinking about a text is time (and money) wasted, time that could be valorized through the consumption of further commodities. In short, the less time the audience “wastes” engaged with a commodity, the better, as far as corporatized Hollywood is concerned.
 15. Savage, *England’s Dreaming*, 519.
 16. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 105.
 17. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), ix.
 18. A partial list of documentaries on punk includes Amos Poe’s *Night Lunch* (1975) and *Blank Generation* (1976); Julien Temple’s *Sex Pistols Number One* (1977), *Sex Pistols Number Two* (1977), and *The Great Rock ‘n’ Roll Swindle* (1979); Maggi Carson, Juliusz Kossakowski, and Frederic Shore’s *Punking Out* (1977); Virginia Boston’s *Raw Energy* (1977) and *Kids with Yellow Hair* (1977); Don Letts’s *The Punk Rock Movie* (1978); Colin Burton’s *The Last Pogo* (1978); Dana Lobell’s *Anarchy at La Mere* (1978); John T. Davis’s *Shellshock Rock* (1979); Wolfgang Büld’s *Punk in London* (1979) and *British Rock: Ready for the ‘80’s* (1980); Stephanie Beroes’s *Debt Begins at 20* (1980); Lech Kowalski’s *D.O.A.* (1981); Hasan Shah and Don Shaw’s *Rough Cut and Ready Dubbed* (1982); Penelope Spheeris’s *The Decline of Western Civilization 1* (1981) and *The Decline of Western Civilization 3* (1998); Adam Small and Peter Stuart’s *Another State of Mind* (1984); Dirk Dirksen’s *Dead Kennedys: Dmpos on Broadway* (1984); Scott Treleven’s *Queercore: A Punk-U-Mentary* (1996); Martin Sorrondéguy’s *Beyond the Screams: A U.S. Latino/Chicano Hardcore/Punk Documentary* (1999); and Jem Cohen and Fugazi’s *Instrument* (1999).
 19. Savage, *England’s Dreaming*, 520.
 20. Michael Watt, “Rude Boy—The Movie,” *Melody Maker*, December 1, 1979, 9–10.
 21. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 77.
 22. “Merchandise,” *Repeater*, Dischord Records, 1990.
 23. Chuck Palahniuk’s novel *Fight Club* refrains from shutting down the anarchistic forces to the same extent that the film does. In the final chapter of the book, Project Mayhem has failed to bring down the “world’s tallest building,” and the narrator finds himself confined to a psychiatric ward. But while the film’s concluding concern with Jack and Marla seals off the anarchy plot line, the narrator of the novel discovers that, even after

- he has been hospitalized for some time, Project Mayhem's plans for "break[ing] up civilization so we can make something better" continue outside the hospital, without his guidance. Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 208.
24. Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York* (2002) hypostatizes this particular logic. Bill the Butcher (Daniel Day-Lewis) clearly cathects his killing of Priest Vallon (Liam Neeson). The murder and its memory stand as the single most affectively charged moment in the Butcher's life.
 25. An interesting change occurs between the novel and film that is symptomatic of this representation of heterosex. The narrator of the novel finds one condom in the toilet after Marla spends the night with Tyler; in the film, he finds three condoms. Even this detail must be exaggerated.
 26. Katherine Nilles, "Fight Club Packs a Wallop with Young Fans," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 22, 2001, www.jsonline.com/Enter/movie/jan01/fclub22011901.asp.
 27. Quoted in Nilles.
 28. Benjamin, "On the Mimetic Faculty," 333–36.
 29. BUF Compagnie, Feature Films, Trashcan, http://www.buf.fr/FILM_INDEX/.