

**Phone Footage and the Social Media Image as Global  
Anonymous Cinema: Ana Nyma's (Anonyme)  
*Fragments of a Revolution* (2011) and Peter Snowdon's  
*The Uprising* (2013)**

Tanya Shilina-Conte

DOI: 10.15664/fcj.v18i1.2248



**Frames Cinema Journal**

ISSN 2053-8812

Issue 18 (Jun 2021)

<http://www.framescinemajournal.com>



**Phone Footage and the Social Media Image as Global Anonymous Cinema: Ana Nyma's (Anonyme) *Fragments of a Revolution* (2011) and Peter Snowden's *The Uprising* (2013)**

Tanya Shilina-Conte

**Introduction**

In a video clip uploaded to YouTube, a sparse crowd of men runs through a street during the Arab Spring uprisings. There are shouts, the sounds of sporadic gunfire. An unseen person holds the camera phone low and outstretched from their body. As the person runs, the jostling image swings wildly up to the sky, sweeping over apartment buildings and rooftops, then back down to the pavement passing underfoot, and up again, catching a glimpse of a man in a blue jersey carrying a national flag. The gunfire intensifies – “It’s live ammunition!” .... The image turns upside down as an unknown person with the camera phone falls to the ground. No shooters are visible, but the sound of gunfire becomes deafening. For several moments we see only the haptic outline of the pavement and part of a trouser leg stained with blood. And then, the frame rises gently to capture the prostrate body of a man in blue, bleeding profusely from his wounds. In a massacre slowly revealed to our eyes, several people lying on the ground cry out for both Allah and an ambulance.<sup>1</sup>

Inspired by the raw aesthetics and immediate urgency of such video clips, this article offers a critical examination of phone footage as a unique mode of image production and distribution through social networks, as well as a distinctive feature of anonymous cinema in the global age. I place my argument within the larger context of various forms and modalities of global anonymous cinema that have recently emerged as a means of protest and resistance against repressive regimes across the world. I contend that unlike earlier forms of anonymity in the history of cinema, such anonymous cinema is newly global in its expression and intentionally obscured in its origin. Global anonymous cinema is closely linked to such factors as

globalisation, transnational migratory flows, the advent of the internet, as well as the proliferation of tools and channels of digital connectivity, such as portable camera phones and social media platforms.

In what follows I will argue that with respect to the phone footage modality, we can discern several levels of engagement within global anonymous cinema: anonymous camera phone filmmakers who produce the videos; anonymous or pseudonymous social media users who post and disseminate anonymous images (not necessarily the filmmakers themselves); and global film directors (in rare cases, anonymous or pseudonymous) who mediate and curate anonymous found footage. Camera phone filmmakers and phone footage posters often operate under oppressive codes of censorship in autocratic states, embracing anonymity or pseudonymity to escape retaliation and undermine the dominant power of mass media channels. Adopting Nadav Hochman's concept of "the social media image" as a variety of Deleuzian third image regime, I will approach the anonymous camera phone filmmakers and anonymous or pseudonymous social media users as the new "missing people." To extend Deleuze's terminology, they can also act as "intercessors," joined in their efforts by global film directors who montage the anonymous found phone footage in accordance with their individual artistic visions.<sup>2</sup>

In this article I analyse two feature-length films that present variations of global anonymous cinema: one in which the director remains an anonymous participant while using anonymous phone footage; and one that is composed of anonymous phone footage but preserves the name of the director who acts as an archival performer.<sup>3</sup> Focusing on the Iranian Green Movement protests of 2009, the Iranian filmmaker Anonymous, or Ana Nyma (French, Anonyme) relies extensively on phone footage in *Fragments of a Revolution* (2011), yet she and

her crew remain anonymous in accord with the goals of those who film and/or post anonymously.<sup>4</sup> In her film, Ana Nyma remixes YouTube videos, fragments of state broadcast media, personal email correspondence, as well as her original footage shot while in exile. Peter Snowden's *The Uprising* (2013), a visceral account of the Arab Spring revolutions of 2010-12, is based entirely on anonymous phone footage. Snowden asserts that the anonymous making and/or uploading of video clips to YouTube is less concerned with protecting the filmmakers and/or their subjects from arrest and reprisal than with becoming a strategic form of image production and circulation that cannot be controlled by the state. The graphic images of the uprisings belong to the people and stand as a testament to the revolution.<sup>5</sup>

### **Anonymity in the Arts and Contemporary Global Cinema**

The adoption of anonymity or pseudonymity in literature and film long predates its use in social media and global cinema of the twenty-first century. The history of literary anonymity, in which the author's name does not appear on the title page of the work, is many centuries old and beyond the scope of this article. As Robert J. Griffin observes, until the "professionalization" of the author in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was not unusual for literary works to be circulated without the name of an author. Referencing Michel Foucault on the "author-function," Griffin explains that only when the "author becomes an owner of intellectual property and takes his or her place in an emerging bourgeois society" does the proper name regularly appear on the page.<sup>6</sup> Once a manuscript becomes a commodity to be sold and not a gift that is subsidised by a patron or list of subscribers, then the author is afforded the legal protections of intellectual property or copyright. And yet, there are fluctuating historical reasons for why anonymity or pseudonymity might be sought well into the twentieth and twenty-first century, including the

desire to protect the artistic reputation of the author's name (popular genre fiction is sometimes published pseudonymously, as in the case of J. K. Rowling/Robert Galbraith's crime fiction) or the risk of political retaliation (e.g., *A Warning*, by Anonymous [2019]).<sup>7</sup>

An amendment to US copyright law in 1912 put dramatic motion pictures and newsreels under protection as intellectual property, after many legal battles over copyright.<sup>8</sup> Early films were typically identified by their production company, e.g., the Edison Manufacturing Company, and often did not include the names of the director, cinematographer, or actors in a credit roll. Film historians have researched and retroactively assigned these credits for much of early cinema. Jane M. Gaines points out that while film history has chiefly attended to the credited rather than the uncredited, the anonymity of the players, screenwriters, and film crew was the rule rather than the exception in film's earliest years.<sup>9</sup> Even after 1912, those films that were owned by their parent company represent only a portion of the vast trove of motion pictures. The so-called "orphan films" include not only those for which copyright has lapsed or for which legal owners cannot be found but also the incomplete, abandoned, censored, amateur, industrial, anthropological, and other independent footage that might be preserved by archivists but never positively identified.<sup>10</sup> In the twenty-first century, the category of "orphan films" may also incorporate crowd-sourced phone footage that dwarfs the output of the studios or independent filmmakers who take ownership of intellectual property rights.

Although space does not permit an extended analysis of anonymity in contemporary global cinema, we should acknowledge the appearance of several other anonymous forms and modalities in films that are not comprised of found phone footage. In his documentary film on the extreme violence perpetrated by Mexico's drug cartels, *Devil's Freedom (La Libertad del Diablo)*, 2018), Everardo González conducts anonymous subject interviews with both the victims

and perpetrators of abduction, torture, and murder. All the interviewees wear balaclavas and have their voices disguised in order to encourage frankness and avoid reprisals from gang members. Reversing the anonymity of the interviewee and interviewers, Luc Côté and Patricio Henríquez's documentary, *You Don't Like the Truth: 4 Days Inside Guantánamo* (2010), is based on surveillance footage of the interrogation of Omar Khadr, then Guantánamo's youngest prisoner, by a team of Canadian intelligence agents. Consistently interrupted by distorted video and auditory dropouts, the film can neither show nor name Khadr's anonymous interrogators for security reasons. Yet another modality is represented by two notable examples of Iranian films that end without any crew credits, Mohammad Rasoulof's *Manuscripts Don't Burn* (*Dast-Neveshtehaa Nemisoozand*, 2013) and Jafar Panahi's *Taxi* (2015). Both Rasoulof and Panahi were arrested in 2010 and sentenced to prison terms for unlawful assembly, collusion, and propaganda against the Islamic republic of Iran. In the comparable case of *The Act of Killing* (2012), a documentary on those who participated in the Indonesian genocide of 1965–66, co-directors Joshua Oppenheimer and an anonymous Indonesian filmmaker chose to list some of the film's crew as anonymous in order to protect them from extrajudicial retribution. It is phone footage, however, that presents itself as one of the most widespread modalities of global anonymous cinema due to the proliferation of personal cell phones as tools of connectivity.

### **Phone Footage and Cell Phone Cinema(s)**

With so many users pressing "Record" on their smartphones and uploading footage of everyday occurrences and momentous events to social media accounts, phone footage in the twenty-first century becomes a demotic digital language in which much of the world is conversant. Designed as an electronic device that combines a cellular telephone, web-enabled

applications, text, audio and camera, the smartphone is a unique digital tool. At some point between 2018 and 2019 the number of cell phones surpassed the world population of just under eight billion. That does not mean that everyone in the world possesses a smartphone, especially in underdeveloped countries, though broadband subscriptions exceeded five billion by the end of 2018.<sup>11</sup> The portability, immediacy, and economy of the digital smartphone camera have facilitated its use in cinema just as, a generation before, the video camera replaced expensive and unwieldy film cameras in low-budget, independent, or amateur filmmaking. When literally billions of people are “making films” on mobile devices, it follows that filmmakers would adopt (and adapt) a technology that provides easy access, affordability, and surprisingly high resolution for feature-length films. Among many other examples, Sean Baker directed the independent film *Tangerine* (2015), about a transgender sex worker, shot exclusively on an iPhone 5S, using the FiLMiC Pro app and an anamorphic adapter for widescreen. Even the Hollywood director Steven Soderbergh made the horror film *Unsane* (2018) on an iPhone 7 Plus in 4K. These directors have utilised a variety of apps and add-ons to create professional grade cinematography on the smartphone. Although there have been examples of visually refined commercials filmed on iPhones (such as that commissioned by the luxury automobile firm Bentley Motors to be shot on an everyday iPhone 5S in 2014), the majority of phone footage is recognisable by its shaky, handheld image-capture instead of a stabilised film frame.<sup>12</sup>

As Kata Szita argues, contemporary “smartphone film and video culture universalises participation and anonymises users and creators.”<sup>13</sup> The popularity of cell phones among filmmakers in developing countries integrates low barriers of technical expertise, low production costs, and free distribution through online streaming. Some of these directors extend the democratisation and anonymisation of the medium to their position as artists, as is the case with

the pseudonymous director Tetsuo Lumière, who made the comedic horror cell phone film, *Red Bloody Forest (Rojo en el Bosque Sangriento, 2006)*.<sup>14</sup> As a result, the global filmmakers, either with established auteur credentials or pseudonymous reputations, have produced a new media art form, which has been called iPhone cinema or cell phone cinema, composed of original footage that emulates the haptic, on-the-spot impact of crowd-sourced video.<sup>15</sup>

By virtue of its pocket-ability, the widespread coverage of cellular networks, and the affordances of anonymous clandestine filming, the camera phone has travelled with migrants across international borders and also become an indispensable tool for citizens documenting uprisings in authoritarian countries. From this perspective, phone footage cinema has evolved into a successor of Third Cinema, or “an imperfect cinema,” combining revolutionary participation with its own spectatorship.<sup>16</sup> As practiced by migrants, such as refugees from sub-Saharan Africa or from the Syrian civil war as they travel into the European Union, phone footage is nomadic and deterritorialised. Some migrant films rely entirely on phone footage, such as Hassan Fazili’s auto-documentary *Midnight Traveler (2019)*.<sup>17</sup> The Afghan director films himself with a smartphone as he flees the country with his wife and two daughters after the Taliban puts a price on his head. Citizen documentaries and media projects of resistance to state authority and its control of mainstream media likewise avail themselves of covert phone footage. In *Tehran Without Permission (Tehran bedoune mojavez, 2009)*, shot without authorization of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Sepideh Farsi is able to surreptitiously film people and places in Tehran with a cell phone, moving about unnoticed, as if she were anonymous.<sup>18</sup>

While these films are composed of original phone footage, many global directors rely on anonymous found phone footage, either in part or entirely. In *Green Days (Roozahaye Sabz, 2009)*, Hana Makhmalbaf sets out to document the reformist Green Movement candidacy of Mir-



Hossein Mousavi in June 2009. Makhmalbaf sources mobile phone footage shot on the street, as Mousavi's supporters, marching through Tehran, were met by gunfire and mass arrests by the paramilitary Basij. In his film installation and lecture-performance, *The Pixelated Revolution* (2012), Rabih Mroué's remixes found phone footage of the Syrian war that he found on YouTube. At the centre of the project is a montage of video clips that the artist describes as "double shooting," a visceral moment of confrontation between the citizen's smartphone and the sniper's rifle. The fate of the camera phone filmmaker remains unknown, and Mroué zooms into the faces of the government shooters, but as he does so, they "pixelate" into haptic abstractions. In Mroué's installation the exchanges of shot and counter-shot between an armed militia and citizens with personal phones are marked by anonymity. As Syrian citizens filmed government snipers with their camera phones, the footage was later circulated online, in order to hold the authorities responsible for their murderous brutality. The digital citizen is a global citizen, and these films and media projects of global resistance and revolution cannot look askance at the countless hours of phone footage that have been uploaded – often anonymously or pseudonymously – to online forums and social media platforms.<sup>19</sup>

### **Phone Footage and the Social Media Image**

As we move about the world, our mobile media transfer seamlessly from one network to the next, from AT&T to Vodaphone, without hindrance to access or communication. One of the social consequences of the near-complete saturation of smartphone usage is that almost any event of any consequence (or none) is likely to have been captured on our phones and then uploaded to the internet. So, when one locality is plunged into turmoil, be it Tehran, Cairo,

Homs, or Tripoli, the rest of the world is involved, by virtue of the distributed communications of social media.

Many media scholars have pursued the connection between digital networks and Gilles Deleuze's concept of "the society of control," with the focus on big data, personal information, and surveillance mechanisms in contemporary society.<sup>20</sup> The theorisation between social media and cinematic modes, however, might still benefit from additional research. Toward the end of Deleuze's studies in film-philosophy, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), he suggests that image regimes – the practice of inventing new images and signs – will carry on. Such post-Deleuzian film theorists as Patricia Pisters and Steven Shaviro have deliberated the future of cinema, asking how a *Cinema 3* might be envisioned and what might be its subtitle.<sup>21</sup> A common thread in such debates was the recognition that a third regime might be dominated by the digital image. But in the present context, we might need to advance another candidate for the third image regime. Nadav Hochman's concept of "the social media image" as the "dominant cultural visual form of the 2010s" might fulfil this role because it highlights contemporary visual modes in connection to the changing perception of time.<sup>22</sup> Comparing the continuity and dynamism of the data stream to the nonlinearity and relative stability of the database, Hochman claims that the former introduces a new order of time: "the stream activates a set of co-occurring temporal relations (before/after/at the same time) and thus brings the past, present, and future of many users close together as a simultaneous duration of multiple temporalities."<sup>23</sup> He describes how online media platforms arrange and classify social media images, relating them to the new models of production and distribution in a networked society. Unlike its celluloid-based predecessors, the social media image is often produced not under the license of a single studio as its intellectual property but rather as the collective

production of innumerable users with limited claims to property rights. The social media image may also consist of imperfect, poor, or unedited (phone) footage, in distinct contrast to films that undergo extensive post-production before theatrical releases. The social media image is frequently the product of the amateur videographer rather than the auteur filmmaker; as such, rather than being forever associated with the proper name of the artist, it is preserved in the vast anonymous or pseudonymous digital repository. At the time of this writing, a search for “Arab Spring” on YouTube alone returns about fifty-four million results in under a second.

While some commentators dismiss the tactics of online activism as “slacktivism” and engage in darker readings of networked technologies, others contend that social media activism can contribute to promoting civic engagement and encourage collective action on a global scale.<sup>24</sup> In certain cases, social media platforms may allow the powerless, the minoritarian, and the disenfranchised caught up in social upheaval to bypass state-controlled news media. The link between phone footage, social media, and online activism has been pronouncedly articulated in the wake of the Iranian Green Movement of 2009 and the Arab Spring movement of 2010-12. While Henry Jenkins and others concede that microblogging and vlogging may not have been chiefly responsible for organising the mass demonstrations of the Arab Spring of 2010-12 or the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011, nevertheless, the instant dissemination of provocative images and terse commentary on social media have assumed such collective power in influencing public opinion—as a call to social change—that mainstream network reportage often trailed in its wake.<sup>25</sup> In her book written shortly after the Arab Spring uprisings, Zeynep Tufekci advances the notion of the “networked protest,” seeking middle ground between dystopian and utopian perspectives on internet technologies.<sup>26</sup> Focusing on multiple case studies of global protest movements in the Middle East and North Africa, she argues that contemporary forms of

protest organization differ from earlier modes of planning such as the civil rights movement in the US. In comparison to analogue modes of protest organisation, the expanded global dimension of digital connectivity in personal communication has permitted “networked movements to grow dramatically and rapidly.”<sup>27</sup> From this standpoint, anonymous strategies of filming and uploading of content to the internet could be regarded as a means of countering mass media narratives through citizen activism.<sup>28</sup>

In *Creating the Witness: Documenting Genocide on Film, Video, and the Internet*, Leshu Torchin explores the documentation of atrocities and injustices in different countries – from the Armenian genocide in Turkey to the war in Darfur, Sudan – by means of such media technologies as film, video, and the internet. At the centre of her attention is the figure of the witness and its changed role due to the influence of new media formats in disseminating information. Torchin argues that audiovisual technologies promote virtual witnessing and help to spread global awareness, transforming audiences into “witnessing publics.”<sup>29</sup> In turn, “witnessing publics” can become “witnessing publicists,” as they mediate and extend the testimonial encounter with the help of internet.<sup>30</sup> For Torchin, this new mode of witnessing is not a simple act of experiencing or disseminating an image or a video but a propagating engagement, which can potentially lead to further acts of civic mobilisation, including in offline formats. To apply Torchin’s theory to my argument, the videos by anonymous camera phone filmmakers can be approached as just one form of witnessing. Anonymous or pseudonymous social media users as “witnessing publics” and “publicists” further extend the encounter with anonymous images by uploading, re-cutting, re-uploading, or commenting on the original footage.

The recent philosophy of affirmation advances a non-dialectical politics of “multitude” as social action and a turn to a new materialism. The writings of Deleuze and Guattari, Lyotard, or

Hardt and Negri emphasize difference or “dissensus” rather than oppositions resolved into a political (and potentially totalizing) consensus.<sup>31</sup> Following in the steps of Deleuze’s postulations on modern political, or minor cinema, we can assert parallels between the absent people in minor cinema and the forging of the missing people in the social media image regime, who invent themselves in a global age, creating new awareness. In a Deleuzian sense, this urge is collective but not unifying, and anonymous camera phone filmmakers who come to global protests are not singular but multiple. The missing people of the social media image regime pass information from one voice to another in “free indirect style,” including anonymous modes of disseminating phone footage through online platforms.<sup>32</sup> From this perspective anonymous camera phone filmmakers and social media users act as “intercessors,” whose role, according to Deleuze, can either be performed by minority figures themselves or by writers/filmmakers who speak on their behalf.<sup>33</sup> Global directors, who remediate anonymous phone footage and convert it into cinematic modes, can perform the role of intercessors by becoming-minor, becoming-other, becoming-else. As intercessors, they find a way to counter the “intolerable” by way of fabulation, the speech-act as creative storytelling.<sup>34</sup> This mode may contain a mixture of real and imaginary, colour and black-and-white film, as well as elements of performance. These filmic fabulations work against representation, dislodging comforting and simplified depictions of a moral and ideal world that encourages identification and rejects difference.

***Fragments of a Revolution and The Uprising: Filmmaker as Anonymous Participant and Filmmaker as Anarchival Performer***

The breakthrough in the use of smartphone footage in cinema came before *Unsane* and *Tangerine* premiered globally at the Berlin International and the Sundance Film Festivals.

Though less widely distributed or financially successful, *Fragments of a Revolution* (2011) and *The Uprising* (2013), films that rely extensively or exclusively on phone footage, nevertheless present themselves as truly significant works of social conscience and consequence. As we have seen, filmmakers wishing to document mass uprisings such as the Green Movement in Iran in 2009 or the Arab Spring in 2010-12 can find a sizeable cache of video clips on the internet that would serve as the anonymous sources of their films. As an Iranian-in-exile, Ana Nyma is an insider-intercessor, because she intercedes between anonymous Iranian image-makers, her friends and compatriots who have sent her emails from Tehran, and those who watch her own film, placing herself, her family in Iran, and her correspondents in considerable danger from the Islamist regime. As an outsider-intercessor, Peter Snowden's main activity in the making of *The Uprising* was to select, remediate, and remix many hundreds of hours of online videos from the Arab Spring revolutions. And yet, he has also met online and in person "with Egyptians in Egypt, with Tunisians in Marseille, with Yemenis in New York, and with Syrians in Brussels," in order to best give them an authentic voice in their own drama.<sup>35</sup> Both directors curate anonymous phone footage and shape it into cinematic formats, distributing their films on DVDs or screening them at global film festivals and film centres.<sup>36</sup>

Ana Nyma seems to have made two films as an anonymous Iranian director, *Fragments of a Revolution* (2011) and *Remote Control* (2015). Though we have seen that filmmakers often went uncredited in early cinema, and so-called orphan films, when recovered, frequently do not retain information regarding their production, in our celebrity-infatuated times, films made by an anonymous director might be rather unconventional. Literary anonymity offers a closer analogy, especially in those cases where the author has sought to avoid political retaliation, imprisonment for slander, or worse extrajudicial harm. In *Fragments of a Revolution* Ana Nyma becomes a

remote anonymous participant in the events she documents, an intercessor who speaks from the point of view of Iranians in exile. In the midst of the Green Movement, Iranians abroad followed the news from home through social media, trying to recreate their version of the protests from the fragmentary video clips. Rather than using her own camera phone – as she cannot be there in person – Ana Nyma participates in the street protests in Tehran through her computer interface. Although *Fragments of a Revolution* is not a pure example of the “desktop documentary,” which relies on “the computer screen as both a camera lens and a canvas,” Ana Nyma’s computer screen and the documentation of her activities on it are at the centre of the film.<sup>37</sup> Ana Nyma films her desktop with a camera, which is both an aesthetic choice of auto-documentary and a record of her anonymous, but embodied participation in its making. Working in this modality, she types on the laptop screen as she watches numerous video clips, moves folders, uploads footage, responds to emails, and even encounters error screens.<sup>38</sup>



Figure 1: *Fragments of a Revolution* (Ana Nyma, 2011)

Ana Nyma's goal is not so much to reconstruct an objective account of the events but to communicate to the spectator the process by which she herself makes sense of the Green Movement protests. The film follows an overlapping chronology, cutting between YouTube videos of the street protests in Tehran that begin on 3 June 2009 and original footage of the documentarian in Paris in January 2010, converging on 11 February 2010. The email exchanged between "anonyme1388" and "azad2009" states: "Eight months have passed since June 2009. The sky of Paris remains grey." The image changes, and the writing continues: "Yet, for these eight months, it's as though I've been living virtually in Tehran. I don't know how many times I've looked at these distressing pictures. It's my way of feeling that I'm with you." The correspondence establishes Ana Nyma's time and place in the present but also inscribes her forcefully in the past. Her role as an anonymous participant is most obviously expressed by this intersection of correspondence, imagery, and temporality.

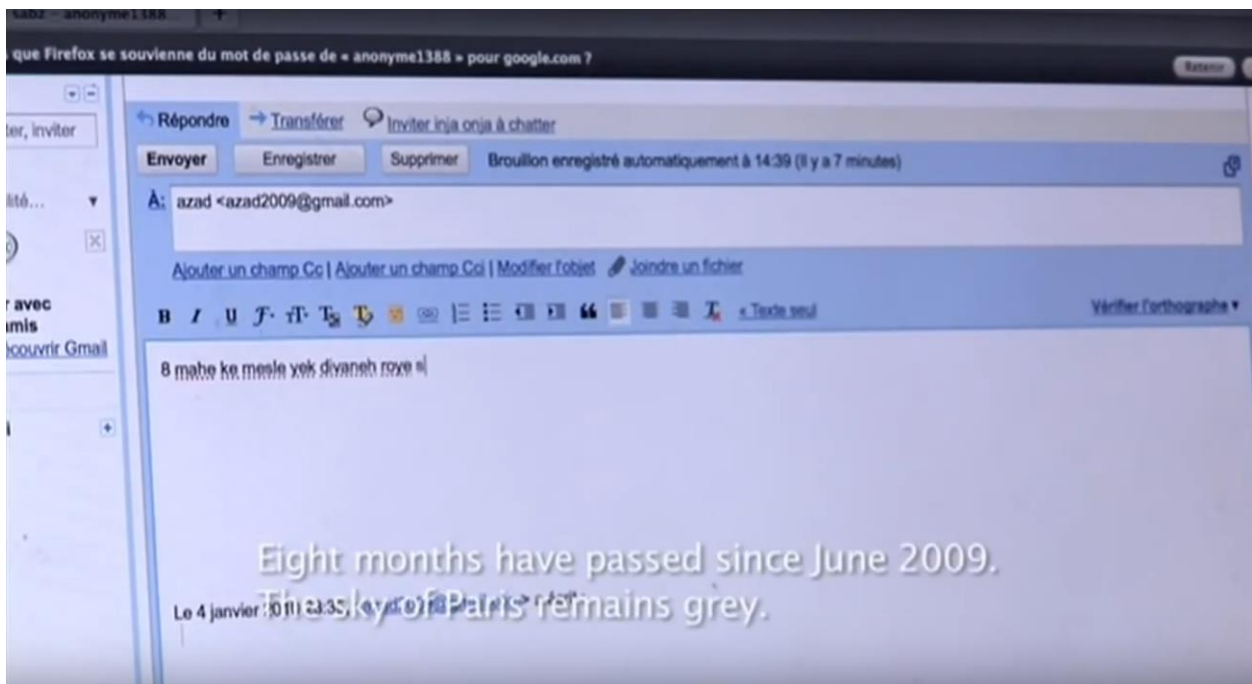


Figure 2: *Fragments of a Revolution* (Ana Nyma, 2011)





Figure 3: *Fragments of a Revolution* (Ana Nyma, 2011)

The film begins by juxtaposing a shot of the crewmember's hands as they make a sound check on the film camera with full-screen phone footage of a street protest in Tehran. As the video concludes, the window is tiled to reveal that we have been watching a clip uploaded to YouTube, "June 20, 2009 Iran Raw Footage: 3rdmurder," for which Ana Nyma's friend has sent the link, and which the director is archiving on her hard drive.<sup>39</sup> Ana Nyma's involvement takes the form of textual commentary, as we now see her hands typing on the laptop, on 4 January 2010: "Hello my dear, I looked at the YouTube link that you sent me. I think I've found the title for my film."<sup>40</sup> She then proceeds to type the title of the film itself, which appears in the middle of her computer screen: *Fragments of a Revolution*. Ana Nyma's virtual presence is two-fold: she has both a personal investment in the hopes for a post-revolutionary Iran and a filmmaker's role in splicing together this giant visual puzzle, "some of whose pieces are missing." As she

tries to reconstruct the story of protests, she acts as an intercessor who is neither the producer of these disturbing video clips nor a merely impassive spectator.

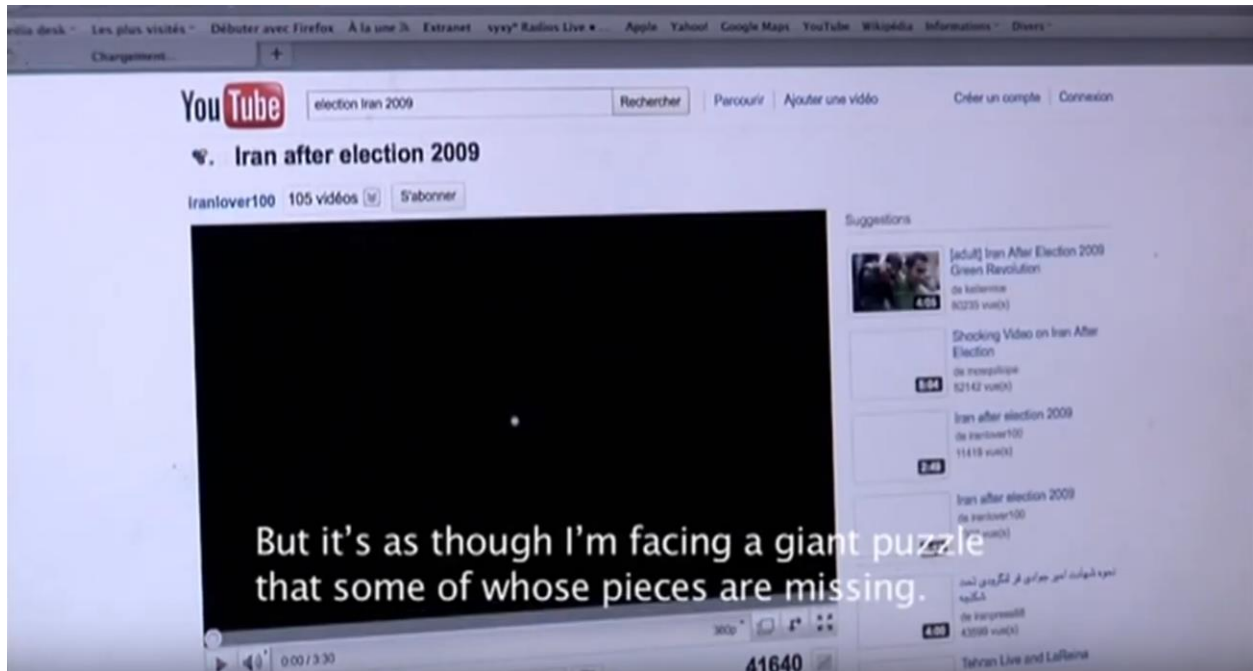


Figure 4: *Fragments of a Revolution* (Ana Nyma, 2011)

Ana Nyma creates many moments of co-participation through her computer screen despite the temporal and spatial divergence. On 10 January 2010, she films Paris by night “in silence,” urging her correspondent to shout from the rooftop because she cannot. She then segues to the 15 June 2009 “March of Silence” in Iran. This co-presence, as if the two narrative threads converged in one time and place, is most apparent near the midpoint of the film. As we view the phone footage of a protest at which the assembled crowd is fired upon from the rooftops by the Basiji, we hear the heavy breathing of an anonymous camera phone filmmaker as they try to escape the violence. The filmmaker is wounded and points the camera phone both at their own bloodied hand and the spatters of blood on the street. Disassociating sound and image, Ana

Nyma cuts to the relative calm of a rainy, pedestrian boulevard in Paris, but as the camera passes among the shoppers, we continue to hear on the soundtrack the report of gunshots and the anonymous Iranian filmmaker's increasingly laboured breathing.

Ana Nyma points out in her interview with *Journal du festival Cinéma du Réel* that the crew was worried that some of the activists whose images were already familiar to them might be killed or their footage might be erased.<sup>41</sup> It was important for everyone involved in the project not only to bear witness to these images but also to participate actively in the protests through their own digital intervention. But as Torchin acknowledges, connectivity and remote access are not devoid of danger: "Internet technology offers new possibilities for access, exchange, engagement, and participation, but with this spreadability comes risk, as exposure feeds surveillance of restrictive governments."<sup>42</sup> One may speculate that if Ana Nyma's true identity were to become known, her own family and associates in Iran would be gravely endangered. In an email exchange dated 19 July 2009, she is instructed not to send "X" any more emails, because they have been arrested. The Iranian state police are known to demand the passwords to email accounts of anyone they detain. If "X" has foolishly not wiped their Inbox, they put themselves and their correspondents in real danger. The state police are especially incensed by pictures and phone footage that are sent out of the country—the very thing that comprises much of Ana Nyma's film. Sending footage of the street protests abroad constitutes espionage or treason, charges punishable by imprisonment, torture, and execution. With the government severely restricting both foreign and Iranian media from shooting footage of the opposition activities, the only account of the protests could come from the participants themselves. In one anonymous video clip of the Basij militia running amok on the street, the filmmaker is warned that they have been spotted and that the Basiji is training his rifle on them. In another video clip,

the person filming is remonstrated not to shoot the interior of the apartment for fear of identifying the occupants.

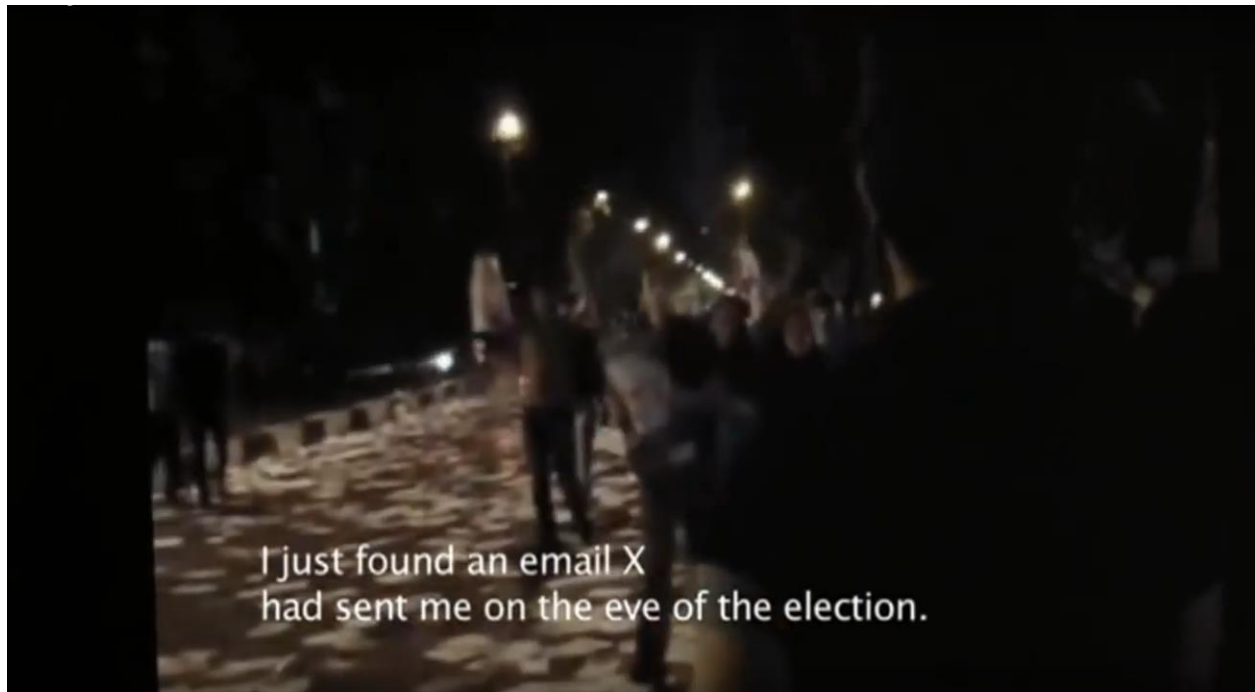


Figure 5: *Fragments of a Revolution* (Ana Nyma, 2011)

Only in the final sequence of *Fragments of a Revolution* does Ana Nyma comment directly on her own anonymous authorship of the film. A woman sits in a chair against a bare wall holding a set of cards. The shot cuts off the woman's head – enacting a filmic violence on her body – and she does not speak aloud. The fixed camera and deliberate silence suggest that she is being held hostage by her fear of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The first card reads, "I also confess." What follows is the anonymous testament of the filmmaker. But at the same time, she also invokes the forced confessions of Iranians held prisoner by the state. Twelve anti-government "rioters" during the Ashura mourning ceremonies on 27 December 2009 were made to read confessions before Tehran's Revolution Court and handed death sentences.<sup>43</sup> She continues, "I confess I did not tell you the whole truth" – a remarkable admission for a documentary filmmaker. She further discloses: "I confess those were not my hands [on the

laptop] that I filmed.” There is more: “I confess I did not dare use my voice nor my friends. I confess I’m afraid.” Just as Iranian directors Rasoulof and Panahi withheld crew credits for their films due to Iranian censorship and reprisals, so Ana Nyma offers a final statement regarding her anonymous film: “We would like to thank the long list of the anonymous without whom this film could not have been made. In particular those Iranians who courageously shared their images.” Ana Nyma has striven to protect the identities of the Green Movement protestors, and yet it is only through the selfless act of sharing their anonymous footage that the revolution continues: “this is not the end of the story.” While any hope that the Green Movement might bring a moderate reformist to power in Iran has become “a pile of ashes,” Ana Nyma declares that she is “countless” and the people are multitude.

With the assistance of his co-writer, the French filmmaker Bruno Tracq, Peter Snowdon has researched, curated, and edited *The Uprising* (2013), without contributing any original footage to the seventy-nine-minute film. In “Remixing the Spring!,” Donatella Della Ratta and Augusto Valeriani show that the curation and remixing of uploaded video clips of the Arab Spring—numbering in the millions—involves hard work including sourcing, selecting, translating, archiving, tagging, and manipulating the footage.<sup>44</sup> Authorship consists not in Snowdon’s own imagery but in the form and aesthetic style that he gives to *The Uprising*.

Snowdon is meticulous in documenting his sources in the credit roll, providing URLs for the over one hundred YouTube videos used in the film. But as the director of *The Uprising*, Snowdon is not an archival preservationist but an anarchival performer of the many video clips of which the film is composed. As a film conservator, curator, and archivist, Paolo Cherchi Usai laboured to preserve the holdings of the George Eastman Museum in Rochester, NY at the time of his employment there, especially the films on cellulose nitrate stock made until 1951, which

are both combustible and subject to decomposition, and some of which are orphan films. According to Emily Cohen, creative filmmakers such as Bill Morrison identify with the efforts of “orphanistas,” those “who struggle to reshape and reproduce cultural memory and heritage through reviving ‘orphans’ – films abandoned by their makers.”<sup>45</sup> Morrison’s *Decasia: The State of Decay* (2003) presents a whirling collage of many orphan films on nitrate stock that bubbles, splotches, and streaks into evanescence. *Decasia* turns the distorted images of an Egyptian Sufi dancer, a Japanese geisha, and a vigorous boxer into visual metaphors, “creating a kind of filmic trance.”<sup>46</sup> Morrison’s role is that of the filmmaker as archival preservationist, as his film rescues the images from the orphanage of decomposition. Morrison’s and Snowden’s films are both composed of found footage that remains outside of the transactional exchange of commercial media. But if Morrison impresses upon us the decayed state of his objects in the past tense, then Snowden uses the present-day online phone footage to imagine a future uprising. In the age of post-cinema and the social media image regime, Snowden regards the video clips uploaded by anonymous and pseudonymous Arab revolutionaries to be part of a “vernacular anarchieve.”<sup>47</sup>

The so-called “archival turn” in critical studies in the 1990s was greatly influenced by the works of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault.<sup>48</sup> Snowden acknowledges these thinkers in his book, *The People Are Not an Image: Vernacular Video After the Arab Spring*, but he more resolutely relies on the concept of the anarchieve, which has recently gained purchase among film and media scholars. *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving*, a collection of essays published by the Concordia University’s SenseLab, not only offers perspectives on the definition of the anarchieve but also performs as an anarchieve, doing what it describes by way of multimodality and hybridity.<sup>49</sup> If the archive is typically approached as a sorting of past records guided by the impulse to preserve and interpret them, the anarchieve activates the affective and processual

energies within the archive (which the anarchiving needs as its support), leading to new creative assemblages and eventualities.<sup>50</sup>

Snowdon's usage of "vernacular" is indebted to the research of Ivan Illich, who links the term to "people's resistance to the emerging (or invading) State's colonization of their everyday forms of life."<sup>51</sup> The vernacular anarchiving, as Snowdon states in his book, consists of videos that are "far from being raw documents of original events which, by the time we see the video, have definitely receded into an irretrievable past." Rather, "they are explicitly or implicitly complex constellations of time and space," not just media objects but the "*distributor of energy*" (author's emphasis).<sup>52</sup> Therefore, his goal is not to preserve these images as a record of what is past but rather to imagine an uprising in the future tense, as the video clips are constantly being uploaded, deleted, re-watched, shared, and commented upon. For Snowdon, then, the vernacular videos of the Arab Spring are an anarchiving of "*embodied*" and "*performative*" collective practices, which activate new potential forms of living through both online and offline engagement (author's emphasis).<sup>53</sup> As Brian Massumi emphasises, "The anarchiving is by nature something to be *performed* rather than presented" (author's emphasis).<sup>54</sup> Snowdon himself acts as an archival performer, as he sorts and sifts through not only massive amounts of online phone footage but also "blog posts, tweets, Facebook status updates, newspaper articles, and academic essays."<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Snowdon relies on multimodality and cross-platforming – the descriptors Massumi uses in relation to anarchiving – as his project encompasses the film (*The Uprising*), the subsequent book (*The People Are Not an Image*), and the Vimeo digital companion that features all video clips discussed in the book.<sup>56</sup>

*The Uprising* is not a methodically documented account of revolutions governed by the principles of the archive. It is not a "filing cabinet" but more of an "overstuffed folder that jams

the rollers sending random papers to the ground, remixing their contents.”<sup>57</sup> Snowden’s film is guided by an improvisational anarchival impulse, as it envisions a revolution yet to come. In contrast to the reconstructed temporal sequence of events in *Fragments of a Revolution*, Snowden’s *The Uprising* manipulates the chronology of the Arab Spring, stating at its outset, “The revolution that this film imagines is based on several real revolutions.” “Imagining” a global revolution is a form of futurity, which is tied to the production and circulation of video clips by anonymous filmmakers and anonymous or pseudonymous social media users as the missing people.<sup>58</sup>

*The Uprising* begins with tremulous phone footage of a tornado approaching Huntsville, Alabama in 2010, a seemingly unrelated clip that sets the energy of the future revolution in motion. The sound of lashing rain and electrical transformers exploding is overlaid in a contrapuntal montage with beseeching voices of the Arab Spring participants. We hear the “Last Broadcast of Mohammed Nabbous,” who is killed in the Libyan uprising, with a message from his widow; the vlog of Asmaa Mahfouz that describes the self-immolation of four men that instigated the revolution in Egypt; and similar broadcasts from Syria and Bahrain, all of which have been uploaded to YouTube in 2011 by anonymous or pseudonymous users. One man declares in English that we should thank God we are living in the year 2011 when we have access to internet technology that bears witness to atrocities and bloodbaths that might have been suppressed before social media. This stunning interstice between the tornadic image and the cacophonous, contrapuntal sound of voices from the countries of the Arab Spring introduces Snowden’s performance of an anarchival.





Figure 6: *The Uprising* (Peter Snowden, 2013)



Figure 7: *The Uprising* (Peter Snowden, 2013)

As a framing device, the film ends with a quotation by the anarchist Russian philosopher Pyotr Kropotkin, who compares revolution to a crashing “cyclone,” or a “social gale” born of countless years of tyranny, inequality, and mistreatment.<sup>59</sup> The maelstrom of protests in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen during the Arab Spring is structured in chapters that count down from “Seven Days Ago” until “Today,” ending with another clip of a tornado in Alabama in 2011, thus forming an imaginary global uprising. Snowden is the outsider-intercessor in that uprising on the screen, born from the whirlwind of anonymous phone footage. There are video clips of the Tahrir Square demonstrations in Cairo, Egypt in 2011; of massacres in Dera’a, the epicentre of the war in Syria; and of the Tunisian (Jasmine) Revolution in January 2011. The serial montage of video clips from different countries effects a collective anonymity in place of any causal analysis of the uprisings: images from Bahrain, Libya, and Syria are spliced together but represent similar moments in the outrage and collective spirit of the people. Performing an anarchic through a series of affective in-betweens, Snowden “*looks for a different kind of potential for feeling*, not immediately structured, but in passage, in a swerve, veering away from the given” (author’s emphasis).<sup>60</sup> While we catch glimpses of different national flags – a trope of the protest marches – and the denunciations of dictators by name, the anarchival film documents the collective “duty to be free.”

The video clip, “Protest in Souq Al Jumma–Tripoli,” which Snowden refers to as “The Death of Ali Talha” in *The People Are Not an Image*, immediately precedes the montage sequence in *The Uprising* that I describe in my introduction.<sup>61</sup> The video is shot on the Day of Rage on 17 February 2011 during the Libyan Revolution against Muammar Gaddafi. In the chapter of *The Uprising* entitled “6 Days Ago,” protestors march through the Tripoli district of Tajura towards the waterfront, where the crowd surges in chaotic rushes and is driven back by

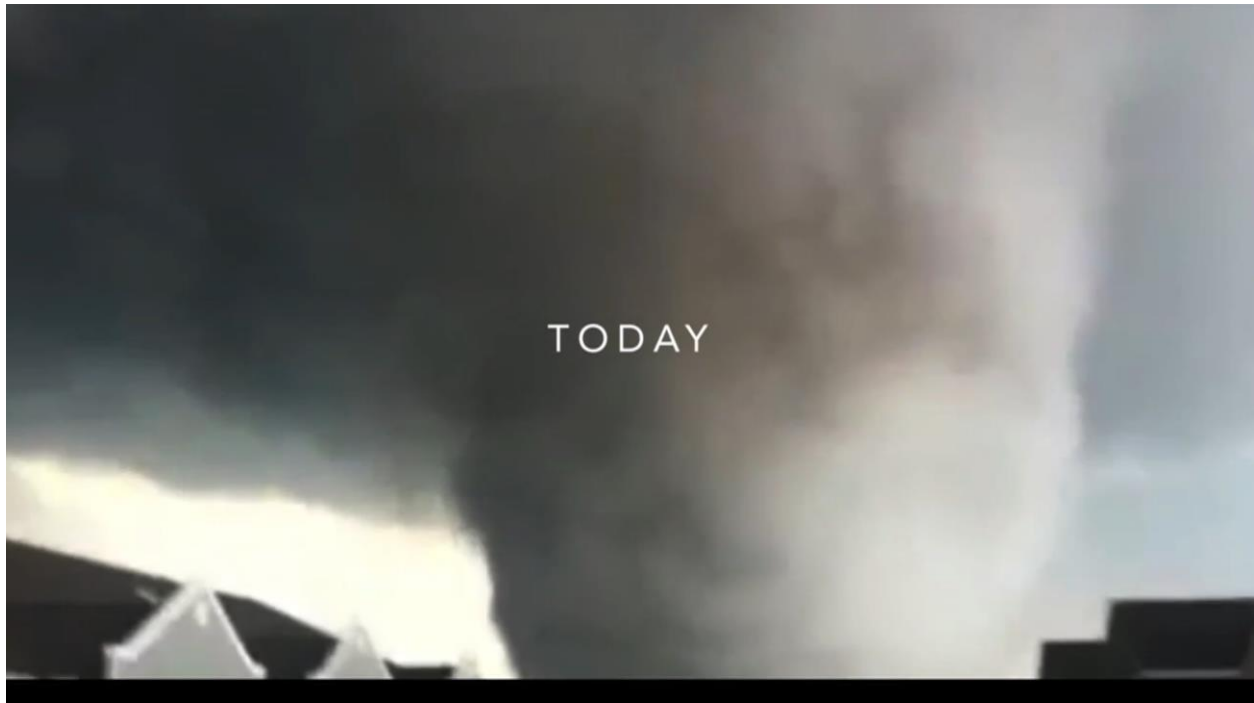


Figure 8: *The Uprising* (Peter Snowden, 2013)



Figure 9: *The Uprising* (Peter Snowden, 2013)

state security forces. There is intermittent gunfire from the unidentified militia. The smartphone is shakily held sideways as the filmmaker first runs toward the sea, pauses, and then turns in retreat along the boulevard. Unlike the film camera that is held to the cinematographer's eye, the camera phone is usually held at arm's length, a prosthetic device that likewise points and shoots. Suddenly, someone cries out, "There is no God but God! God loves the martyr!" as the body of a man with bloodied head is carried facedown past the filmmaker, spattering a trail of blood along the pavement. The attention of the anonymous person, who is now presented to us as a shadow-figure with the camera phone in hand, is drawn back to a blood-soaked jacket on the ground. "Are his papers there? Let's see who it is," a man asks. His name is Ali Talha. In his longer account of "The Death of Ali Talha," Snowden notes that he could find little more information regarding Ali Mohammed Talha, who gave his life for the revolution.<sup>62</sup> He is granted a proper name in death, but the visceral shock of his martyrdom is captured and uploaded to YouTube by a pseudonymous poster, "17thFebRevolution."



Figure 10: *The Uprising* (Peter Snowden, 2013)



Figure 11: *The Uprising* (Peter Snowden, 2013)

While Ana Nyma conceals her own identity and those of her confidants in Tehran out of concern for their safety, Snowden asserts that the circulation of video clips posted anonymously or pseudonymously on social media sites makes them common property. The anonymity of these images and their postings has less to do with the tactical need to protect the filmmaker from identification and retaliation. Rather, these images express a “strategic” anonymity, because their circulation cannot be controlled by the state: “these videos do not and cannot belong (legally) to the person who may happen to have ‘made’ them, because they belong (morally) to all those who make the revolution,” and die for its cause.<sup>63</sup> The anonymous filmmaker of “Protest in Souq Al Jumma–Tripoli” remains unknown, but there is no need for his identification because these videos of the Arab Spring speak for all the missing people and for their collective power.

In the twenty-first century, the moving image has become truly transnational, a product of the globalisation that produces and distributes smartphones and creates the networked systems that facilitate their use. In this article, I have demonstrated that the social media image may exhibit various forms of anonymity with respect to phone footage: images may be produced on a personal camera phone device; posted privately by any individual with internet access; shared instantly on a network beyond the control of their maker; and taken up by global film directors. Further, I have distinguished two different modes in the use of anonymous phone footage by global directors as intercessors. In the first, a relatively rare mode, anonymous filmmakers such as the Iranian documentarian Ana Nyma in *Fragments of a Revolution* demonstrate the desire for exposing injustice, brutality, and corruption, calling out for social transformations or regime change. As an anonymous participant, Ana Nyma takes part in the Iranian Green Movement remotely through her laptop, retaining her own anonymity while also sharing in the collective anonymity of her sources. In the second mode, the filmmaker Peter Snowden identifies himself as the author of *The Uprising*, comprised entirely of phone footage of the Arab Spring. Snowden presides over the film as an archival performer, curating and remixing numerous video clips that have been uploaded anonymously or pseudonymously to social media platforms. Relying on phone footage as one of the strategies of anonymous cinema in the global age, both filmmakers create their own vision of history in opposition to the ideological representations that proliferate in state-controlled and broadcast media.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> These two video clips of the Arab Spring protests are featured in Peter Snowdon's found footage film, *The Uprising* (2013). Despite the seeming affective continuity, one moment we are in Bahrain in March 2011; in the next moment – in Syria in April 2011 (See “Bahrain riot police use gun against protestors 13-03-2011,” YouTube, 13 March 2011, Uploaded by CITIZENARENA—BAHRAIN, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEV\\_iH9keVE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEV_iH9keVE); “Massacre in Daraa, Syria, April 22, 2011,” YouTube, 22 April 2011, Uploaded by IZRA' DARAA, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbeuYtFmcyQ>. The links to the videos are listed in the final credit roll of Snowdon's film. The latter clip appears to have been deleted from YouTube). In the first clip, we see the national flag of Bahrain, however Snowdon's method of montage encourages the sense that the action might be happening in any country of the Arab Spring. The affective energy in this montage sequence is activated by the chance encounters between sounds and colours (such as the sound of gunfire or the blue colour of the shirts worn by two different men in the clips). The editing of the clips reveals Snowdon's style of the filmmaker as archival performer, to be discussed further in the article.

<sup>2</sup> Among other sources, Deleuze references the missing people and the intercessors in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 204–15.

<sup>3</sup> On the concept of the anarchival, see my analysis of Snowdon's *The Uprising*.

<sup>4</sup> The filmmaker has employed both designations in her career, Anonymous and Ana Nyma.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Snowdon, *The People Are Not an Image: Vernacular Video After the Arab Spring* (London and New York: Verso, 2020), 1–21.

<sup>6</sup> Robert J. Griffin, “Anonymity and Authorship,” *New Literary History* 30, no. 4 (1999): 877. For further discussion of literary anonymity, see Robert J. Griffin, ed. *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publication from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (New York and Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous (A Senior Trump Administration Official), *A Warning* (New York: Twelve, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Wendi A. Maloney, “1912 Amendment Adds Movies to Copyright Law,” *Copyright Lore*, March 2012, 16, accessed 6 June 2021, [https://www.copyright.gov/history/lore/pdfs/201203%20CLore\\_March2012.pdf](https://www.copyright.gov/history/lore/pdfs/201203%20CLore_March2012.pdf). See also Peter Decherney, *Hollywood's Copyright Wars: From Edison to the Internet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). For example, he notes that many early films were legally protected as photographs, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Jane M. Gaines, “Anonymity: Uncredited and Unknown in Early Cinema,” in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, ed. André Gaudreault and Nicolas Dulac (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 443–59.

<sup>10</sup> Dan Streible, “The Role of Orphan Films in the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Archive,” *Cinema Journal* 46, no. 3 (2007): 124–28.



<sup>11</sup> Mike Murphy, “Cellphones Now Outnumber the World’s Population,” *Quartz*, 29 April 2019, accessed 6 June 2021, <https://qz.com/1608103/there-are-now-more-cellphones-than-people-in-the-world/>.

<sup>12</sup> V. Renée, “This New Ad for Bentley Was Shot on the iPhone 5S & Edited on an iPad Air Right Inside the Car,” *No Film School*, 17 May 2014, accessed 5 June 2021, <https://nofilmschool.com/2014/05/new-ad-for-bentley-shot-on-iphone-5s>.

<sup>13</sup> Kata Szita, “New Perspectives on an Imperfect Cinema: Smartphones, Spectatorship, and Screen Culture 2.0,” *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 9, no. 1 (2020): 34. Szita refers to Sally Potter’s *Rage* (2009) as an example of cell phone aesthetics.

<sup>14</sup> See Eduardo Ledesma, “Cell Phone Cinema: Latin American Horror Flicks in the Post-Digital Age,” *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 53, no. 3 (2019): 821–54.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Tony Myers, “‘Tangerine’ and iPhone Cinema,” *Videomaker* 31, no. 5 (Nov. 2016): 48+, *Gale Academic OneFile*, accessed 24 May 2021, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A470868754/AONE?u=sunybuff\\_main&sid=AONE&xid=242c9ebf](link.gale.com/apps/doc/A470868754/AONE?u=sunybuff_main&sid=AONE&xid=242c9ebf).

<sup>16</sup> See Kata Szita, “New Perspectives on an Imperfect Cinema.” See also Juan García Espinosa, “For an Imperfect Cinema,” in *Twenty-Five Years of the New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael Chanan (London: British Film Institute, 1983), 28–33.

<sup>17</sup> I thank Susan McWhinney for drawing my attention to this example.

<sup>18</sup> I thank Susan McWhinney for drawing my attention to this example.

<sup>19</sup> Other recent conceptualisations of phone footage cinema include “desktop documentary,” pioneered by the video essayist Kevin B. Lee, which has its counterpart in the “desktop fiction film” or “screenmovie genre,” popularized by the director Timur Bekmambetov. Kevin B. Lee, “Kevin B. Lee on Desktop Documentary,” *Reframe: Research in Media, Arts and Humanities*, 2015, accessed 5 June 2021, <https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/conversations/archive2015/kevin-b-lee/>. Timur Bekmambetov, “Rules of the Screenmovie: The *Unfriended* Manifesto for the Digital Age,” *Moviemaker*, 22 April 2015, accessed 5 June 2021, <https://moviemaker.com/unfriended-rules-of-the-screenmovie-a-manifesto-for-the-digital-age/>. As Bekmambetov notes, what stirs the audience’s interest in the screenmovie genre is the pervasive sense of anonymity in online interactions, which permits “users to communicate without leaving their comfort zone,” n. pag. Chloé Galibert-Lainé puts desktop documentaries, along with compilation films such as Snowdon’s *The Uprising*, under the rubric of “netnographic” films (“net” + “ethnographic”). She also includes here other modalities in which filmmakers appropriate and re-edit the uploaded content of an online community, as in Grégoire Beil’s *Roman National* (2018), complete with scrolling text commentary and emojis. Chloé Galibert-Lainé, “Netnographic Cinema as a Cultural Interface,” *Illuminace* 32, no. 2 (2020): 53–69.

<sup>20</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59 (Winter, 1992): 3–7. See, for example, *Deleuze and New Technology*, eds. David Savat and Mark Poster (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> See Patricia Pisters, *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); Steven Shaviro, “The Rhythm-Image,”



keynote lecture delivered at the Thinking Through Deleuze: Nomadic Subjects, Global Citizenship and Posthumanism Conference, Brock University, St. Catherines, Ontario, February 6–8, 2015, accessed 6 June 2021, [www.shaviro.com/Presentations/Third/#/](http://www.shaviro.com/Presentations/Third/#/).

<sup>22</sup> Nadav Hochman, “The Social Media Image,” *Big Data & Society*, July–December 2014: 1.

<sup>23</sup> Hochman finds this new order of time enacted in such artistic projects as Christian Marclay’s video installation, *The Clock* (2010), in which the data stream presents “an expression of the desire for a film to become a contemporary image.” “The Social Media Image,” 11.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011); and Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, eds. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Henry Jenkins, “Twitter Revolutions?” Blog, n.d., accessed June 6, 2021, <https://spreadablemedia.org/essays/jenkins/index.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017), 263.

<sup>27</sup> Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas*, xii.

<sup>28</sup> Tufekci also discusses social media specifications regarding the issues of privacy and anonymity. Whereas some online platforms operate under real name policies (Facebook), others allow anonymity or pseudonymity (Reddit, YouTube), *Twitter and Tear Gas*, 171. It should also be noted that retaining complete online anonymity might be difficult unless significant precautions are taken. One immediate concern is metadata associated with the use of a specific platform (geo-positioning) or extended online activities (email accounts). See, for example, Zoraida Esteve, Asier Moneva, and Fernando Miró-Llinares, “Can Metadata Be Used to Measure the Anonymity of Twitter Users? Results of a Confirmatory Factor Analysis,” *International e-Journal of Criminal Science*, Artículo 4, Número 13 (2019), accessed 7 June 2021, <http://www.ehu.es/inecs>; or Matthias Marx, Erik Sy, Christian Burkert, and Hannes Federrath, “Anonymity Online – Current Solutions and Challenges,” in *Privacy and Identity Management: The Smart Revolution*, ed. M. Hansen, E. Kosta, I. Nai-Fovino, and S. Fischer-Hübner (Heidelberg: Springer, 2017), 38–55. Accessed 5 June 2021, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92925-5\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92925-5_4).

<sup>29</sup> Leshu Torchin, *Creating the Witness: Documenting Genocide on Film, Video, and the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Torchin, *Creating the Witness*, 17.

<sup>31</sup> See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004). Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van den Abbeele (1983; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

<sup>32</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 242.

<sup>33</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 152.

<sup>34</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 222.

<sup>35</sup> Snowden, *The People Are Not an Image*, 17. In a similar vein, Deleuze refers to the French filmmaker and anthropologist Jean Rouch as an intercessor, who is not a third-world filmmaker himself but one who “has done so much to put the West into flight, to flee himself.” Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 223. Snowden also had a two-month residency in post-revolutionary Egypt, during which he screened his film to audiences for their response.

<sup>36</sup> I watched Ana Nyma’s *Fragments of a Revolution* on a DVD, and I ordered her other film, *Remote Control*, to be projected on-screen at the Global Film Festival that I curate in Buffalo, NY. The first time I viewed Snowden’s *The Uprising* was not on my computer screen but in a screening room with the director in attendance, at the Squeaky Wheel Film and Media Arts Center in Buffalo, NY.

<sup>37</sup> Lee, “Kevin B. Lee on Desktop Documentary,” n.pag.

<sup>38</sup> As she will reveal at the end of the film, Ana Nyma uses a stand-in for reasons of anonymity. In my description of the film, I will refer to Ana Nyma both as the director and as the on-screen persona.

<sup>39</sup> The pseudonymous accounts of the users whose footage Ana Nyma is watching include “dochartagn,” “Iranlover100,” “Pelve17,” and “Sherlock72.”

<sup>40</sup> This and subsequent quotations are from the on-screen, typed text of *Fragments of a Revolution*.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Ana Nyma, *Journal du festival Cinéma du Réel*, Dimanche 27 March 2011, n.pag.

<sup>42</sup> Torchin, *Creating the Witness*, 18.

<sup>43</sup> Ashura is a major holy day on which public mourning rituals for Muslim martyrs are conducted. The “rioters” were mourning not the Martyrs of the Revolution but those killed on the street or in captivity during the Green Movement.

<sup>44</sup> Donatella Della Ratta and Augusto Valeriani, “Remixing the Spring!: Connective Leadership and Read-write Practices in the 2011 Arab Uprisings,” *CyberOrient* 6, no. 1 (2012): 52–76.

<sup>45</sup> Emily Cohen, “The Orphanista Manifesto: Orphan Films and the Politics of Reproduction,” *American Anthropologist* 106, no. 4 (2004): 719.

<sup>46</sup> Cohen, “The Orphanista Manifesto,” 723.

<sup>47</sup> Snowden, *The People Are Not an Image*, 13. See also Snowden, “The Revolution Will be Uploaded: Vernacular Video and the Arab Spring,” *Culture Unbound* 6 (2014): 401–29.

<sup>48</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139–64.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Murphie, ed., *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving* (Montréal: The SenseLab, 2016).

<sup>50</sup> Brian Massumi, “Working Principles,” in *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving*, ed. Andrew Murphie, 6-7.

<sup>51</sup> Snowden, *The People Are Not an Image*, 14.

<sup>52</sup> Snowden, *The People Are Not an Image*, 52.

<sup>53</sup> Snowden, *The People Are Not an Image*, 14.

<sup>54</sup> Brian Massumi, “Materializations of the Anarchive: Anarchival Propositions,” in *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving*, ed. Andrew Murphie, 46.

<sup>55</sup> Snowden, *The People Are Not an Image*, 16.

<sup>56</sup> Massumi, “Working Principles,” 6-7.

<sup>57</sup> Andrew Goodman, “IF,” in *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving*, ed. Andrew Murphie, 98.

<sup>58</sup> See Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 216. Snowden employs the reference to “the missing people” as one of two epigraphs for *The People Are Not an Image*.

<sup>59</sup> Snowden notes the etymological link between “anarchy” and “anarchive,” *The People Are Not an Image*, 20. The full quotation by Kropotkin is as follows: “It is no use to sneer and cry, ‘why these revolutions?’ No use for the sailor to scorn the cyclone and cry, ‘why should it approach my ship?’ The gale has originated in times past, in remote regions. Cold mist and hot air have been struggling long before the great rupture of equilibrium – the gale – was born. So it is with social gales also. Centuries of injustice, ages of oppression and misery, ages of disdain of the subject and poor, have prepared the storm.” Pyotr Kropotkin, “The Coming Revolution” (1 October 1886), reprinted in *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism* 1, no. 1, accessed 6 June 2021, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/freedom-press-london-the-coming-revolution>.

<sup>60</sup> Murphie, ““Where Are the Other Places?": Archives and Anarchives,” in *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving*, ed. Andrew Murphie, 42.

<sup>61</sup> Snowden, *The People Are Not an Image*, 97–107; “Protest in Souq Al Jumma–Tripoli,” originally posted by 17thFebRevolution, on 27 February 2011, at [youtube.com/watch?v=RdlBRgioBFc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdlBRgioBFc). The video clip is no longer available on YouTube, but it can be viewed on the companion Vimeo site for Snowden’s book, *The People Are Not an Image*, <https://vimeo.com/channels/thepeoplearenot>, at <https://vimeo.com/49182496>. About two minutes of the 5:13 video clip are used in *The Uprising*. Accessed 5 June 2021.

<sup>62</sup> Snowden, *The People Are Not an Image*, 105.

<sup>63</sup> Snowden, *The People Are Not an Image*, 7.

## Bibliography

Anonymous (A Senior Trump Administration Official). *A Warning*. New York: Twelve, 2019.

Bekmambetov, Timur. “Rules of the Screenmovie: The *Unfriended* Manifesto for the Digital Age.” *Moviemaker*, 22 April 2015, accessed 5 June 2021, <https://moviemaker.com/unfriended-rules-of-the-screenmovie-a-manifesto-for-the-digital-age/>.

- Cohen, Emily. "The Orphanista Manifesto: Orphan Films and the Politics of Reproduction." *American Anthropologist* 106, no. 4 (2004): 719–31.
- Decherney, Peter. *Hollywood's Copyright Wars: From Edison to the Internet*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59 (Winter, 1992): 3–7.
- Della Ratta, Donatella, and Augusto Valeriani. "Remixing the Spring! Connective Leadership and Read-Write Practices in the 2011 Arab Uprisings." *CyberOrient* 6, no. 1 (2012): 52–76.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Translated by Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Espinosa, Juan García. "For an Imperfect Cinema." In *Twenty-Five Years of the New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael Chanan, 28–33. London: British Film Institute, 1983.
- Esteve, Zoraida, Asier Moneva, and Fernando Miró-Llinares. "Can Metadata Be Used to Measure the Anonymity of *Twitter* Users? Results of a Confirmatory Factor Analysis." *International e-Journal of Criminal Science*, Artículo 4, Número 13 (2019), accessed 7 June 2021, <http://www.ehu.es/inecs>.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.
- Foucault, Michel. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard, 139–64. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Gaines, Jane M. "Anonymity: Uncredited and Unknown in Early Cinema." In *A Companion to Early Cinema*, ed. André Gaudreault and Nicolas Dulac, 443–59. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.
- Galibert-Lainé, Chloé. "Netnographic Cinema as a Cultural Interface." *Illuminace* 32, no. 2 (2020): 53–69.
- Goodman, Andrew. "IF." In *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving*, ed. Andrew Murphie, 98–99.

- Griffin, Robert J. "Anonymity and Authorship." *New Literary History* 30, no. 4 (1999): 877–95.
- Griffin, Robert J., ed. *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publication from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*. New York and Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin, 2004.
- Hochman, Nadav. "The Social Media Image." *Big Data & Society*, July–December 2014: 1–15. Accessed 5 June 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951714546645>.
- Ilich, Ivan D. *Shadow Work*. London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1981.
- Jenkins, Henry. "Twitter Revolutions?" Blog, n.d., accessed 6 June 2021, <https://spreadablemedia.org/essays/jenkins/index.html>.
- Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, eds. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2013.
- Kropotkin, Pyotr. "The Coming Revolution" (1 October 1886). Reprinted in *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism* 1, no. 1, accessed 6 June 2021, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/freedom-press-london-the-coming-revolution>.
- Ledesma, Eduardo. "Cell Phone Cinema: Latin American Horror Flicks in the Post-Digital Age." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 53, no. 3 (2019): 821–54.
- Lee, Kevin B. "Kevin B. Lee on Desktop Documentary." *Reframe: Research in Media, Arts and Humanities*, 2015, accessed 5 June 2021, <https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/conversations/archive2015/kevin-b-lee/>.
- Liotard, Jean-François. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Translated by Georges Van den Abbeele. 1983; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Maloney, Wendi A. "1912 Amendment Adds Movies to Copyright Law." *Copyright Lore*, March 2012, 16, accessed 6 June 2021, [https://www.copyright.gov/history/lore/pdfs/201203%20CLore\\_March2012.pdf](https://www.copyright.gov/history/lore/pdfs/201203%20CLore_March2012.pdf).
- Marx, Matthias, Erik Sy, Christian Burkert, and Hannes Federrath. "Anonymity Online – Current Solutions and Challenges." In *Privacy and Identity Management: The Smart Revolution*,

- ed. M. Hansen, E. Kosta, I. Nai-Fovino, and S. Fischer-Hübner, 38–55. Heidelberg: Springer, 2017. Accessed 5 June 2021, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92925-5\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92925-5_4).
- Massumi, Brian. “Materializations of the Anarchive: Anarchival Propositions.” In *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving*, ed. Andrew Murphie, 45–46.
- Massumi, Brian. “Working Principles.” In *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving*, ed. Andrew Murphie, 6-7.
- Morozov, Evgeny. *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*. New York: Public Affairs, 2011.
- Murphie, Andrew, ed. *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving*. Montréal: The SenseLab, 2016.
- Murphie, Andrew. “‘Where Are the Other Places?’: Archives and Anarchives.” In *The Go-To How To Book of Anarchiving*, ed. Andrew Murphie, 41–43.
- Murphy, Mike. “Cellphones Now Outnumber the World’s Population.” *Quartz*, 29 April 2019, accessed 6 June 2021, <https://qz.com/1608103/there-are-now-more-cellphones-than-people-in-the-world/>.
- Myers, Tony. “‘Tangerine’ and iPhone Cinema.” *Videomaker* 31, no. 5 (Nov. 2016): 48+. *Gale Academic OneFile*, accessed 24 May 2021, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A470868754/AONE?u=sunybuff\\_main&sid=AONE&xid=242c9ebf](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A470868754/AONE?u=sunybuff_main&sid=AONE&xid=242c9ebf).
- Pisters, Patricia. *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Renée, V. “This New Ad for Bentley Was Shot on the iPhone 5S & Edited on an iPad Air Right Inside the Car.” *No Film School*, 17 May 2014, accessed 5 June 2021, <https://nofilmschool.com/2014/05/new-ad-for-bentley-shot-on-iphone-5s>.
- Savat, David, and Mark Poster, eds. *Deleuze and New Technology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
- Shaviro, Steven. “The Rhythm-Image.” Keynote lecture delivered at the Thinking Through Deleuze: Nomadic Subjects, Global Citizenship and Posthumanism Conference, Brock University, St. Catherines, Ontario, February 6–8, 2015, accessed 6 June 2021, [www.shaviro.com/Presentations/Third/#/](http://www.shaviro.com/Presentations/Third/#/).
- Snowdon, Peter. *The People Are Not an Image: Vernacular Video After the Arab Spring*. London and New York: Verso, 2020.

Snowdon, Peter. "The Revolution *Will* be Uploaded: Vernacular Video and the Arab Spring." *Culture Unbound* 6 (2014): 401–29.

Streible, Dan. "The Role of Orphan Films in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Archive." *Cinema Journal* 46, no. 3 (2007): 124–28.

Szita, Kata. "New Perspectives on an Imperfect Cinema: Smartphones, Spectatorship, and Screen Culture 2.0." *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 9, no. 1 (2020): 31–52.

Torchin, Leshu. *Creating the Witness: Documenting Genocide on Film, Video, and the Internet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Tufekci, Zeynep. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017.

### **Filmography**

*The Act of Killing*. Directed by Joshua Oppenheimer, Christine Cynn, and Anonymous. Denmark, Norway, United Kingdom, Final Cut for Real, 2012.

*The Clock*. Video installation by Christian Marclay. Tate, London, 2010.

*Decasia: The State of Decay*. Directed by Bill Morrison. United States, Bill Morrison Film, 2003.

*Devil's Freedom (La Libertad del Diablo)*. Directed by Everardo González. Mexico, Animal de Luz Films, 2018.

*Fragments of a Revolution (Fragments d'une révolution)*. Directed by Anonymous. France, Mille et Une Films, 2011.

*Green Days (Roozahaye Sabz)*. Directed by Hana Makhmalbaf. Iran, Makhmalbaf Film, 2009.

*Manuscripts Don't Burn*. Directed by Mohammad Rasoulof. United Kingdom, Kino Lorber, 2013.

*Midnight Traveler*. Directed by Hassan Fazili. Qatar, Old Chilly Pictures, 2019.

*The Pixelated Revolution*. Video installation by Rabih Mroué. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2012.

*Rage*. Directed by Sally Potter. United States, Adventure Pictures and Vox3 Films, 2009.

*Remote Control (Télécommande)*. Directed by Anonymous. France, L'Atelier documentaire, 2015.

*Red Bloody Forest (Rojo en el Bosque Sangriento)*. Directed by Tetsuo Lumière. Argentina, 2006. Accessed 5 June 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SINsGagzVJI>.

*Roman National*. Directed by Grégoire Beil. France, Bad Manners, 2018.

*Tangerine*. Directed by Sean Baker. United States, Duplass Brothers Productions, 2015.

*Taxi*. Directed by Jafar Panahi. Iran, Jafar Panahi Film Productions, 2015.

*Tehran Without Permission (Tehran bedoune mojavez)*. Directed by Sepideh Farsi. Iran, France, Rêves d'Eau Productions, 2009.

*Unsane*. Directed by Steven Soderbergh. United States, Bleecker Street, 2018.

*Unfriended*. Directed by Timur Bekmambetov. United States, Bazelevs Production, 2014.

*The Uprising*. Directed by Peter Snowdon. Belgium and UK, Rien à Voir Production, 2013.

*You Don't Like the Truth: 4 Days Inside Guantánamo*. Directed by Luc Côté and Patricio Henríquez. Canada, Les Films Adobe, 2010.

I would like to thank my anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article.

### **Author Biography**

Tanya Shilina-Conte is Assistant Professor of Global Film Studies at the University at Buffalo, SUNY. She teaches a wide variety of courses in Film and Media Theory, Cinema in the Post-media Age, and Global Film and Media. Her research has been published or is forthcoming in *Screen*, *Film-Philosophy*, *Studia Phænomenologica*, *Word & Image*, *Iran Namag*, *Leitura: Teoria & Pratica*, *Studia Linguistica*, and *Border Visions: Identity and Diaspora in Film*. She is the founder of the Center for Global Media at the University at Buffalo and curator of the Global Film Series held at the Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo, NY. Her book manuscript, *Black Screens, White Frames: Gilles Deleuze and The Interstices of Cinema*, is under contract with Oxford University Press. She is currently working on a new book, *Anonymous Cinema in the Global Age*.



