

# De-anarch-ification

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We are all accustomed to the phenomena of selling out, of the stigma of political material in mainstream media and entertainment. Anything 'political' is bad. To say something non-offensively in everyday life, on various important matters, becomes 'politically' correct and therefore stigmatized as oppression by 'elites' or 'do-gooders'. To put the mildest of political material in a film or play is to render it controversial, therefore worthy of contempt and dismissal by conservative commentators, stigmatized as partial and biased. But for plays or movies with political material beyond the mild level - becoming a little radical - it must be entirely wiped out, whitewashed, erased from history and from memory, as if it were never there. Two instances of this occurred to me recently, respectively in a (very mainstream!) movie and play with radical political subject matter.

First there is this Hollywood movie "V for vendetta". This movie comes, no, not from the people who brought you the Matrix, it comes originally from a comic strip. The comic strip is about a dystopian future Britain in which a dark hero tries to set things right. The hero, "V", is a mixture of freedom-fighter/terrorist (the distinction is a political matter, not factual) and advocate of anarchism. Of course, anarchists in the average mind are associated (by some propaganda process) much more with violence than with anarchist principles of organization, federation, cooperation, decentralisation and so on, which apparently appear in the comic. The movie retains some political overtones, of course, dumbed down and diluted into a Hollywood liberal form. This is better than nothing but it is clear that any reference to serious political thought must be removed.

Second, while we were in London we went to see Les Miserables, which was awesome, as I mentioned. But even here, in a play with quite radical themes - after all, most of the characters die on the barricades! - it happened there too. They couldn't change the lyrics of course, but they could change the colours and the ideology. For instance, there's a song they sing where they extol the colours of their flag, "Red and Black".

Red - the blood of angry men!

Black - the dark of ages past!

Red - a world about to dawn!  
Black - the night that ends at last!

But, at least in this production, still they fly only a red flag when they are marching off as angry men and so on. Why not red and black? Why contradict the very lyrics with the action? Interesting, but a red and black flag, the libertarian socialist or anarchist flag, seems just a little too threatening, it seems. We must pretend that the words did not exist, and forget them. I haven't read the book, it's one of the many hundreds of books I have to read urgently right now. But I suspect that much more controversial subject matter has been cut, also.