

Guest Worker: Dušan Makavejev's Capitalist Phase

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When asked about the situation in Yugoslavia & my status there, I used to answer that I was sentenced to forced labor abroad.¹

I expected only the "melancholy pleasure" of finding again the same Renoir in *Diary [of a Chambermaid, 1946]*, but this time wrestling with the wrong subject & the wrong style.²

1. Chocolate

One of the terminal endings of *Sweet Movie* (1974) involves a grotesque television advertisement shoot. Miss World 1984 (Carole Laure), naked in a vat of thick liquid chocolate, writhes, gyrates, strikes pornographic poses, gurgles & flails like a baby, masturbates, adopts birthing positions, then inhales & chokes on the chocolate, & seemingly drowns. The director initially declares "I want them to feel as they're eating you... Action! Chocolat!"³ & soon after delivers one of the final lines of dialogue of the film, dribbling slightly, in an urgent, husky whisper & to no-one in particular: "Right! We're gonna sell the chocolate!" The chocolate pool is in a crude studio mock-up of an Arabian desert oasis & the music played is vaguely "oriental," framing the scene as reminiscent of the television adverts for Fry's Turkish Delight ("full of Eastern promise").

The tendency satirised here, the eroticisation & the literal fetishisation of consumer goods, is nothing new. Cadbury, now owned by Kraft, have been selling their chocolate Flake bars along these lines since the 1960s, & Fry since the 1950s. Jean-Luc Godard in the latter half of the 1960s often presented a gaudy, pastiche *mise-en-scène* that illustrated the idea of the experience of the world as mediated through advertisements & products rather than encounters with reality & people.⁴ But the chocolate Flake in

1 Makavejev in 2001, quoted in Lorraine Mortimer, *Terror & Joy: The Films of Dušan Makavejev* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) 12.

2 André Bazin, & Janine Bazin & François Truffaut, eds, *Jean Renoir by André Bazin* (New York: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, Inc. 1986) 95.

3 The line may not be fluffed ("as [though] they're eating you") but deliberate in its ambiguity & artlessness: the director's task is to connect feelings & consumption into one experience. Since "you" here can here signify both chocolate & Miss World "eating" is both consumption & cunnilingus.

4 See *Puritans at Kraft May End Five Decades of Risky Cadburys Ads*: www.bnet.com/blog/advertising-business/puritans-at-kraft-may-end-five-decades-of-risky-cadbury-flake-ads/4446. From Godard, in particular *Deux ou Trois Choses Que Je Sais d'Elle & Made in USA* (both 1966) but also *Privilege* (Peter Watkins, 1967).

the series of adverts represents the phallus, & the consumption of the Flake (or, more accurately: the "Flake girl" beholding it, unwrapping it, fellating it) was merely a visual motif denoting sexual intimacy, & so likening sexual intercourse to chocolate consumption. Miss World's performance in a pool of liquid chocolate is autoerotic: a self-contained spectacle in which the product – chocolate – is, *a priori*, the desired other, its substance giving rise to intimacy. There is no potential to be fulfilled, no "Eastern promise" to be kept: the promise, the event, the engulfing delirium, occurs now – an orgasm without the phallus or phallus-substitute. The satire is more psychoanalytical than absurdist. Chocolate has long been understood as a sex substitute (that is, a stand-in rather than a parallel) & so the eating of chocolate can be read as a displacement activity: stimulating the mind & body in the way that sex otherwise would, a replacement buzz for those without sexual opportunities, while other sugared & salted foods, "comfort foods," work as downers or an anesthetizing agent to take the edge off the lack of human contact.

A comparable sequence in Makavejev's next film, *Montenegro, or Pigs & Pearls* (1981), returns the phallus substitute to the erotic spectacle (a remote controlled, toy tank-mounted dildo, which penetrates the stripper in the ZanziBar club while the crowd applauds) – the onlookers still have a purchase on the events, an intercourse with the woman, even if "virtual" (as with the controller of the toy tank). Various critics have noted Makavejev's allusion to *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) as Miss World drowns in chocolate: Marion's (Janet Leigh)/Miss World's lifeless, blank eye, staring at the camera, cheek parallel & pressed to the ground. This remade shot signals, intertextually, the death of Miss World. But the essential difference, in this signalling, is that Marion is alone as she slowly falls onto the bathroom floor, & in a seedy, semi-abandoned motel. The murderer has departed, leaving this post-slashing choreography of dying to be acted out unseen by others. Yet Miss World is seen surrounded by others, the centre of attention, & "immortalised" on film during her act of dying. This difference between *Psycho* & *Sweet Movie* in these death scenes highlights the nature of the essential connection between Marion & Miss World: abandonment, to be in sole possession of their environment of dying (despite the advertisement television crew), a disconnection or severance from the others.⁵

36 The abuse of food at this moment (in the sense of the puerile other-use of food: not for consumption but as plaything, or projectile) recalls earlier instances in the film: the mountains of white sugar that frost the sailor Potemkin (Pierre Clémenti) & entice him to his death in the ship *Survival*, & the Hogarthian meal / happening / regression session run by the members of Otto Muehl's commune. In these scenes, the food becomes mixed with substances not considered, in the first instance, to be consumable – blood,

5 This may explain the odd poster image for the film: two tubes (possibly candy or worms or veins, or animal tentacles), beginning to entwine but not enmesh – they remain separate entities. The tubes glow with the blue of orgone energy: now de-alienated, perhaps, these two things begin to connect or reconnect.

vomit, piss – & the consumption in general segues into, & facilitates & even becomes part of, intimate or sexual happenings (as with the passing & breaking of the egg yoke that opens Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, 1971). In this light too, the chocolate advert seems sterile & asexual; it presents the human as devoid of contact with other humans, alienated at the behest of new technologies & the ever-expanding world of consumables – a warning typical of 1970s science-fiction films.

Yet at the same time, the sequence "recovers" the food: unlike the earlier instances in the film, food is not destroyed or, sullied, abandoned. Even if, in this chocolate advert, the food is not directly eaten by Miss World, it is still related to the internal functions & functioning of the body. Bodily sexual excitement is projected onto it, in the Flake / Fry manner, but the connection runs deeper. The chocolate envelopes the body entirely in this ritual, as if a new amniotic fluid, & is now experienced or taken through the skin, the vagina & anus, as well as the mouth. At one point, the chocolate seems to stream from Miss World's breasts. For the makers of the advertisement chocolate frees the body, liberates the person, overwhelms the senses.

2. Dialectics & Dialects

Such sterility is a particularly Western imagining of the fate of revolutionary impulses: the picaresque journey of *Sweet Movie* & whatever Miss World may have learnt during it fizzles out into the inconsequential. The radical sexual practices encountered in & with the Muehl commune give way to the asexual spectacle of the television advert. Miss World's death merely makes way for the next model (the ancient Chairman of the Chastity Belt Foundation returns, talking of the external search for cleanliness, beauty & virginity) so that Miss World 1984 herself will be forgotten. Likewise Wilhelm Reich, in the present time-frame of the documentary aspect of *WR*, is understood to have been forgotten: unlike the proletarian revolutionaries of the Yugoslav sections of the film, his death is through neglect & marginalisation rather than design or assassination. And, also in contrast to this Western imagining in *Sweet Movie*, the consequences of the death of a lowly telephonist in Makavejev's *Love Affair, or the Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (1967) are stretched to encompass the then-contemporary society in all its facets. Such an East/West difference becomes the fulcrum of the narrative of *Montenegro*. The affluent milieu of the bourgeois Swedish-American family is one that gives rise to quiet desperation, loneliness & isolation &, for the housewife protagonist, encroaching madness. This desperate situation is momentarily alleviated as she stumbles across a previously hidden subculture of Eastern European immigrants on the outskirts of Stockholm & their living recreation of their East (or, rather, their interzone condition: their "non-West"). This non-bourgeois milieu is the very antithesis of her sterile, cold existence. This is not to say that the "Eastern" presence in the West – which seems to function as a temporary autonomous zone (TAZ) – represents a more balanced, holistic

living experience, & one that is meaningful, communicative & community-minded. Rather, its forms of alienation, & cruder or less refined attitudes towards commodities & sexuality, replaces the absoluteness & dominance of Western alienation in which emotions seem to find their polite external expression in Abba songs rather than erotic cabaret.

Such an East/West dialectic, in Makavejev's film after his exile, is a constant: invariably, since world revolution is seen not to occur, it becomes a matter of tracking anti-bourgeois or revolutionary sentiment on its downwards trajectory, now as freer to play itself out in the other, "freer" side of the Iron Curtain. Finally, this notion of difference, of East from the perspective of the West, remains only in the mind: the lone soldier of *Gorilla Bathes at Noon* (1993) or, one might add, the lone ex-Yugoslav film-maker of the documentary *A Hole in the Soul* (1994) who feels himself defined by countries & state ideologies that no longer exist. This is not to say that Makavejev's films lack optimism, or are defeatist, or even nostalgic: it is this very condition of failed revolution, or impossibility of revolution, that remains at the fore, & the condition in which his characters live & come to find themselves, for better or for worse. Indeed, it is this sense of a living historical aberration, & of the theft of a horizon of possibility, that prompts Badiou's notion of the "obscure disaster" of the 1990s, coming in 'the redoubtable effects of [the idea of Communism's] lack.'⁶ In many respects, Makavejev's films anticipate such a scenario before 1989 & the formal ending of the "Soviet century" (to use Lewin's term):⁷ capitalism, which demanded a free market penetration into the East, & economic shock therapy to enable & embed this, also demanded the erosion of borders in the West & a flow in the opposite direction – that of cheaper, imported labour.

The flows of difference that concerned Makavejev before 1989 (as piggybacking on immigration, as re-established in the TAZ or recreation of the Eastern home in Western surroundings) anticipate the sense of the theft of a horizon of possibility. Compensations rather than change come to salve the soul, deprived of the dream of revolution, & so other possibilities fill this void. As in *Montenegro*, the "wrong" liberations typically occur, of a type identified, in the context of bourgeois society, as libertarian rather than revolutionary, consciousness-expanding rather than consciousness-raising. And the consciousness expansion occurs in the proximity of exile: the resultant erosion of the clear class stratifications of the nation state are seen to occur. For Marilyn (Susan Anspach) it is the possibility of sexual fulfilment, via slumming it with manual workers / buying into the myth of "Eastern promise", that is activated, & enabled via just such an erosion. Thus the presence of the "Other", with destabilising new potentials (criminal, sexual, non-mortgaged), threatens the old order, its institutions & unspoken rules – a condition that the idea of multiculturalism would attempt to

6 Alain Badiou, 'Of an Obscure Disaster: On the End of the Truth of State' in *Lacanian Ink* 22 (2003) 69.

7 Moshe Lewin, *The Soviet Century* (London: Verso, 2005).

contain & even police. The very international aspect of *Montenegro* – even in the sense of its production – speaks of such a condition: the American housewife, the Swedish husband, & the English-speaking children, & the broken English of the immigrants & customs officials. The baseline of “home” becomes increasingly distant, & increasingly fantastical: a golden age of the nation state, of the one people, that probably did not exist. Even Marilyn, comically made up as the singer Suzy Nashville in the ZanziBar, finds herself introduced to the applauding immigrant audience as from the “United States of American – land of immigrants.” Immigrants, for Makavejev, are not the exception to the rule, or living proof of difference within the hegemony (the way in which they typically function in Fassbinder’s films), but come to represent the unavoidable state of difference as a constant.

The Northern Europe of *Montenegro*, unlike the Northern Europe of Ibsen’s plays, incorporates an access to an other world – an underground zone of liberation (illegal, free for all, uninhibited) that exists with, but entirely independently of, the realms of the legal, regimented & repressed aboveground. The final moments of *The Doll’s House* (in which Nora leaves her marriage – but with Ibsen immobilising the moment: her new destination cannot yet be certain) anticipate, or call into existence (one hundred years later) such an altermodernity: an other place, created by the rude intrusion of the Second World into the First, undermining & throwing into relief the contours of the First in the process. Marilyn Jordan moves from the ordered, bright & clean household into the disordered, murky & cheek-by-jowl environs of the ZanziBar. The mental disorder she has exhibited, & that sends her husband scurrying to a psychiatrist (although perhaps for his own nefarious reasons: he soon enters into a *ménage à trois* with the psychiatrist & his secretary), & which seems to have resulted in a reversal of her household chores (Marilyn eats the food she makes for the family, “unmakes” the bed by setting fire to it, empties out the contents of the Hoover bag) are momentarily cured.

In this respect, the ZanziBar functions, for Marilyn, as a kind of anti-psychiatry commune: a place for the exercise of the Id at the expense of the Superego. Any Superego deficit in the Jordan family unit is made good by her husband: rather than entertain the idea that he has propelled his wife away, he assumes – with a timely bourgeois aggression & paranoia – that a kidnapping has been in operation, contacts the police, & asks Marilyn (when she first calls) how much the ransom payment required might be. Marilyn’s informal therapeutic treatment can only begin once she is out the environs that lock her into her role as a housewife: the bourgeois home as gilded cage, mothering her daughter as teaching her to be a housewife (& good cook) in turn, & so forth. The ZanziBar can function in this de-alienating way since its status & so its social expectations are entirely uncertain: it seems to be a meeting or business place (at one moment described as a distillery), a warehouse, a bar or restaurant, a hub for illegal immigrants, incorporating an erotic cabaret / brothel, & living quarters / squat. Its geography remains

obscure too; it sprawls – a maze in which erotic encounters occur, & in which the status (professional, legal) & social relations of its occupants become secondary to the moments in which they collectively find themselves. Certainty, privacy & security are eradicated, & Marilyn embraces the new roles these losses make available to someone freed of her oppressive social status & its raft of expectations: to be a "mere" waitress, to be a sexual spectacle, to engage in free love, to be desired rather than (as seen earlier) the frustrated desirer.

The treatment however remains temporary: the liberation that would propel Marilyn further & permanently away from her home life, including an abandonment of her children (a dilemma not unusual for many radical second wave feminists of these years, at the point of the decision to live in all-woman communes) does not occur. Rather, the culmination of the adventure comes in the form of the "untamed" sexuality of Mr Montenegro (Svetozar Cvetković), first seen working at the zoo: a romantic interlude, & one that perhaps only reaches the curtailed limit of the erotic imaginings of the bored housewife. Once Marilyn has returned, with the psychiatrist now seemingly adopted into the family too, she poisons them all, destroying the vicious circle rather than perpetuating it. She relates her adventures in the ZanziBar & responds "They all lived happily ever after" to the psychiatrist's question: "Does this story have an ending?"

At this point in the family meal (after "ever after") a near-subliminal shot of Mr Montenegro breaks the *mise-en-scène*. He is seen behind the zoo bars – a moment culled from earlier footage, as then seen from the point of view of Marilyn, & now recalled & thus coded as subjective: a flashback on Marilyn's part. The image is suggested as unrepressed or irrepressible, seemingly authored or called forth by Marilyn's mind. The shot, & its associations, elicits the potential for a complex series of painful realisations: Mr Montenegro is *only* a manual labourer rather than the romantic figure of the interlude;⁸ like his monkeys, he is imprisoned a long way from his "natural" home; like his monkeys, he remains an object of fascination for visitors such as Marilyn, but one ultimately to be kept at a distance; as a non-Swede or non-Western European, he is detained, demeaned, kept out of polite society; in the class stratifications of society (Swedes, immigrants, zoo animals). He is closer, via his immediate proximity, to the animals than the Swedes; & now he looks wistful & unhappy (as had Marilyn at the film's opening) – he is out of his "natural habitat", & feeling that something is missing. Yet the bars themselves do not enforce dislocation & engender alienation: while Mr Montenegro & Marilyn are both out of their natural habitats, Mr Montenegro alone retains the sense of a homeland, & the possibility of return, & the recreation of a temporary home away from home. Marilyn's homelessness can be briefly

8 In fact he reveals himself, apologetically, as Serbian rather than Montenegrin; questions of the projection of the desired sexual Other seem to go even further here: the "wild man" from elsewhere himself adopts the persona of the "wild man" from elsewhere.

alleviated, but remains incurable. For Ibsen's world, & that of the European naturalists, in which the forces of calamity-inducing modernisation emanate from the West, from Paris & London (& Rome, for James Joyce, in *Exiles*), Makavejev offers the East.

In respect of the dialectical progressions of the film, in its series of liberations from family mores & the family environment (which can therefore be read as showing or proving that the family is held together by repression), albeit liberations that ultimately fail to liberate, the film would seem to be very reminiscent of Pasolini's *Teorema* (1968). Pasolini's fragmenting family is revealed via a series of "unstable" aesthetic techniques: sudden switches in narrative, moments of belief-defying miracles, an unresolved ambiguity as to the reality occasionally presented, experiential long takes, & a privileging of catatonic or wordless performances (& even literal instability: unsteady camera work). Makavejev's form is smooth, his characters believable, the performances rendered sympathetically, & Makavejev cautiously locks the "excesses" of the narrative into straight story-telling. In this respect, the film looks to dramas of domestic rebellion typical of the films of Ingmar Bergman (*Scenes from a Marriage*, 1973) in particular, both in terms of the similar ambience of setting & as indicated via the casting of Erland Josephson as Marilyn's husband) & even of New Hollywood (for North American audiences the casting of Anspach would have functioned in a not dissimilar way). Naturalism is the mode that is entirely appropriate to the subject matter, locale, & scrutiny of the bourgeois family of *Montenegro*. Indeed the Ibsen comparisons above are directly invited by the film in its very opening moments: Marilyn is seen looking wistfully out over a fjord, seemingly haunted by all the dreams & aspirations she has jettisoned to run the household seen in the background, & have her family. The lyrics of Marianne Faithfull's *The Ballad of Lucy Jordan*, which plays over this sequence, make such a reading of her expression explicit: "In a white suburban bedroom in a white suburban town /... At the age of thirty-seven she realised she'd never / Ride through Paris in a sports car... / She could clean the house for hours or rearrange the flowers." It is only at the point of the first encounter with the ZanziBar that the certainties of naturalism are strained via a disruptive surrealist flourish: the dagger protruding from a forehead (Marilyn arrives mid-fight), which is comic & grotesque & unreal, indicates a jarring break with the world of the possible.

Naturalism is not a form that would be recognised as typical of Makavejev: prior to the 1980s he was categorised as a New Wave / *Novi Film* filmmaker (after his amateur film career), & then as an ethnographer / investigator of the counterculture. Naturalism, which seems entirely regressive in respect to the vibrancy & radicalism of his filmography, & the very antithesis of Makavejev's much-discussed collage techniques, is thus an outlandish choice as it inverts the relationship between form & content. Before, form had offered the final critique of content so that form – montage *pace* Eisenstein – is read by Levi in respect of Makavejev as "a device by which to accomplish a cinematic critique

of ideology (state-socialist but also capitalist).⁹ Now it would seem that form remains subservient or is returned to a subservience to content – form as a discrete device for the delivery of the story. Even the final interjected shot of Mr Montenegro, which takes on a profound narrative role & weight (the context or trigger for Marilyn's murder of her family) can be read as straight psychological realism rather than a breaking or fragmenting of the totality of the *mise-en-scène*. Makavejev's naturalist form – which can be observed in the characterisations, the suture of the shots, the relation of the non-diegetic music to the image, the observant framing, the tightness (& intrigue) of the narrative as it unfolds – remains one which does not intrude on the action.

However naturalism here suggests itself as a vernacular or dialect that parallels the central problem of the lifestyle under examination: as typically argued (by Benjamin, in relation to Brecht,¹⁰ among others), naturalism remains the form *par excellence* of passivity & it is the very impossibility of passivity that activates the world of *Montenegro* & shapes its dramatic trajectory. The stillness of the waters of the fjord is as deceptive as the comfort of the interior of the Jordan household: passivity cannot but give way to revolt, murderously misdirected or otherwise. As with the "classical" liberal drama, the viewer is nominally placed in a position of observer, provided with information sufficient to judge or pass judgement. In this instance, the philosophical question posed, across the two worlds of *Montenegro*, is introduced at the outset in the film's supplementary title: *Pearls & Pigs*. How is one to live – for vanity or necessity, politely or humanly, decorously or nakedly, with riches or produce, "Westernly" or "Easternly"?

These are not unreasonable questions to have posed to that quiet segment of bourgeois society interested in intelligent, erotic art movies, or in relation to Swedish society as a model for Western European nations (then held as liberal & tolerant, wealthy but not ostentatious). It is with the condition of exile that Makavejev comes to adapt his project: the "cinematic critique of ideology" remains present but is recalibrated – made subtle, to be surmised, working within rather than standing without. In this respect, a fully commercial film (in the sense of populist film-making) would seem to be the next logical step – with a newer model (new frontiers of capitalism), a New World setting (contemporary Australia) & a simpler dialect (unqualified naturalism).

42 A quarter of a century later *The Coca-Cola Kid* (1985) remains mostly unavailable & overlooked or "outlawed" by academic writing on Makavejev, which invariably edits his filmography from an Eastern European perspective. Levi, addressing the scope of his study of Yugoslav & post-Yugoslav cinema,

9 Pavle Levi, *Disintegration in Frames: Aesthetics & Ideology in the Yugoslav & Post-Yugoslav Cinema* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007) 31.

10 See Benjamin's analysis of the vitality of Brechtian form in contrast to earlier modes of expression in theatre (from the "sacral origins" of drama to naturalism), which Benjamin sees as typified by a need for now "filling-in the orchestra pit [in the theatre]. The abyss which separates the actors from the audience like the dead from the living...". Walter Benjamin, trans. Anna Bostock, *Understanding Brecht* (London: Verso, 2003) 1.

articulates this latter framing: "a select group of works in which ideological, socio-political, & cultural issues of relevance for the existence & subsequent disintegration of Yugoslavia have acquired [sic] pronounced aesthetic expression..."¹¹ Mortimer is upfront: *The Coca-Cola Kid*, along with *Manifesto* (1988) is "less rich than the others" &, quoting Gina Marchetti, of a "thinner intellectual texture,"¹² even in spite of Mortimer noting the modest size of Makavejev's filmography. *Montenegro*, by the same token, is typically relegated to an afterthought or deserving of secondary consideration. Mortimer calls in Makavejev himself for this argument, who claims his liking of *Montenegro* is in spite of its relatively lesser status to *Sweet Movie*.¹³ Mortimer's dislike or disappointment in these films is entirely understandable; they do not exhibit the provocations, richness & historical hinterland of Makavejev's work up to & including *Sweet Movie*. One has to overlook the continual references *The Coca-Cola Kid* makes to previous Makavejev films (*Sweet Movie*'s mouse turns up in next to no time, for example) in order to find an artistic basis for this downgrading. But one also has to utilise a model of *auteur*ship that is both ahistorical in terms of the initial theorisation & testing of *auteur* theory by critics associated with André Bazin, & precious in terms of what does or does not constitute art, or worthiness, on the part of the cultural artefact. None of the filmographies of Makavejev's chief cinematic influences would survive such scrutiny: not Eisenstein, nor Kenneth Anger (with his fascination with popular art, in *Hollywood Babylon*) & not Buñuel. In this respect *The Coca-Cola Kid* was to the 2000s what *Sweet Movie* was to the 1970s: unseen & unacceptable.

3.... do as the Romans do.

The unfairness, even indolence, of the final moments of *Montenegro* is offset by the ambience of the family's last meal. The film's last image is that of a quintessentially conservative happy ending (& certainly it is a happy ending, as far as those around the table, bar Marilyn, are concerned): the family unit reassembled, warm & relaxed in each other's company, wrongs forgiven. Subtlety or commercial acumen can be said to account for the failure to show the deaths. One is almost tempted not to believe the imposed title ("The fruit

11 Levi, *Disintegration in Frames*, 159.

12 Mortimer, *Terror & Joy*, xiii, 267. The qualitative use of the term "intellectual" is always a pointer to middle class film tastes; John Russell Taylor's 1964 study of "some key film-makers of the sixties" begins: "If the cinema is an art, who is the artist? Ever since people began to consider, very tentatively, the possibility that the cinema might be a new art-form, this has been a favourite topic of discussion among intellectual enthusiasts. Perhaps the question sounds absurdly academic...," John Russell Taylor, *Cinema Eye, Cinema Ear: Some Key Film-makers of the Sixties* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1964) 1. Taylor, a path-breaking intellectual enthusiast & an early champion of Makavejev would eventually, in a 1975 study, attack *Sweet Movie* from the perspective of the intellectual audience: the scenes of "regression" at the hands of the Otto Muehl commune are "titillating" for only "a tiny coprophilic minority," John Russell Taylor, *Directors & Directions: Cinema for the Seventies* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1975) 249-250.

13 Mortimer, *Terror & Joy*, 228.

was poisoned") but for the subsequent proclamation that the film is based on a true story (a proclamation that is suspiciously light on further information). This proclamation further finesses the avoidance of dramaturgical problems associated with ending a film with the results of mass murder. The filmmakers suddenly seem to have hewn a tasteful docudrama from the human elements alone of a bloody & tragic story – a liberal & humanist endeavour, as typified by the nature & ideological position (overwhelmingly middle-of-the-road) of the "serious" docudrama.

The Coca-Cola Kid, which also ends with yellow titles across the final images, is even more abrupt, & apocalyptic, in its final seconds. And this time the unfairness & indolence is seemingly against the grain of the narrative of the film, which really is an entirely conventional happy ending. The third world war is declared by Makavejev & writer Frank Moorhouse:

A week later...
While cherries blossomed in Japan
the next world war began

The protagonists, Becker (Eric Roberts) & Terri (Greta Scacchi) have found each other – she now freed of the tyranny of her father, he now free of the self-discipline of being a free market evangelist & new-territory-breaker / business trouble-shooter for Coca-Cola – & yet Makavejev denies them a future, & promises to dispel the Australian sun with a nuclear winter. They remain, like the Japanese cherry blossoms, blissfully ignorant of the coming disaster. The final shots of the film show mice scampering around a doll's house – a portent of the annihilation of mankind to come in the fate of the ruins left? The inclusion of a shot of Terri's smiling daughter in this montage prevents so straightforward a reading, & recalls or makes reference to the ambiguity of the final moments of Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960), which also ends with a passing reference to the notion of the terminal decay & dying days of Western civilisation.

The precedent for such an act of violence on the part of the filmmaker to his protagonists – a final "plague on both their houses" – seems to come from Buñuel & his *Diary of a Chambermaid*. To a large extent Buñuel leaves this excursion into enemy territory (the insulated, interwar French aristocracy) unqualified: the film displays many aesthetic tropes that are entirely typical of the mid-1960s French art film, complete with the then-modish trimmings of discrete *Nouvelle Vague* flourishes. The film is comfortable in its bourgeois setting, & smooth in its form, even as it assembles a picture of the household as a panoply of deranged sexual tensions, fetishisms & sadistic practices. This bourgeois tenor is only once sabotaged by a "lapse" into a ferocious image, reminiscent of the Buñuel of old: the snails on the bloodied legs of the corpse of the raped & murdered child, discovered in the woods.¹⁴

14 Buñuel forces the viewer to behold the image: the handheld tracking shot & zoom-in crashes the image suddenly into the frame while a scream on the soundtrack (the

By the close of the film the amoral & opportunist characters have escaped immediate justice: the chambermaid has married the elderly neighbour (who is now spending his dying days waiting on her in his castle-like mansion) & the suspected murderer is poised to live happily ever after as a member of the Cherbourg petit-bourgeoisie. But the enrichment of such an aspirant petit-bourgeois layer has clearly been the ideal condition for, if not the facilitator of, the growth of fascism. Buñuel closes with a shot of a rowdy fascist march & dismisses this rabble via four jump-cuts, shuttling the marchers down the street to the vanishing point & then off-screen altogether. He then pans up to the darkening, stormy heavens: an approaching "Fin" is imposed over a lightning bolt & the rumble of thunder. The characters do not share the knowledge that their decade will close in war, which is implicitly manifest in this sudden turn, & that whatever stasis born of mutual accommodation & compromise that has been achieved between the petit-bourgeoisie & the bourgeoisie will be suddenly swept away. (Milne reads this moment in a more proactive & autobiographical way: Buñuel wishes to bring down destruction with "that avenging blast of lightning").¹⁵ It is as if Buñuel, & Makavejev of *Montenegro*, can only hold their breath so long: long enough to fashion a film in the vernacular expected, even on the subject matter expected, & critically, as expected, even if only to a tactical extent, but not without the disarming imposition of a final judgment, or an alarming "return of the repressed" (the condemnation, the full critique, the ironic or historical distance) in the final moments.

Buñuel's *Chambermaid* functions as a *modus operandi* in the case of *The Coca-Cola Kid* (which likewise also contains one "unacceptable" & narratively-redundant image: animal defecation), & Buñuel's method anticipates later examples of the work of subversives in the enemy camp (as with Paul Verhoeven's Hollywood films). But Buñuel's method – that of a crude dialectical swing suddenly rendering the dialect that has been used as part of the problem under examination¹⁶ – only one such model of subversion. Renoir's earlier version of *Diary of a Chambermaid* (both his & Buñuel's films are adaptations of Octave Mirbeau's 1900 novel) is also made in the requisite aesthetic vernacular (Hollywood 1940s melodrama) but its subversion can be read as continual & constant. Bazin, after revisiting his initial 1948 dismissal of Renoir's film ("What mental aberration, what failure of self-analysis, or what dangerous taste for irony led Renoir to make a film in America on the subject closest to him... [t]he entire film is bathed in this aquarium light so typical of Hollywood... [h]is American works are still 'Renoir films,' as characteristic as his

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whistle of a passing train) further rattles the viewer's senses as the legs come into view. This lapse was corrected by the British censor: the film was passed with one cut for its 1965 release (from the British Board of Film Classification's cutting notes: "Remove sight of the dead girl in the woods").

15 Tom Milne, 'The Two Chambermaids' in Joan Mellen, ed., *The World of Luis Buñuel: Essays in Criticism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 257.

16 This operation would be made subtler for *Belle de Jour* (1967).

French films, but this time characteristic in their failures:") was to completely reverse his judgement for his incomplete book on Renoir:¹⁷

Today I can see clearly what critical preconception blinded me... The point of the meticulous design was not to reconstruct an impossible, synthetic France, but rather to give the images the precision of a nightmare. As for the "aquarium light" which had so upset me, it was still there all right, but this time it appeared like the illumination of some interior hell, a sort of telluric phosphorescence... Everything, including the meticulous details of the costumes, is organized into a vision of cruel fantasy completely removed from the real world.¹⁸ This then represents the model of *Montenegro's* bourgeois settings: the clean, bright, fjord-aided environs of the Jordans' home, in which madness & rebellion are barely repressed, & that ends with a snapshot of the smiling family with the administered poison only just beginning to course through their bodies. In *Montenegro*, as with Renoir, the subversion of the aesthetic is in operation. In *The Coca-Cola Kid*, as with Buñuel, the subversive elements remain thematic, delivered straight, as content, & deserve no less a serious consideration for that.

For *auteurists*, however, Makavejev delivers a *mea culpa*: the film, which he goes to some length to liken or connect to his previous work through a series of intertextual references, & a typically Makavejevan sex scene,¹⁹ implicates itself in the problem it is examining. The film opens with the offending music the Coca-Cola executive cooks up to suggest Coca-Cola as an indigenous Australian product, & the film's very title, its self-branding (with an irony so light that it evaded the lawyers of Coca-Cola; not so much product placement but placement as product), automatically suggests – for the cognisant – a "fallen" film, made in the vernacular of capitalism. Rumble finds a comparably non-purist strategy in late Pasolini. For Rumble, Pasolini forsook the respectable, authorial & expected role of writer & effectively accepted the condition of working in "the perhaps inherently compromising character of the new medium" of cinema with a sense of an "ever-ambivalent complicity."²⁰ Rumble reads this as a Gramscian impulse & an acknowledgement of the role of the intellectual in society which can be said, in Marxist terms & in contradistinction to the Taylor & *auteurist* schools,²¹ to be a symbiotic rather than deferential relationship. Such notions offer answers (rather than the answer) to the contemporary question: how

17 Bazin died in 1958, & the published manuscript was assembled by others. Makavejev introduced both Buñuel's & Renoir's *Chambermaid* films on 26 March 1988 for a BBC2 "Film Club" double bill, & quoted from these passages of Bazin's in his introductions. *WR* received the Luis Buñuel award at Cannes in 1971.

18 Bazin, *Jean Renoir by André Bazin*, 94-95.

19 See Makavejev's own discussion of *The Coca-Cola Kid* in Dušan Makavejev, 'The Reel Thing', in *Cinema Papers* (51, May 1985), 60-62.

20 Patrick Rumble, *Allegories of Contamination: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Trilogy of Life* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 5-6.

21 In fact Pasolini was one of Taylor's original "key film-makers" too & supervised the dubbing of *Sweet Movie* for its Italian release.

does an anti-capitalist film-maker make a film in the capitalist system, & to be consumed as a product? What kind of "forced labor abroad"²² is required for this anachronistic figure?

The serious consideration that *The Coca-Cola Kid* deserves can be said to be in relation to the film's concerns with immigration & globalisation. In Australia, which like the America of *Montenegro* is also envisaged as a land of immigrants, displacement is a permanent condition. And the one "authentic" Australian – a busking Aboriginal (albeit one with his own business cards) – is almost immediately utilised to "naturalise" Coca-Cola: a making local of – a "glocalisation" of – a global product. His didgeridoo "sound," in the recording of the advertising jingle that Becker oversees, infuses & glocalises a song of praise to the thirst-quenching properties of the drink. Becker's perception of the drink is not international – it is a product that is fundamentally American, & an avatar of free market capitalism (he sermonises about this "miracle of America... a product of charisma... bring it to the people... getting in touch with the American way of life... "). The potential of Coke is that of civilisation; the "primitive" Australian surroundings are read as insufficiently capitalist & so ripe for "breaking." To do this, Becker uses a form of 3D technology (that would then have been seen then as computer imaging but, twenty-five years later, is recognisable as a proto-form of Google Maps) that presents Australia & its outback as the new frontier. The blank areas on the computer's map await the jingle, provide the coordinates of the mission for Becker, & equate being, in the sense of existence, with product availability: "[I] don't want to go where there's no Coca-Cola."

A trade war with a "local" variety of soft drink is inevitable, & Becker's pseudo-Reichian man (the young entrepreneur outsider, who practices a blend of yoga/martial arts/disco dancing; liberated in the manner of El Macho of *Sweet Movie*) goes head-to-head with T. George McDowell's pseudo-Reichian man (the aged industrialist father-figure, whose physical unstoppableness recalls Djagolub Aleksić of *Innocence Unprotected*). While Becker evangelises about a free market reshaping of rural Australia that has yet to dawn, McDowell's Anderson Valley, with his business run along family-lines (& with a lone escapee, his daughter) recalls the Jonestown cult & its distorted socialist communalism. The only peaceful business solution is a fusing of the two products: a McCoke. Such an idea, which suggested (& still suggests) the potential for a sudden leap for mankind (McDonalds & Coca-Cola brought together as one) in the superseding of the old models "back home," requires the kind of experimental, laboratory-like conditions available in Australia. Australia becomes the zone in which society has been disrupted, or can be taken as disrupted (capitalism as halted or faltering in its advancement: the outback remains feudal) which, as Klein would later argue in respect of her thesis of "disaster capitalism,"²³ allows for the development of

22 Makavejev, as quoted in Mortimer, *Terror & Joy*, 12.

23 Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

new paradigms of society & capitalism, so radical that they would meet with civil resistance in even the most advanced capitalist societies of the West. Such new paradigms, tested in all their facets (& freed from the need to avoid fatalities, which become par for the course in the environs of disaster), can then be exported back home.

In such emergency conditions, for which no alternative seems to exist to the free market (an argument made by Žižek as typifying the post-1989 West),²⁴ & which therefore suggests an intrinsically advanced nature or potential free market purity to Australian society (as a nation that did not pass through a state socialist or Soviet "phase"), the only revolutionary potential arises from radical conservative dissent. Thus McDowell sabotages the project by blowing up his own soft drinks plant. Multinational, monopoly-minded capitalism is finally defeated by small-town chauvinism – this time, at least. (One is tempted to surmise that this blockage – this failure of the "smooth space" of global capitalism, as Hardt & Negri term it²⁵ – then prompts the third world war, as later announced). And the only victory Becker achieves is McDowell's daughter who, in her chaotic, sensuous & scatty way, suggests Becker's anally retentive persona & manner merely represses his attraction to these very antithetical qualities (& that his evangelical love of Coca-Cola is merely a form of delusion & self-deception; he quits his job).

Despite the level of sophistication of the reading of capitalism (well in advance of that "classic" of capitalism, Oliver Stone's *Wall Street* of 1987, which places the "internal" revolutionary mechanisms of deregulation & asset-stripping as the new frontier in business evolution),²⁶ at no point does Makavejev seem to step back & comment upon, or find an ironic distance from, events as they are seen. Stylisation occurs in terms of what is seen rather than how it is seen. However the model of aesthetic stylisation to the point of disruption, as here associated with Renoir, is not in operation; if anything, Makavejev's cast seem distinguished by their wide-eyed, even naive integrity, & the narrative remains engrossing, diverting & pleasurable. It is in the series of disasters that occur in the course of the film (the end of capitalism, the end of Coca-Cola Australia, the end of McDowell, & the coming end of the love story in the end of the world) that Makavejev's final curse is placed upon the film. It is a curse against capitalism: its continuum, its single-mindedness, its seeming universality, its new territories, its ability

48 24 Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994) 1.

25 Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 2001) 327.

26 *The Coca-Cola Kid* is closer to anarchist / psychosexual critiques of capitalist relations set in the workplace such as *How to Get Ahead in Advertising* (Bruce Robinson, 1989) & *The Boss of It All (Direktøren for det hele)*, Lars Von Trier, 2006). Makavejev's reading of Western capitalism is not dissimilar to Rainer Werner Fassbinder's, as in *The Third Generation (Die dritte Generation, 1979)* & the 1974 play *Garbage, the City & Death* in which old fashioned terrorist violence & the occupation of enemy territory becomes outmoded, its use & function now either employed or rendered irrelevant by & for shady financial interests.

to transform – an anti-baptism for its embryonic manifestation (the “Kid”).

The film form, like the characters, is straight-forward; the narrative is strong & pacy, the editing is invisible, the jokes are physical, the limbs are supple: it is good, blank, capitalist cinema. Makavejev's previous editing techniques, *pace* Eisenstein, remain a trace at best. While *Montenegro* retains a space in which the audience can situate themselves, & so understand their position as outside the vicious circle & deceptions that characterise this family & their lives, *The Coca-Cola Kid* denies the audience such a space. The film unspools, one suspends one's disbelief or remains disinclined to; one analyzes (here) or, finding the film lacking, or an affront, or artless, declines to do so (as with Mortimer, & the majority of writing on Makavejev, respectively). And yet the lessons of *The Coca-Cola Kid* are timely & forward-looking. If *Sweet Movie* can be taken as a wake for the dreams of Western Marxism, & what once seemed to be an aberration (the *milieu* of *Montenegro*; pan-European variants of the *gastarbeiter*, the “guest worker”) has become the norm with the new, post-Cold War Iron Curtain across Europe, *The Coca-Cola Kid* anticipates the birth of new intrigues & techniques of global capitalism.

Indeed, the cinema of globalisation, such as it would exist at an early juncture (in, say, *Import-Export* (Ulrich Seidl, 2007) or *Mondovino* (Jonathan Nossiter, 2004)), tended to explore just such fish-out-of-water scenarios, & recalibrate the concept of alienation as the condition endemic not to societal norms, & the homesickness & disjunction of being a stranger in a strange land, but post-nation state society. The unequal co-existence of really existing cultures becomes the very foundation of globalisation, while the assimilation & reinvention of local cultural practices typifies the global workings of market capitalism.

It is paradoxical therefore that Makavejev's most populist & so potentially most accessible film, *The Coca-Cola Kid*, has become the overlooked or unseen feature in his filmography. This is the film that extends the idea of disjunction by finding it to be the very condition with which new territories can be reinvented as untapped markets. On Makavejev's part the intimation is that the coming “End of History”²⁷ was not so much a closing off of a particular period (the “Soviet Century”), but the anticipation of the coming, post-socialist, society. In this, surely, is the dire answer, or end-destination, of the voyage of *Sweet Movie*?

27 Francis Fukuyama's 1989 “End of History” thesis posited the ability of liberal democracies to overcome internal problems & to achieve an indefinite socio-political stability – that, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a consensual levelling-out of ideological differences was inevitable, & would occur with the agreeableness of the ideal of this “final form of human government,” Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History & the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992) xiii.