STUDIES IN EASTERN EUROPEAN CINEMA, 2016
VOL. 7, NO. 1, 53–67
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2040350X.2016.1112503

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Irresistible irreverence: Dušan Makavejev's amateur films and the Yugoslav cine-club scene

Aida Vidan

Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on Dušan Makavejev's short amateur films from the 1950s *Jatagan mala/Yatagan Mala (1953), Pečat/The Seal (1955), Antonijevo razbijeno ogledalo/Anthony's Broken Mirror (1957)* and *Spomenicima ne treba verovati/Don't Believe in Monuments* (1958) in relation to his theoretical/critical texts from the 1950s and 1960s. Situating these works within the Yugoslav cine-club scene as well as within a broader socio-political and artistic context, the article provides an overview of the principal intellectual debates of the time, in particular Miroslav Krleža's programmatic texts, against the backdrop of the socialist dogma which viewed the arts as subservient to the political agenda. Makavejev's short films are examined for their thematic, stylistic and generic features, but also for their social engagement, ethical purpose and reception. The article asserts that Makavejev's central preoccupation in his early films is the notion of freedom, but also underscores that the tenets of his later opus are recognizable in this early phase and include reliance on documentary/anthropological components, exploration of psychological dimensions and an exquisite use of editing (montage). Amateur film is discussed as a vehicle for subversion of the official discourse and a space for poetic experimentation.

KEYWORDS

Dušan Makavejev; amateur short film; Yugoslav cine-clubs; Miroslav Krleža; social engagement in film; subversiveness

Any recollection of the Yugoslav film industry inevitably brings to the fore the golden age of the Black Wave with its fury and fervour that resonated in the late 1960s all the way to Cannes, Berlin and Venice. What has come into focus only recently, however, is the earlier decade of the 1950s with its incipient subversion, irreverent humour and uncompromising poetics which eventually paved the way for the crowning achievements of the later period. Owing to a series of recent programmes on East European avant-garde cinemas in several European and American institutions, films by directors such as Dušan Makavejev, Vojislav Kokan Rakonjac, Marko Babac, Živojin Pavlović and Želimir Žilnik (Belgrade); Mihovil Pansini, Tomislav Gotovac, Vladimir Petek, Tomislav Kobija, Vlado Kristl (Zagreb); Ivan Martinac and Ante Verzotti (Split) have gained greater visibility. This article provides an interpretation of the four films made between 1953 and 1958 by one of the most recognised Yugoslav (Serbian) filmmakers, Dušan Makavejev, situating them within the Yugoslav cine-club scene as well as within a broader socio-political context. It

CONTACT Aida Vidan avidan@fas.harvard.edu

© 2016 Taylor & Francis

was already in this early stage of the post-war recovery and political establishment of the new Yugoslavia that the socialist apotheosis exhibited its first cracks and that the first sins of transgression were committed in the arts. Makavejev's *Jatagan mala/Yatagan Mala* (1953), *Pečat/The Seal* (1955), *Antonijevo razbijeno ogledalo/Anthony's Broken Mirror* (1957) and *Spomenicima ne treba verovati/Don't Believe in Monuments* (1958) not only left an indelible artistic mark on this period but also initiated a polemic on the function of film in the socialist context.[1] While the term 'amateur film' implies the non-professional status of its author, defining and categorizing experimental shorts proves elusive. As Hrvoje Turković points out in more general terms, but also with an eye to the specific situation in Croatia and Serbia,[2] experimental (avant-garde, alternative) film is difficult to pin down because of the scope of its structural–aesthetic variation as well as its cultural specificity. He calls, therefore, for a structural–functional approach which foregrounds the impact that experimental or alternative films make on the culture in which they originate (Turković 2002). Although films themselves may be dissimilar, their oppositional function in a given society is shared, claims Turković. They challenge the premises of established cultural, artistic or/and political norms, threatening thereby the very foundations of the system from which they emanated. In addition, I would claim, such alternative movements invariably offer ethical values which oppose or at a minimum question those of the dominant culture. Makavejev's early films can be singled out as excellent examples of the tendencies under examination.

Yugoslavia in the 1950s – intellectual climate and political circumstances

More than any other director from the regional cine-clubs, Makavejev incorporated in his work a pressing social dimension. The polemic that amateur filmmakers introduced into mainstream Yugoslav socialist-realist culture along with other artists, most notably the literary circle led by the Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža, was at the crux of broader social developments of the 1950s, and it successfully derailed the subservient role attributed to the arts by the socialist ideologues and the Yugoslav Communist Party. The Yugoslav break with the type of oppressive state-controlled socialism as practised in the Soviet Union and Tito's rejection of Stalin's political and economic demands resulted in Yugoslav exclusion from the Cominform in 1948 and a change of course in its external politics. In turn, this had a vast impact on the domestic brand of socialism allowing for the emergence of a more decentralized system with a socialist market economy, a unique brand of socialist self-management, and greater individual liberties. In this type of political climate a laxer view of the arts did not come to life as a matter of fact; rather, it resulted from a harsh battle which culminated at the Third Congress of the Writers Alliance of Yugoslavia held in Ljubljana in 1952 with an influential speech by Miroslav Krleža. In it he built on his previous substantial theoretical work in the area of arts, freedom and engagement, most notably his *Moj obračun s njima/My Settling of Accounts with Them* (1932), *Foreword* in Krsto Hegedušić, *Podravski motive/Motifs of the Podrava Region* (1933) and *Dijalektički antibarbarus/Dialectical Antibarbarus* (1939). His dense philosophical-political-aesthetic treatise of 1952 denounced socialist realism, but also questioned the imitative practices that followed Western models in art since, as Krleža underscored, Yugoslavia 'reached its idiosyncratic socialist political model relying on its own forces and following the laws of its own historical development' (Krleža 1952, 241).[3] Condemning

subordination to 'the political tendency in its fanatical and persistent one-sided political party loyalty', 'various religious, conservative, legitimistic (in essence capitalist and private) tendencies which preach similar one-sided party loyalty but in a super-naturalistic and idealistic sense' and 'West-European neutral decadent aestheticism' (Krleža 1952, 208), he asserted that 'in that moment when among us we have artists who through their gift, knowledge and taste are able to express the objective motifs of our leftist reality in a subjective manner, our own Art will be born' (Krleža 1952, 243). This uncompromising call to remain true to oneself as an artist while at the same time being rooted in the specific circumstances of one's own society was, in Krleža's view, the ultimate purpose of art which, in order to be recognized as such, needs to infuse its aesthetic components with an ethical dimension. It is indicative that Krleža capitalized the word 'Art' and refused to suggest what exact course Yugoslav art should take since this could easily result in a new dogma. Although a proponent of social responsibility, he tipped the scale in the direction of the artist and individual talent echoing thereby his earlier writings. Despite an outcry from the hard-core communist circles, Krleža's vehemently critical voice prevailed and opened a whole new chapter for the Yugoslav art scene of which Makavejev's films would become a part.[4] *Yatagan Mala*, his first amateur project, was completed in 1953, only a year after Krleža's speech.

In the light of Makavejev's subsequent social engagement, it is not surprising that in his 1960 text entitled 'The Moral and Social Meaning of Individual Human Life', he singles out precisely Krleža and the Serbian surrealist poet Marko Ristić for their recalcitrant stances:

> Having looked for their verticals, for the origin of our aesthetic and moral sensibility, we encounter in the intellectual action of yesterday the pained and angry roar of Miroslav Krleža – the lone proponent of sense, brain and humanity in a decayed and paradoxical society and the succulent corrosive thought of Marko Ristić, an engaged interpreter of the moral and social purpose of poetry. (Makavejev 1965, 135)

Although Makavejev in this article does not examine the connection between the two writers closely, it is worth recalling that Krleža extended his support to Ristić, who, with his surrealist programme that trumpeted supremacy of the individual and the subconscious, quickly became persona non grata in official circles. In fact, the kinship between the two writers was formed long before the socialist period when Krleža contributed the programmatic foreword to Hegedušić's provocative collection of drawings of everyday peasant motifs (*Motifs of the Podrava Region*, 1933). Hegedušić, in turn, supplied drawings for Ristić's *Turpituda/Turpitude* (1933), a collection of surrealist texts with strong anti-bourgeois colouration censored when its publication was attempted in 1938. Thus, the ideas on the status of art that had already surfaced in the 1930s in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia came to full blossom in post-war socialist Yugoslavia. For Makavejev, who was only 21 when he shot his first amateur film, the impact of Krleža's and Ristić's writings is unquestionable. His unerring sense for the most pertinent discourse on politics and the arts led him to the texts and individuals who shaped the era and whose respective poetics ultimately served as a formative element in his own early works.

From the very inception of the new Yugoslavia, the socialist establishment was fully aware of film's potential to reach the broadest masses and developed this industry into an intricate web of institutions and operations. Despite the encumbering involvement of the

party structures, the 1950s were recognized as a period of overt support for film with regards to economic and cultural politics (Turković 2005, 123–124). Initially a part of a larger project known as 'Tehnika narodu' ('Technology to the People') and funded by the State Film Fund, film operations became increasingly decentralized to the point where the Committee for Cinematography was dissolved (Goulding 1985, 36). By April 1950 film workers ceased to be state employees becoming free unionized artists instead (Sudar 2013, 29), and by 1956 a model of self-financing that relied on taxation of box-office tickets replaced state subventions for film. From six feature films per year made before 1954, Yugoslav production jumped to about fourteen until 1960, peaking in 1967-69 with remarkable twenty-nine to thirty-two domestic features (Goulding 1985, 64). The 1950s also saw a surge in film-related scholarly and journalist activity (*Film*, *Film danas*, Belgrade; *Filmska revija*, *Filmska kultura*, Zagreb; *Film*, Ljubljana) with many directors, including Makavejev, as regular contributors. Last but not least, the 1950s launched the National Film Festival in Pula (1954) and the Festival/Review of Short Film (1957), which annually rotated through different constituent republics.

Emergence of the cine-clubs

Along with the groundswell of these political and institutional changes, a central force in the development of the film art in the former Yugoslavia were cine-clubs, amateur educational/production facilities supported by state funds. Among them, the ones in Belgrade (1951), Split (1952) and Zagreb (1953)[5] should be singled out for their pioneering aesthetic experiments, poetic inspiration and provocative stance (Babac 2001, 12; Majcen 2002, 194; Turković 2005, 123; DeCuir 2011, 41−46). The individual clubs did not function as isolated units; on the contrary, a strong exchange of ideas and materials went on among them, with some members (such as Ivan Martinac, originally from Split; Benčić 2012, 26) being active in all three. Young cineastes gathered around clubs to partake in an array of cultural offerings, including screenings of vanguard films, engaging lectures and workshops, which sharpened the conceptual and practical skills of the members through vigorous analysis of their work in progress (Babac 2001, 7–15). Although the clubs were in some instances looked down on for the lack of professional conditions and their low-tech solutions, it was precisely amateur film that opposed the official line of sugar-coated socialist products formally, thematically and ideologically. Aspiring to present narratives which, in addition to a convincing socialist message, would convey a sense of objectivity, the state-supported industry favoured a classic approach which relied, in essence, on Hollywood and European populist films (Turković 2005, 126). The few artistic features that deviated from this prescribed formula (such as for instance Branko Belan's *Concert*, 1954) were received with hostility. Although the achievements of the cine-clubs stayed under the radar longer than those of the other segments of the Yugoslav film industry, soon enough these too drew the censors' attention. And just as in other branches of art, the symbiosis of innovation and individualism went against the grain of party visions.[6] The censorship took a strike at provocative themes, formal complexity, dark intonation and documentarism uncovering bleak aspects of socialism as subversive elements, and it perceived the amateur activity, in Ranko Munitić's words, as 'the Trojan horse of the Yugoslav modern film' (Munitić 2003). A heated debate developed between the custodians of socialism and the practitioners of what was to become the New Film, also later known as

the Black Wave in Serbia in the 1960s. An article entitled 'Amateurs Stray from the Path' ('Amateri na stranputici') by Oto Deneš, a Communist film critic and hard-liner, which he published in *Filmska kultura* (No. 20, 1960) in reaction to the Sixth National Festival of Amateur Film in Belgrade, encapsulates the official stance. Deneš charged the latest crop of short films with 'delirious babble', 'a vulgar grasp of classic and silent film', 'problems of ideological orientation', 'problems with regards to aesthetic and thematic views as manifested in numerous films' and a failure 'to make our Yugoslav amateur film fundamentally, especially thematically, different from any other including English, French, but also Polish, Bulgarian' (Munitić 2003, 15−20). As Munitić argues, the principal three sins − pessimism, elitism and eroticism − in the perception of the Communist ideologues all stem from 'the treasury of western decadence' and as such were a direct attack on the fundamental values of the socialist system (Munitić 2003, 20).

Despite the fact that the official outlets criticized cine-club production with broad strokes, the clubs' members differed in their aesthetic interpretations and modes of engagement with society (Goulding 1994, 211; Daković 2003, 477). Even a superficial review of the films from the two most productive clubs in Belgrade and Zagreb reveals this fact. From surrealist visions and social engagement to the concept of anti-film, from documentary poeticism to abolition of communicative function, from expression to sheer contemplation − this somewhat arbitrary list could be supplemented by Amos Vogel's much lengthier inventory of distinctive features of alternative film (Vogel 2005, 19−20) and exemplified by the output of the Yugoslav cine-clubs. What sets the two clubs apart is the tendency of the Zagreb artists towards conceptual film and the cult of 'pure art', which became particularly pronounced in the subsequent decade at the GEFF (Genre Film Festival)[7] initiated by Mihovil Pansini, while the Belgrade club leaned more in the direction of social commentary and political provocation.[8] The extraordinary diversity resulted in authors such as Pansini, a proponent of anti-film who joined the Zagreb cine-club in 1953, and Makavejev, a supporter of the surrealist and activist approach, who became a member of the Belgrade club the same year, finding themselves at times on opposing sides of the artistic spectrum.

Notwithstanding the generic elusiveness that most critics note, it is possible to provide a broad thematic framework within which the achievements of the Belgrade cine-club, including Makavejev's works, could be situated. Ranko Munitić, one of the few critics who could offer a first-hand account of the cine-club's activities and whose own life followed the Split−Zagreb−Belgrade triangle, makes such an attempt. He particularly singles out the amateurs' occupation with 'the flea-market of anonymous characters [brought up by] the tide of everyday life' (Munitić 2003, 39). Among several examples he mentions Makavejev's two films, *Yatagan Mala* and *The Seal*. They represent stark opposition to the official line of films, which insisted on epic tonality even when they dealt with everyday socialist reality, let alone the heroic achievements of the war for liberation. The motif of a lonely human being is another prominent element in an array of amateur shorts from Belgrade, and here again Munitić lists as an exemplary work Makavejev's *Anthony's Broken Mirror* (Munitić 2003, 41). The third recognizable theme in this corpus is the sense of abandonment and captivity (and, related to this, the lack of communication among human beings), which, like the previous two, was not an acceptable subject in the official spectrum of preferred topics. As Munitić suggests (Munitić 2003, 44–45), the pervasiveness of this motif is already visible in a survey of the titles of the films: Rakonjac's *Zid/The*

Wall (1960), Stojanović's *Kavez/Cage* (1957), Pavlović's *Lavirint/Labyrinth* (1961) and Ivkov's *Kula/The Tower* (1960). Makavejev is not mentioned in this group, but his *Dole plotovi/Down with Fences* made in 1962, when he had already begun working as a professional, could certainly be counted here. In discussing the stylistic qualities of these films, Munitić points to a mixing of the factual and fictional which permeate and structure one another, and an extreme stylization resulting in symbolism as their most relevant features. The narration, in his view, was not structured externally through description and recounting, but from within 'through the signals emerging between the frames' (Munitić 2003, 47–48). Despite the filmmakers' critical attitude, they overall did not aim to undermine the socialist project but rather were opposed to its dogmatic and corrupt manifestations.

Towards the poetics of Makavejev's early films

Munitić's analysis sets up a working framework within which Makavejev's amateur films can be given their due attention. If one were to attempt to pinpoint succinctly the tenets of Makavejev's art which come into sight in this early period and remain prominent in his later work, the focus should be on his preoccupation with the notion of freedom, his reliance on documentary/anthropological components, his exploration of psychological dimensions (his degree was in psychology), and his exquisite use of editing (montage) in which juxtaposition of disparate sequences creates unexpected semantic realms. Although in the context of situating this author within the spectrum of the Belgrade club, Munitić speaks of Makavejev's exploration of 'the boundaries which on the stage-boards of life stand between man and what he yearns for' (Munitić 2003, 54), I would like to suggest in addition that thematically all of Makavejev's films concern themselves in one way or another with the concept of freedom. This is recognizable already in his very first film, *Yatagan Mala*, a depiction of a Roma settlement in the centre of Belgrade with a maze of shabby houses which Makavejev skilfully turns into a web of human fates. Since Munitić had the rare privilege of viewing this now lost footage,[9] it is worth quoting him:

> The introductory frames (modern Belgrade skyscrapers) and the final ones (a cistern for emptying out the settlement's shared septic tank) suggest in an unassuming manner the spatial limitations and anachronism, i.e. 'doom' of the Roma neighbourhood, the law of sprawl and growth of the city organism which relegates such relics to other locations, to the margins ever more distant from the central zone. (Munitić 2003, 38)

The boundary is present in the sense of an economic ghettoization of the specific population, but the director refrains from commentary and simply shows physiognomies that structure a documentary-style narrative little by little through everyday activities. In this film in particular, one can recognize a future trend that occupied the Black Wave filmmakers of the 1960s – insight into the nitty-gritty, everyday existence of simple, often marginalized, people. Makavejev's choice of setting constitutes precisely the material deliberately avoided by the official socialist lenses since it testified to the failure of what was supposed to be an infallible system. Marko Babac, Makavejev's close peer and collaborator on multiple projects,[10] states in his reminiscences about the Belgrade cine-club that only in hindsight does one realize the level of ambiguity and accusation subsumed in Makavejev's idea (Babac 2001, 62).

Makavejev's first venture into film thus contains the director's recognizable cinematic gestures in the sense that it captures the delimitations imposed by the suffocating economic/social conditions and as such also represents an outcry for freedom on behalf of a marginalized group. His anthropological inclination and propensity for everyday detail (even those that are 'supposed' to stay hidden in the official discourse) is engagingly discussed by Loraine Mortimer (2009) in reference to Makavejev's later works. Here it is pertinent to recall Makavejev's own statement with regards to employing raw life for the purpose of art (quoted in Petrović 2008, 64):

> What I'll say is paradoxical, but the main thing we cultivated and cherished was the love towards our city. We would hang out wherever we could shoot. You have a camera and nothing else, and then you sneak into attics, climb onto roofs, go into cellars; we picked various yards, garbage dumps, shot inside rundown empty houses. […] You shoot people in the street, they look straight into the camera, and you leave all these glances in, so some interesting solutions happen which you would otherwise never reach if you worked in a classic manner and everything was organized – if the police cleared the bystanders and extras were brought in. Everything would be artificial, and you wouldn't know how to break this…we learned this way that raw life was more interesting than anything we could come up with; that no makeup could produce a toothless man found in a food market or at the railway station because it took years for him to age in the way he did, and for him to lose his teeth and to get all the scars, and to get that expression in his eyes. You see that he is half-alive, half-dead, hungry, and that he was sick…This is what I think is important – for one to realize that what life does to people, no other art can do.

This documentary impulse combined with characteristic editing became a trademark of Makavejev's professional work. In some other early texts he similarly emphasizes the importance of a real-life dimension. For instance in his article with a telling title 'While writing a script, look through the window' (Makavejev 1956a), he weaves several putative situations embedded in reality from which one could easily spin off an engaging dramatic structure. Many, if not all, of his professional features have some segment of the plot drawn from a real occurrence, newspaper tidbit, or found footage/sources. It is hard to judge the psychological component and the editing choice for *Yatagan Mala*, but relying on Babac's and Munitić's accounts, the number of close-ups and the suggested rhythm lead to the conclusion that the basic directorial pattern has emerged already in this very first work.

In addition to making a case for specificity, Makavejev also calls for the universality of a theme, a direction more readily recognizable in his other amateur films. It is indicative that in his 1958 article 'Through Branches – the Sky' (Munitić 2002–2007, vol. I, 299–301) in which he discusses a film by Stole Janković, he singles out the need for a story rooted in specific circumstances about specific individuals which can then yield, as in Janković's film, a universal narrative (in this case about a man's encounter with death). In his 'Specificity and Abstraction in our Film' from 1959, Makavejev delineates the path from the prison house of socialist realism to gaining access to artistic freedom in the following words:

> From the dictatorship of the specific detail, from the paranoid senseless escape away from the truth into the realm of concreteness, of a photographic image, of a factographic scene, of a dialogue registered by the magnetic tape recorder, we emerged liberated and stepped into the desert of free creativity. (Makavejev 1959a, 304)

Concluding his argument, Makavajev echoes Krleža's closing thoughts from the 1952 speech in Ljubljana when he says: 'What is universally human can be conveyed only

through the specific, particularized, and strictly individual.' (Makavejev 1959a, 305). His rejection of pragmatic realist tendencies is thus as absolute as his determination to reach a poetics loaded with symbolic potential.

The Seal, Anthony's Broken Mirror and *Don't Believe in Monuments*

His next film, *The Seal* (17 min. 40 sec., 1955, Figure 1), draws on both expressionism and surrealism (his link to the Serbian surrealist writer Marko Ristić) but also shows an inclination for provocation. It was influenced by *The Life and Death of 9413, a Hollywood Extra* (1928), a film by the Serbian-American director Slavko Vorkapić and Robert Foley. In Makavejev's words, it is his 'first film against the invisible power certain people have over others, against bureaucracy' (quoted in Mortimer 2009, 8). However, among many other differences, both the narrative structure and the political commentary of Makavejev's film produce an entirely different level of social engagement from Vorkapić's and Foley's short which is closely defined with regard to its locus (Hollywood). While the older directors' film revolves around the trope of material satisfaction and professional success with the motifs of the consumerist world attesting to such an agenda, Makavejev's much darker overtones (the opening scenes include a funeral and the narrative trajectory is reversed) implicate an unsettling but also unspecified diegetic universe. The film was in part inspired by an event from Makavejev's childhood when a boy who was supposed to attend school with him was not admitted because he could not show a certificate of

Figure 1. *The Seal.*

baptism (Petrović 2008, 65). *The Seal* has a Kafkaesque spirit, with the main character posthumously recounting his lacklustre life spent in repressive conditions in an unnamed country. Makavejev shares that the film 'was made in an expressionist style which drew attention but also repelled some viewers (…) Undefined in spatial and temporal terms, it leaves full freedom to the viewer to project the content of his/her own unsettling feelings into the world depicted on the screen' (quoted in Munitić 2003, 40).

The facts that the intertitles are provided in Esperanto and the name of the country is withheld both contribute to the universal message and to the lasting relevance of the underlying political and ethical concerns. The opening sequence showing a field of grave stones which then dissolves into a field of stamps reminiscent of human figures, both shot from the same angle, comments on the totalitarian system in which every human being at every stage of his/her life needs a corporeal stamp from faceless officials in order to gain legitimacy. An additional layer of subversiveness is conveyed through showing a state official not only stamp a newborn, but also conduct a type of emulative baptism (sprinkling water over a child lying naked in a basin). These acts of marking a person during every important event of his life symbolically subsume multiple facets of control over the population (physical, political, spiritual, procreational, economic, educational, etc.). The distribution of high- and low-angle shots further emphasizes an iron hierarchy and utmost submission of the citizens. A nod to Eisenstein is encapsulated in a sequence showing a wooden crate containing an unwilling soldier tumbling down a set of stairs reminiscent of those in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), as well as in an frenetic editing pattern of the concluding sequence. A frequent use of diagonal compositions supports the narrative scheme and accentuates the transience of time in the dreary life of the main character. His lack of agency is underscored by depriving him of voice and appropriating the communicative means of a silent film for delivery of basic information. Makavejev's proclivity for intriguing editing techniques comes forth particularly in the final sequence depicting the character's pre-mortal delirium. Some 60 frames populate the 50 seconds depicting his death agony during which the motifs of the oppressive state intersect in his anguished mind with the images from his private life and tormenting hallucinations.

Anthony's Broken Mirror (11 min 30 sec., 1957, Figure 2), awarded with a special recognition for directing at the Pula National Film Festival (Stojanović 1957) and screened at the Cannes Amateur Film Festival, marks the beginning of Makavejev's increased visibility in film circles both at home and abroad. This short film portrays a lonely young man (played by excellent pantomime actor Dragoljub Ivkov) who falls in love with a mannequin in the window of a tailor's shop, and whose infatuation alone is sufficient to bring her to life. The young protagonist is likened to children (playing with marbles) and animals (a white bunny he tries to present as a gift to the mannequin), giving him a measure of innocence and enabling him to see things to which others are blind. His romantic visits to the shop window to communicate through the pane of thick glass impart a strong suggestion of his longing to free the mannequin and unite with her, and the framing accentuates their growing affection and eroticism. However, in his attempt to release her, he shatters the glass which destroys both the mannequin and his dream. This film, imbued with both neo-realist imagery and surrealist plot components, like many others by Makavejev speaks of captivity and the metaphorical glass panes that separate a person from the object of his yearnings. The first two takes are markedly long and the minimal editing in this segment suggests a desire to portray the city through an uncensored lens of the

Figure 2. *Anthony's Broken Mirror*.

camera. These tracking shots record the buildings, people's movements on the streets, repairs of a pavement, a woman hanging washing on a clothesline, rubble in the yards, children playing and men repairing bicycles (possibly a small tribute to De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948). The concreteness exudes social commentary but it additionally situates the dreamy main character in a harsh environment, standing in opposition to his psychological projections. The director's venture into the realm of psychology in the subsequent segment, especially with regards to desire, artifice and perception, clearly stems from his general interest in psychology (Nenadić 2014). An inventory of surrealist motifs (dual perspective, glass pane refracting the reality and the dream, an interplay of animate and inanimate, erotic desire projected into an illusion-infused object)[11] underscores Makavejev's intellectual alliances and sources of inspiration. Yet this union of the two seemingly disparate poetics hints at his future artistic development that created circuits loaded with references to socio-political repression, libidinal anxiety and subconscious tides. Makavejev pointed out in an interview that serendipity played a role in ensuring the continuity of this film: the building appearing behind the main protagonist happened to be torn down exactly at the point when the ending segment was being shot, thus coinciding with the total collapse of the young man's universe after the mannequin is shattered (Petrović 2008, 66). This award-winning film is one of the highpoints of the amateur production in the region and it brings into focus the same motifs of loneliness, illusion and search for meaning in life that would preoccupy the later New Wave European filmmakers.

Figure 3. *Don't Believe in Monuments.*

Makavejev's last film from the amateur phase *Don't Believe in Monuments* (5 min. 8 sec., 1958, Figure 3) represents also his first clash with the authorities who banned its screening until 1964. His colleague Marko Babac recalls that the film was born out of Makavejev's random encounter with Voja Lukić who brought his new Bolex camera and some 16 mm film to the club one afternoon. They took a stroll to the Kalemegdan Park and on their way ran into a female friend. While in the park, she leaned by chance against a sculpture of a male nude and engaged with it in a clearly erotic way. The camera had been turned on for testing, and the improvisation resulted in the footage which was initially censored by the official circles (Babac 2001, 183–184). With this film Makavejev broaches the realm of satire although it also abounds in Buñuelian elements (most clearly referencing the toe-sucking scene in *L'Âge d'or*) and dream-like sequences. The plot is minimalist and revolves around a girl who in vain tries to make love to the male monument. The motif of fetishization appears to be of a greater calibre here than in Makavejev's earlier film because of the more direct political agenda signalled already in the title. Owen justifiably points to a possible link between the male monument (the first embodiment of a stiff 'orthodox male' with many to follow in Makavejev's subsequent films, Owen 2014, 6) and the socialist idea of a 'new man'. What is more, Makavejev seems to poke fun at the project of socialist self-aggrandizing (monuments as political tools) and the process of forcing ethical and socialist values into art-turn-commodity. The fecund and overt female desire collapsed into frustration speaks of disfunctionality of both the erotic act and the space over which her male counterpart presumably dominates. The resulting image is, in fact, that of the fallen socialist man who, captured in his iron cage, fails to embrace life in

the same way socialism rejected all its messy manifestations that failed to align with its dogma. The richness of textures, tactile sensuality and the extreme close-ups of body parts – both human and metal – are quite suggestive; equally striking is the girl's awakening from the reverie which turns her, too, into an immobile sculpture-like entity. The film could be interpreted as a metaphor for libidinal projections, but even more prominent are its provocative dimension and the type of humour characteristic for Makavejev's later stage: the monumentality of the monument (possibly any monument!) is brought down by a suggested erotic game. In this reading a basic human instinct is shown as both supreme and irreverent, thus posing a potential threat to a system in which human needs are subordinated to hierarchies dictated from above. The film sent a jolt to the ruling structures who did not miss to notice its incisive message and shelved it until the following decade.

'Art Needs to Be Jolted'

In 1958 Makavejev made his first professional documentary, *Prokleti praznik/Damned Holiday* (Zagreb Film), and went on to film 12 more, experimenting in them with elements of montage, narration and cinematography. Although not a part of any unified ideological platform (Levi 2007, 16) or aesthetic orientation, his films, along with those by his cine-club peers, shook up the Yugoslav film scene with their dark portrayals of society at the same time when the members of the Praxis circle[12] were causing upheavals with their interpretation of Marxist ideas. They confronted the dogmatism into which Yugoslav society was rapidly sinking and the official response was ruthless. It was at the beginning of this turbulent period that Makavejev wrote his important programmatic text entitled *Umetnost treba cimnuti/Art Needs to be Jolted* (1960, incl. in his *Poljubac za drugaricu parolu,* 1965). In it, he condemns complacency and routine in everyday existence, which makes the individual imprisoned and effectively dead. By extension, he is equally critical of art that follows established schemes and does not evoke any type of response in its recipient. He thus recommends, as his title suggests, that art exists for interaction. In his analysis of estrangement techniques in the films of Lamorisse, Buñuel and Eisenstein, he underscores the stylistic devices that force the viewer to be fully present and emotionally engaged with the content. Makavejev calls for a transformative function because art that leaves no imprint on its recipients and has no such potential falls in the category of kitsch. Once again, his primary concern is with the lack of freedom in both art and life. In his lengthy treatise (mentioned earlier) 'The Moral and Social Meaning of Individual Human Life', written also in 1960 and infused with socialist ideas and youthful enthusiasm, the question of individual freedom and fulfilment is consistently raised from multiple perspectives, in particular economic-political, spiritual and artistic. Highly critical of both the socialist and capitalist systems, Makavejev insists on activism in arts (Makavejev 1965, 136) and creative restlessness, even dissatisfaction, as a propelling force that confronts one with the bleak occurrences, limitations and deformations, but also establishes foundations for building a more humane world (Makavejev 1965, 141–146). In singling out individualism as the only path to these ideals, he thus aligns with Krleža and Ristić who first and foremost insisted on the primacy of humanism over politics.

Through debunking sanctioned behaviours and insisting on the right for the liberation of both the body and the mind, Makavejev provided an unusual angle on commonly accepted truths, thereby questioning the moral fabric of society. In the post-war period

when socialist doctrine claimed to have removed many aspects of alienation and was on the way towards man's utmost liberation, he was all too aware of the human condition torn between the impulse for propulsion to open spaces of creativity and freedom and the stark obstructive reality of everyday existence. For him the realm of amateur film removed the boundaries against which he had to fight throughout his career and was 'the only corner in the world of film in which the creators are not forced to follow the standards of the film market and make compromises' (Munitić 2003, 89).[13] Makavejev, the *enfant terrible* whose provocations were becoming ever more uncompromising, managed to navigate the professional waters for about a decade before having to leave Yugoslavia when his *WR: Misterije organizma/WR: Mysteries of the Organism* was released in 1971. Political charges of the East turned into commercial censorship of the West for which his satire turned out to be too exuberant, too provocative, and, possibly, too truthful.

Notes

1. I wish to express my gratitude to Greg DeCuir and Diana Nenadić for helping me obtain a selection of films from the cine-clubs Belgrade, Zagreb and Split as well as for their assistance with the secondary sources. The audio aspect of Makavejev's short films is not discussed in this article because the soundtracks have not been preserved.
2. I opted for Turković's theoretical framework since it is all-encompassing, but also devotes special attention to the idiosyncratic developments in Croatia and Serbia.
3. Throughout the article all translations of the quotes from Croatian and Serbian originals are my own.
4. Krleža himself has a direct link with the Belgrade film circles through a script he wrote for a short documentary film on the painter Petar Dobović, which was directed by Aleksandar Petrović (Sudar 2013, 53).
5. Both Belgrade and Zagreb cine-clubs had a pre-socialist period, the first cinephile clubs having been established in Belgrade in 1924 (Petrović 2008, 25) and in Zagreb 1928 (Turković 2003, 11).
6. Some of the highly positioned critics of the regime such as Milovan Đilas, who insisted on greater freedom in the cultural domain, fell out of favour as early as 1954 after he published a series of controversial essays in the journal *Nova Misao* (*New Thought*).
7. A series of Genre Film Festivals was held in Zagreb in 1963, 1965, 1967 and 1970, and reinforced the notions of anti-film, conceptual film and found-art film, questioning at the same time cinematographic, narrative and directorial devices and blurring the line between film and other arts. The accent was placed on the visual but non-mimetic aspect, ludism and on capturing psychological processes and emotional states. Experimentation with film stock and with time element was in function of liberation from formal aspects, but also from myths, authority and laws, be they aesthetic or societal.
8. Both clubs were a part of a broader network of activities in the area of the visual arts. For instance the artists from the 'Medijala' group participated in the making of numerous films by the Belgrade cine-club directors (Munitić 2003, 33), while in Zagreb the group EXAT 51 represented a direct link between abstract painting, animation and film with some of the members being active in all of these areas (Majcen 2002, 197−198).
9. In a private exchange with the director, he has confirmed that the footage of this short film has been lost.
10. Babac edited *Yatagan Mala*, *The Seal* and *Don't Believe In Monuments*. The credits for *Anthony's Broken Mirror* list Dušan Stojanović as the editor, but Babac was involved in the editing of this film as well (Babac 2001, 142).
11. An excellent analysis of surrealist elements in Makavejev's films (including early period) is found in Owen (2014).

12. The Praxis group drew many of its ideas from Marx's early manuscripts and insisted that individual freedom constituted a prerequisite for collective, i.e., societal freedom. It included not only Yugoslav thinkers but also philosophers such as Ernst Bloch, Lucien Goldmann, Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, Erich Fromm and Henri Lefebvre.
13. Originally in Makavejev's 'Kriterijumi i žanrovi'.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Aida Vidan holds a Ph.D. in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Harvard University, where she currently teaches Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages, literatures and film. Her areas of interest include film, particularly from the Balkans, and written and oral literatures from the South Slavic region. She is the author of *Embroidered with Gold, Strung with Pearls: The Traditional Ballads of Bosnian Women* (2003), co-author of *Beginner's Croatian* (2009) and *Beginner's Serbian* (2009) and co-editor of *In Contrast: Croatian Film Today* (2012). Her articles have appeared in an array of European and American scholarly publications.

References

Babac, Marko. 2001. *Kino-klub 'Beograd': uspomene*. Belgrade: Jugoslovenska kinoteka.

Benčić, Branka. 2012. "Sve je povezano/Everything Is Connected." In *Splitska škola filma – 60 godina Kino kluba Split*, edited by Branka Benčić, Diana Nenadić, and Adriana Perojević, 14–34. Split: Kino klub Split and Hrvatski filmski savez.

Daković, Nevena. 2003. "The Unfilmable Scenario and Neglected Theory. Yugoslav Avant-Garde Film, 1920–1990." In *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-Gardes, Neo-avant- Gardes, and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, edited by Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković, 466–488. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

DeCuir, Greg, Jr. 2011. *Yugoslav Black Wave. Polemical Cinema from 1963-72 in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*. Belgrade: Film Center Serbia.

Goulding, Daniel J. 1985. *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Goulding, Daniel J. 1994. "Makavejev." In *Five Filmmakers. Tarkovsky, Forman, Polanski, Szabo, Makavejev*, edited by Daniel J. Goulding, 209–263. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Krleža, Miroslav. 1933. "Predgovor." In *Podravski motivi. 34 crteža*, edited by Krsto Hegedušić. Zagreb: Minerva.

Krleža, Miroslav. 1952. "Govor na Kongresu književnika u Ljubljani." *Republika* 8 (10–11): 205–243.

Levi, Pavle. 2007. *Disintegration in Frames. Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Cinema*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Majcen, Vjekoslav. 2002. "Hrvatski neprofesijski film (1928-1998)." *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis* 29: 188–201.

Makavejev, Dušan. 1956a. "Kad pišeš scenario pogledaj kroz prozor." *Vidici* 22–23, May (Belgrade). Reprinted in Vol. 1 of *Beogradski filmski kritičarski krug*, edited by Ranko Munitić, 204–206. Niš: Niški kulturni centar; Belgrade: Art Press, 2002.

Makavejev, Dušan. 1956b. "Kriterijumi i žanrovi." *Fotorevija* 6, December (Belgrade). Reprinted in *Kino klub Beograd ili trojanski konj jugoslovenskog modernog filma*, edited by Ranko Munitić, 85–89. Belgrade: Centar film; Kragujevac: Prizma, Zepter International, 2003.

Makavejev, Dušan. 1958. "Kroz granje nebo." *Film* 12, December (Ljubljana). Reprinted in Vol. 1 of *Beogradski filmski kritičarski krug*, edited by Ranko Munitić, 299–301. Niš: Niški kulturni centar; Belgrade: Art Press, 2002.

Makavejev, Dušan. 1959a. "Konkretnost i apstrakcija u našem filmu." *Film danas* 11, June (Belgrade). Reprinted in *Beogradski filmski kritičarski krug*. Vol. 1, edited by Ranko Munitić, 304–306. Niš: Niški kulturni centar; Belgrade: Art Press, 2002.

Makavejev, Dušan. 1959b. "Antonijevo razbijeno ogledalo." *Foto-kino revija* 1, January (Belgrade). Reprinted in Ranko Munitić, *Kino klub Beograd ili trojanski konj jugoslovenskog modernog filma*, 95–98. Belgrade: Centar film; Kragujevac: Prizma, Zepter International, 2003.

Makavejev, Dušan. 1965. *Poljubac za drugaricu parolu*. Belgrade: Nolit.

Mortimer, Lorraine. 2009. *Terror and Joy. The Films of Dušan Makavejev*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Munitić, Ranko, ed. 2002-2007. *Beogradski filmski kritičarski krug*. 3 vols. Niš: Niški kulturni centar; Belgrade: Art Press.

Munitić, Ranko. 2003. *Kino klub Beograd ili trojanski konj jugoslovenskog modernog filma*. Belgrade: Centar film; Kragujevac: Prizma, Zepter International.

Nenadić, Diana. 2014. "The Seal (Pečat); Anthony's Broken Mirror (Antonijevo razbijeno ogledalo)." http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/features/experimental-cinema-in-eastern-europe/experimental-film-in-croatia-and-serbia/the-seal-anthonys-broken-mirror.html

Owen, Jonathan. 2014. "From Buñuel to the Barbarogenius: Surrealist and Avant-garde Traditions in the Films of Dušan Makavejev." *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 5 (1): 3–15.

Petrović, Miroslav Bata, ed. 2008. *Alternativni film u Beogradu od 1950. do 1990. godine*. Belgrade: Arhiv alternativnog filma i videa Doma kulture Studentski grad.

Stojanović, Dušan. 1957. "Amateri u Puli." *Književne novine*, no. 49, August 23 (Belgrade).

Sudar, Vlastimir. 2013. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Political Dissident: The Life and Work of Aleksandar Petrović*. Bristol: Intellect.

Turković, Hrvoje. 2002. "Što je to eksperimentalni (avangardni, alternativni) film." *Zapis. Bilten Hrvatskog filmskog saveza*, no. 38. http://www.hfs.hr/nakladnistvo_zapis_detail.aspx?sif_clanci=192#.VLalFWdv68A

Turković, Hrvoje. 2003. "Kinoklub Zagreb: Filmsko sadište i rasadište." In *Kinoklub Zagreb. Filmovi snimljeni od 1928–2003.: sedamdeset i pet godina Kinokluba Zagreb*, edited by Duško Popović, 10–16. Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez.

Turković, Hrvoje. 2005. "Filmske pedesete." Hrvatski filmski ljetopis, no. 41: 122–131.

Vogel, Amos. 2005. *Film as a Subversive Art*. London: CT Editions; New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers. First published: London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974.