MANCHEVSKI
Manchevski

Edited by Marina Kostova
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RACK FOCUS FROM S.U.V. TO LANDSCAPE BEHIND

HIGH ANGLE, P.O.V. OF BIRDS IN THE TREE

BIRD ON A TREE: CU

TELEPHOTO

MICROPHONE

SIMON'S P.O.V.

HAND

TREE
Contents
Many consider Milcho Manchevski to be one of the most original and innovative artists of our time for his unique blend of experimentation, poetry, emotion and a demand for the active participation of the viewer in the construction of meaning.\(^1\)

His acclaimed *Before the Rain* (1994) is considered one of the greatest debut feature films in the history of cinema\(^2\) and one of the most important films of the decade\(^3\), while *The New York Times* included it on its “Best 1,000 Films Ever Made” list. Manchevski’s work—which also includes award-winning films *Dust* (2001), *Shadows* (2007), *Mothers* (2010) and *Thursday* (2013), as well award-winning short films *Tennessee* (1991), *Macedonia Timeless* (2009) and *1.73* (1984)—stands out in world cinema for its unique way of playing with space, time and emotion.\(^4\)

Director, photographer, conceptual artist and writer Milcho Manchevski demonstrates superior control both of form and of the emotion his art induces. He reaches outside conventional narrative strategies in every discipline, breaking the format of linear storytelling (sometimes through the use of his concept of cubist narrative). He does this not only for the sake of formal experimentation—which is valuable in itself—but also in order to engage a transcendent, unrestrained communication and experience of sheer emotion. His work is masterfully calibrated and shared in a way that makes the viewer feel emotion deeply, value the work immensely, and trust Manchevski implicitly—as it befits rare, real art.

Manchevski constantly reviews the relationship between the individual person and both reality and spirituality. His films are not easy to watch; he is always confounding the expectations of the viewer, and his work acts as a provocative counterpoint to complacency.\(^5\) Each work functions as an active dialogue with the viewer, immersing the viewer into deep introspection from which its meanings are created. This fascinating reflexivity culminates in *Mothers*, where it is the choice of the viewer to believe that one thing is fiction and another fact; that is the connecting tissue that brings together the two features and the documentary that constitute the film into an emotional whole.

The power of Manchevski’s films, the Irish artist and art critic Conor McGrady says, truly lies “in their ability to challenge the viewer, and open a discourse not only on film, but on our relationship to the complex construction of the social and historical fabric in which we reside.”\(^6\)

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1. Conor McGrady, *Time, Narrative and Representation: Milcho Manchevski’s Work in Performance and Photography*
2. Annette Insdorf, *Audio commentary, Before the Rain DVD, Criterion Collection*
5. Conor McGrady, “Fragments, Layers and Temporal Disruption: Observations on MilichoManchevski’s Work in Film”.
But equal to his creative innovativeness, Manchevski stands out as an author because of his almost religious faith in his work along with a fierce commitment to defend his artistic integrity against (non-creative) outsider break-ins. This defense is held as a moral obligation, no matter if threats to artistic integrity come from film studios, other corporate interests, producers, investors, the political establishment or the expectations of film critics and festival directors.

This fascinating dedication characterizes all the phases of his career, from the mid 1980s, when he unsuccessfully tried to make his first feature film in Macedonia, to his beginnings as a director in New York, his years in the Hollywood industry, and the making of *Before the Rain, Dust, Shadows* and *Mothers* in Europe. Manchevski was born in Macedonia, but educated abroad and his career has mainly taken shape in New York and Europe. The fact that he lives and works on two continents, without a permanent stable base, places him in the challenging role of an artist who is in a sense outside the system, which also affords him additional artistic freedoms. As an independent artist he is in a position to constantly assess the system and confront its elements that threaten artistic integrity, often with the high accompanying cost of exhausting personal emotional engagement.

In a personal note (published in this book) he says that he is questioning the very fabric of the film industry – its reliance on manufacturing obedience to clichés, myths and pre-fabricated patterns of behavior and thinking; questioning the wisdom of the existing political world order; lastly, running afoul of the film industry hierarchy, rejecting the authority of the pyramid, fighting many authorities directly.

Manchevski’s uncompromising attitude comes out of his faith that the artist “has a dialogue only with the work of art itself” and therefore has “responsibility only to his or her work”. So, when asked about how artistic integrity is defended he says:

“Integrity is defended with balls. And with work—works of art or human work—with openness, virtue, and most of all with sacrifice. The contamination of the human spirit, made by corporations and state bureaucracies, is worse than the pollution of the human environment, even worse than sorrow and poverty, because it leads to numbness, egoism and quiet death. It teaches you to hang on to manipulation that dehumanizes you and has no end. For me, the struggle against the corporations and the state bureaucracies is like a struggle against the enslaver from the school textbooks. All good art is, by itself, engaged, because it is against the status quo and against human stupidity.”

For Macedonia, Manchevski’s oeuvre is of colossal, formative importance. From *Before the Rain* (1994) to the short *Thursday* (2013), his films have won more awards on a global scale and have been viewed and respected in more countries than anything else ever made in Macedonia. Manchevski’s work not only has made the name of the young country well-known, but it also gave a face to Macedonia. The

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7 Milcho Manchevski, “Why I Like Writing and Hate Directing: Confessions of a Recovering Writer-Director”
8 Ibid.
9 „Интегритетот се брани со мадиња“, interview in Vest, 12-13/06/2010
self-definition of the nation often consciously and unconsciously leaned on Manchevski’s oeuvre (as well as his statements).

Yet, the question is whether contemporary Macedonian society, whose tissue has been systematically eaten up by two cruel decades of post-communist transition, and that almost pathologically avoids self-reflection, has a capacity to absorb the colossal nature of Manchevski’s oeuvre and cherish it as a lasting heritage. Over the past 20 years, there has been a constant dichotomy in Macedonia’s relationship towards Manchevski as an artist and intellectual: favored and respected by the audience on the one hand, and ignored, attacked, harassed by the cultural establishment on the other. At the heart of this dichotomy is Manchevski’s refusal to compromise his artistic integrity and his readiness to loudly defend the public against political, partisan, and ideological interests, and this is a source of conflict with the establishment (a chapter in this book addresses this as well). Especially after Mothers (that with forensic precision reveals what is probably the only undeniable fact—the aggressive incompetence of the state system), a film the establishment openly viewed as an attack and thus attempted to suppress, the result is a reality that seems almost to be an irony of fate: the most well-known Macedonian artist could not work in his country anymore.

As Iris Kronauer, German historian (and author of Manchevski’s biography in this volume), puts it: “His four feature films to date do feel like a complete opus, an opus one can call Manchevski’s Macedonian phase – from a nostalgic coming home to a sobering question ‘How will we die?’ A pessimist would describe it as a Macedonian descent into hell, a painful confrontation with the dark side. An optimist would call it emancipation from the pull of the womb, a painful but cathartic liberation from cultural codependency.”

Various aspects of Manchevski’s work as filmmaker, photographer, conceptual artist and writer are explored in this book through in-depth analysis by nine renowned film theorists, philosophers and art historians.


A wide selection of archival facsimile—of production notes, storyboards, letters, personal notes, reviews and interviews—is also part of this book with the intention to shed light on Manchevski’s work processes, as well as on how his work was received by the audiences and critics. This archival material, meticulously selected from a wealth of sources, is integral to understanding Manchevski’s oeuvre.

Manchevski’s own theoretical essays and fiction are also part of the book, completing this collection of diverse insights into his work.
In his early performance and conceptual work, Milcho Manchevski embraced a radical and experimental approach to engaging his audience. Working in the context of conceptualism and across a number of disciplines, his embodiment of experimentation coalesced in his film work, and continues to underpin its evolution and development. As with his early performances, his films dispense with compromise, and eschew the conventional tropes of predictability that continue to dominate narrative structure in contemporary filmmaking. Instead, in the tradition of the avant-garde, his films play with the elasticity of narrative structure while not completely forgoing the importance of storytelling. While his films play with time and complex narrative frameworks, they remain underpinned by his ability to immerse the viewer in a particular time and space through the power of storytelling.

Much has been written about Manchevski’s first film, Before the Rain, with its labyrinthine weaving of interlocking narratives and twisting of time into a cinematic Moebius loop. It is in Mothers though, his 2010 film, that he pushes structural experimentation furthest. Shortly after its opening sequence, which consists of a close up of a burning photograph, the viewer is offered the statement that, “No real life story can surpass a film story”. Encapsulated in this deceptively simple phrase is the idea that film, as the manifestation of a particular reality, appears to transcend the banalities of everyday life. Yet the narrative threads that underpin historical and contemporary contexts, even the seemingly banal, remain fundamental in film. The idea that film surpasses real experiences also alludes to the depiction of illusion, one of the key concerns of Mothers. Manchevski states that, “Mothers is about the nature of truth, but we deal with this issue through the very structure of the piece - by directly confronting a dramatic segment with a documentary segment in the same film. We as viewers inhale drama and documentary in different ways, and when we are made to inhale the two at the same time, something interesting happens”.1

1 Conor McGrady & Dario Solman, “Macedonian Mythmaking” Brooklyn Rail, December 7, 2010
Narrative

Constructed as a triptych, each section of the film gets progressively longer than the sequence prior to it, and moves from a fictional short story, to that of a film (also fictional) about the making of a documentary, through to an actual documentary that constitutes the longest sequence. The visual language of documentation pervades each of these three sections, particularly through multiple references to the recorded or photographed image. As previously stated, the film opens with a photograph, and photographs anchor the seemingly disparate and shifting structural approaches contained within the film. In the first section two girls who have identified the wrong man as a flasher take photos of their shoes with their cell phones. Identification, evidence and the question of culpability link this segment with the documentary focusing on suspected serial murderer Vlado Taneski and his mysterious death in prison. In this sequence the concentration of photographic images escalates, from the forensic to family photos; and newspaper images to those taken by surveillance cameras. In the centerpiece of the triptych, which introduces the documentary process (a film about the making of a film) the opening image of the burning photo is given a contextual framework as we witness the old man in the village burning family photos.
Stylistically, all three sections of the film are handled differently, and while they initially appear to clash, are bound together not only through the underpinning references to photographic representation and documentation, but to ideas of verity, and most strikingly, the exposure of the darker side of contemporary life in Macedonia. The threat of sexual violence permeates the first fictional short, with the violent treatment meted out by the police on a yet to be convicted suspect for eshadowing the violent death of Vlado Taneski in prison at the end of the film (though whether his death was suicide or murder remains a mystery). Bitterness, harshness, division and entropy pervade the centerpiece, the isolation of the village and its two remaining inhabitants echoing a sense of alienation that pervades the film in its entirety. The documentary shifts the pace and tonality of the overall film, and elements including jump cuts and cinema verite echo the darker underbelly of society in any context. Animals appear at various points in the film, wandering street dogs and cats adding feral undertones that foreground a heightened sense of vulnerability. This is echoed most clearly in the sequence where a turtle is found on its back during a night in the remote Macedonian village. The following morning the helpless creature is righted and sent on its way by one of the documentary filmmakers, his simple intervention alluding to a sense of fragility yet hope. On the layering and mixing of genres and the dichotomy between objectivity and emotion, Manchevski states:
“At the same time (while making a structuralist or conceptualist piece), it is important that the piece function on an emotional, on a gut level, not only on a cerebral level. With Mothers, I was not interested in narrative devices where one story neatly dovetails into another. I was more interested in a Spartan, austere piece, where the connections are made in the mind of the beholder, and they are not necessarily narrative, but rather tonal and perhaps thematic. I love Beuys, Rauschenberg, Tehching Hsieh. I’m still fascinated by structuralist and conceptualist work, but I’m also trying to see how and whether it can be made richer, what happens when you marry something that is austere and structuralist and conceptual to something that is very emotional or almost sentimental? All of this has been done in contemporary art and literature and even in music, but not so much in film and definitely not so much in narrative cinema. So it was sweet and funny how people were talking about how Before the Rain was groundbreaking, but this film was doing what has been done in other arts many times (but not so much in film). Dust, and, especially Mothers take this further.”

Memory

If photographs provide entry and exit points in Mothers, as they do in all of Manchevski’s work, they also operate as signifiers of memory, permeating the constructed sense of time and narrative structure that embody our notions of the present. In Before the Rain, the central character Alexander is a war photographer, a profession associated not only with risk and bearing witness, but with the presentation of objective truth. The relationship between war and photography surfaces again in Dust, the archival images of the Macedonian Revolution in the early years of the twentieth century hovering between the interweaving narrative strands of past and present. In Mothers, as with Dust, the photograph alternates between the residual, haunted power of the past, and the capturing of evidence in the present. Embodying the dictatorship of time, film is always inherently about the present, even if it deals with the past. In playing with time, compressing, expanding and layering it, it is also about the relationship between pictures, between photography and film:

2 Ibid
“I am fascinated by the ability of film as a medium to play with time. The filmmaker converts time into space: one second becomes 24 frames. In editing, when you move a piece of film, you are moving time. Who knows, this rearrangement may be more accurate to how time really operates than our standard concept of time as a straight arrow.”

This non-linear approach to narrative highlights history as a social construction, or a cultural artifact that is multi-layered, contextual, highly subjective and contested. The technique of the cut-up, or collage, originating in cubism and developed in literature through the work of William Burroughs, for example, alludes to the clashing of competing or complimentary narratives, particularly in situations of conflict, while presenting them simultaneously. This layering affect references the work of Rauschenberg, whom Manchevski admires:

“Placing archetypes in new contexts means questioning them as elements in how you tell a story. They can become richer, or they can deflate. It is sort of like a Robert Rauschenberg print: a piece of it could be found-art and another piece made from a photograph, some of it is an actual brushstroke, but what really matters is what these pieces tell you as a whole—when you step back—rather than what they tell you on their own”.

Non-linearity also disrupts control, and interrupts our perception of an unbroken narrative historical flow. It’s an approach that Manchevski first used in Before the Rain, where a circular story is divided into three chapters. In Dust two parallel stories unfold sequentially, one told in flashbacks. In Shadows, the context is contemporary, but history, violence and trauma continually leak through, punctuating the veneer of present time to call attention to the repressed and unresolved traumas that form the building blocks of most modern nation states and which

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continue to haunt them. With the triptych anchoring the structure of Mothers, Manchevski again borrows from painting, yet subverts its formality through asymmetrical sequencing and shifting stylistic approaches to narrative. This sense of innovation and irreverence, and the desire to play with form and structure question and challenges the relationship between the filmmaker and the viewer.

Violence

*Mothers* shifts gears quite radically from considering innocence (in actions, consequences and culpability) to a poetic exploration of old age, decline and mortality to the clinical aftermath of violent death. The brutal and the banal coincide in the forensic examination of the alleged serial murder of three middle-aged women by journalist Vlado Taneski, who reported on the murders before his arrest and violent death in prison. The analytical approach to violent death in this sequence contrasts with the brooding threat of war in *Before the Rain* and the visceral guerilla battles and massacres of *Dust*, which appropriates the genre of the Hollywood Western to contextualize war and revolution in Macedonia in the early twentieth century. *Dust* opens with an image of tomatoes on a deli stand in November in New York, their fleshiness a surrogate for the sense of rupture, displacement, intrusion and bodily dissolution that takes place later in the film. Likewise, watermelons explode into a fleshy morass in a vicious gun battle, their fragility and obliteration visually echoing the broken bodies and extinguished lives around them. In referencing the use of violence in his films, Manchevski states:
“Ingmar Bergman says something like this: “Violence in film is a perfectly legitimate way of ritualizing violence in society.” I’d emphasize ritualizing. Not glorifying. I like seeing good, adult action violence in movies. Not sadistic, passive violence. There is something exhilarating about action-violence precisely because it is the movies and not real life. I am terrified of any kind of violence in real life, but putting violence in film is a way of exorcising it. The violence in Dust also has a very strong counterpoint in the selfless actions and love that the film advocates.”

The aftermath of violence in Mothers is contextualized somewhat differently. It is unheroic and somewhat ahistorical, while remaining contingent on the contemporary context that produced a serial killer in Macedonia. This is not the violence of competing ideologies, wars of liberation or self-sacrifice, but horrific in its banality, it is the compulsive violence of the social misfit or the psychopath. The dehumanization and desensitization implicit in the murder of the women refers back to the actions of the girls in the police station in the first part of the film. Their deliberate identification of an innocent man in an unverifiable act of indecent exposure appears innocuous yet simultaneously cruel. While the interlocking communities of families and lovers experience war in Before the Rain and Dust, the intimate sense of loss experienced by the families of the victims in Mothers belies a tragedy that has no overarching meta narrative or broader political context to give it meaning. Of course, context is always political in what it reveals about social relations and power dynamics, but in this case the assaulted and murdered women are simply victims of circumstance. Elaborating further, Manchevski states that:

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5 Ibid
“If one hopes for a work of art to have a social function (and it is not meant to have a direct social function by any stretch of the imagination), then one should certainly hope that exposing violence in its despicable and repulsive brutality - if not absurdity - is one of the socially beneficial side-effects of art. Thus, society is better served by a gross “portrayal” of violence than by sanitized studio fare.”6

Conclusion

The multiplicity of approaches to structure and narrative in Milcho Manchevski’s films enable them to pose questions and create open-ended associations that deepen upon reflection and repeated viewing. His work as a storyteller shifts and mutates, proliferating his layering of fiction and documentary and continually interrogating the fabrication of reality as the confluence of fact and imagination. In his film work the viewer is challenged to draw out thematic connections and question the ideas of historical and subjective truth. This is particularly the case with Mothers, where fact and fiction operate within the limited temporal dimensions of the film, and the interplay between truth and lie eludes an easy point of identification. Manchevski is well aware of the tremendous power of film, and its ability to simultaneously operate as both truth and fiction. While the viewer knows that film is a construction they are still prepared to, and in fact, desire to, surrender their disbelief, particularly when it comes to conventional dramatic approaches to narrative. In continuing to imbue his films with the legacy of the twentieth century avant-garde, and confounding the expectations of the viewer, Manchevski’s work acts as a provocative counterpoint to complacency. It is in their ability to challenge the viewer, and open a discourse not only on film, but on our relationship to the complex construction of the social and historical fabric in which we reside, that their power truly lies.

ВИОГРАФИЈА

Милчо Мачевски е роден во една болница.
Завршил го основно образование во едно одговарајуно
училиште, а средното образование во една гимназија. Едукацијата
го продолжува на еден факултет, за да заврши дека академијата
му се во друга област, па се пресфе на друг факултет.
Посветено студира на тој факултет. Се очекува на првата фамилна
дата.

12-7-1981 год.
Скопје

(Милчо Мачевски)
ЧОВЕК БЕЗ АНЕСТЕЗИЈЕ

Дневништво гостодошњих садржаја листа „Јавно“ везује са ових дана интересантним разговором са славним режисером Андоном Видаковићем. Човек без анестезије треба да буде отворен творачким Фест. Како је узгођа да стигне до Вида? Не, није га познавао, није имао „акт", једноставно је скривена вероватно телевизијске амбиције. И Вида је пристао...

ALTERNATIVNI BIOSKOP
Dom kulture "Studentski grad"
Akreanski filmski centar
Subota, 23.10.82, u 19 časova

MILEO MANČEWSKIJ
filmovi
1. STANAR, 8 min.
2. PUTEVI SLAVE, 3 min.
3. BEZ NASLOVA, 5 min.
4. NA LEPU PLAVU DUNAVU, 4 min.
5. BIZANTIJSKA KOMEDija, 21 min.
razgovar sa autorom o filmovima i američkom UNDERGROUND FILMU

Od svih naziva koji idu uz američki underground, nezavisni, alternativni ili eksperimentalni film, najverovatnije mu bat "underground" najmanje pristaje.
- Ekonomski je underground očekivan, ali su nezavisni film-ekspersi već odavaš uočište po filmskim školama i institutima širom SAD i Kanade - što kao profesori i asistenti, što kao većini studenti, koji koriste univerzitetsku opremu i svoju traku za kreiranje;
- Anderground status u distribuciji je takoder evidentan, ali nasuprot holivudsima divovima, postaje i distributerske kuće specijalizovane za nezavisne filmove (kao njojorska "Sinema 16" i kalifornijski "Kennon Sinema", na primer);
- Informativno podzemlje je razbijeno u nadzemnim listovima ("Vilidž vois"), a postoji i specijalizovana periodika ("Film kalcir"),
- Organizacioni underground negiran je (pored postojanja distributera i periodike) i redovnom zastupljeničtu u nastavnim planovima filmskih škola, brojnim literaturama ("Film kao subverzivna umetnost", Anosa Vogela i "Vizionarski film" P. Adams' Sitnija, na primer), kao i festivalima ("Big Madi" i "An Arbor", izmedju ostalih).
МИЛЧО МАНЧЕВСКИ
ПИЈТЕ КОКА-КОЛА!
Истраживање

Или: како рекламира и хепинг но се промовирају во необлаган уметност? Што, покрај соревноста си чини израца и кока-колонојалитет, уметнички?

1

Општеството секогаш каскало зад уметноста. Или, попрецизно — уметноста како манифестација на одредена индивидуална и општествена свест, изведена на посебен начин, секогаш била пред останатите манифестации на општествената (на, ако сакате и индивидуалната) свест, како што се тоа општествените науки (право, социологија, економија), науката, организацијата на општеството (правен систем, армија), итн. До потврдувањето на тезава одма ке дојдем: општеството или општествените сили секогаш ги прифаќале уметнички ставови, третмани и правци ретроградно. Или, со други зборови: секогаш ги прифаќале правците и облици на уметноста од минатото, истите оне кои сто, двеста или десет години порано ги отфрлало како некомунитативни, „неуметнички“, бласфемички и сл. Или, сврзено наопаку — општеството и општествените сили (што спонтани, што организирани) врцело репресија врз уметноста на денешницата со отфрлањето, неразбирањето и дестимулирањето на истата како уметност, за сметка на правците, ставовите и размислувањата кои претставале да бидат актуелни, а кои во минатото на ист начин и по ист пат биле репресирани.

Примери: импресионизмот не бил прифатен како уметност, импресионистите не можеле да ги излагаат нивните дела во Лувр, за да мораат да направат сопствен музеј, кој денес постои под покровителство на Лувр (плус или минус) и пред кој се чека во редови повеќе одишто пред класичниот Лувр.

Пример 2: Маљевич како основоположник на не-предметното (или — апстрактно, условно земено) сликарство не бил сфастан не само од државните органи на Советскиот Сојуз, ами и од функционалистиите на „Баухаус” и руските конструктивисти. Денес, како се
ЌЕ ЗАМИРИСАЛИ „МУСАКА“?

Најновиот филмски проект на младиот сценарист и режисер Милко Манчевски треба да почне со снимање во мај годинава, макаро од првата клапа се уште нема ништо. — Досега зад него како продуцент фигурирале „Македонија филм“, а од неодамна интересирале за неговата комплетна реализација покажува и „Вардар филм“.

Новој филмен проект на Милко Манчевски треба да биде реализиран во Скопје. Дистрибутор „Македонија филм“ од страна на републичкиот културен фонд со поддршка на Народниот филмски и прашински фондови се обележува со бројни културни усвртници, доколку за републикаската кинорадио, како и за слични одржани филмски проекти.

Македонија филм од време на време се обележува со многу усвртници, доколку за републикаската кинорадио, како и за слични одржани филмски проекти.

Во време на ВМРО беше променет одбор за искористување на овие усвртници, но време на време ВМРО-ски филмски филми биле изводени и во странство, како и во делови на балканското просторие.

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On hot days in Mexico
Beware of rapists -
they may hide an axe
in their threats!

Sit close to the window
that's blinking at the rose - garden,
so the guards would stop their gossip
and run to wipe off your blood.

Don't change climates too often -
that could be a dangerous habit
which may erupt into painfull
head-, ear-, eye-, and nose- bleeding.

Don't befriend men with mustaches...
Don't change climates too often...
Don't read Belsac outside the library...
... and beware of rapists
on hot days in Mexico.
3. VR-1, Norman Schoenfeld, 711-6920, 1775 Broadway, 10019, 20th floor, (at 67th Street) (with a letter stating who we are, etc.)
4. FRED ALAN (VR-1 AGENCY), Mr. Chris Strand, 506-6313 (left me a note, spoke to see' on 9/12, send over, follow up in a couple of days, sec: "Where did you hear about him?") 16 W 61, 10th floor, 10023

CAROLINE RECORDS, (Peter Galore, Live Skull, White Zombie)
Janet Billing, 989-2929, 114 W 26, 11 fl, 10001 (send over)

AMPERLAND PRODS, 564-0050, 424 W 33, 12th floor, Michael Delgado, Exec Prod.

POLYGRAM, Anette Cirillo, director of video prod (card at SEE)
333-8559 (they have in-house prod. co.) Worldwide Plaza, 825 8th Ave, 24th floor, 10019 (49 & 50), Lisa Schnaup sometimes looks at them.

11. RCA 930-4600, Debbie De Voor, 413 6AV, 9th fl, 10036

12. BIANCHI FILMS, INC., 141 5th Ave, 11th floor, 505-0670, Tom Mooney, sales rep, director: Barbara Canovich (MTV with Iggy)

13. DENNIS & HIRSCH, 461 Park Ave, South, 12th floor, 683-6311, att: Barry Hirsh, John F's former firm, seeks stylish dirs w/ "different point of view."

14. NUREYEV BASKET PRODUCTIONS, INC., 288-0292 (took speedo spec guy), secetry of perky nym-nym-nya, send to "[Sandy, how do you spell your last name]?" Sandy Tereilli (sp. ??), 307 E 37, 43 (Terry Films 412-1884 11/27.)

15. SUE SCREEN GENIX, div. of Columbia Picture Industries, Inc. 522 East 44th, 867-4020 (send att: Production, says protective sec'y)

DANCE FILMS 307 E 37

16. Columbia Records, Susan Silverman (MTV), 51 W 52, 12 fl (Debbie's roommate)

17. Epic's Danc back, 13 fl

FRAMING!

New angle over scene

Using chair in dance scoring

Texture

Only tafeta w/shadows in JC

Dancing Torso

F.C.: Royale's dancers in B.G.

Deep Focus + Rack Focus

2 pairs of dancing feet

Good reflect in mirror
- GINICK PRODUCTIONS, Paula Cargiaboe, 725-2560, 21 East 49th, penthouse.

1991
Spoke to secretary on 7/1. Sending reel on July 10.
Check back on July 10.
I believe I met a guy there with my personal reel in 1985 or '86. He was okay, I believe, might be the one who wanted me to stay in touch and give me a chance at a smaller commercial.
Spoke on July 12, she hasn't seen it yet.
Message with secretary on July 26.
Talked to her, Sunday, July 28.
Call on Tuesday, August 1.
Called on 8/1. Message ("She's not available."). Any feedback, if she wants to see more, schedule a meeting, or all of the above.
Call on August 9.
Called, secretary relayed a message from Paula, saying that they loved the piece.
She called back later to say that they thought the video was fun and they were impressed, told me she has a couple of directors who want to use me if they get the job. We talked a bit about clients and stuff like that, told her I used to deal with clients, now I'm looking for a production company, she said that's exactly what they do, they are producers and handle clients, but hire freelancers. Asked me to stop by for a chat.
I suggested we do a smaller job first, like taking heads, to get to know each other.
Several days later I called her in the morning, then stopped by. The place is more serious than I remembered or imagined. Her clients showed up before they were scheduled, so I had to wait for a long time, but I got other stuff done in the meantime. Apologized profusely when she came out.
She was nice, active, dynamic, 40's, A/F type. All they do is in-house and industrial. Says she wants to use me. Talked about their shoots. One was a James Bond piece, where they intercut a bunch of executives with 007 action, as if they are doing it. That would've been fun.
Get in on a smaller project, elbow your way in.
They shoot a good deal, also do stage and slides, real A/F.
I mentioned Igor as D/P, Joan as designer. Her name has come up earlier that day in comparing name lists with her designer. When I mentioned working with Klerk as equipment and production base, she said they have line producers and producers on stuff. So, they'd hire me as a director, but they handle the thing, which is perfectly ok with me, as long as I get to make a good-looking piece and see good people - Igor and Joan.
The Possession spot has apparently left a good impression there, she introduced me to at least two people who saw it (he must've been showing it around). Orin Wechsberg was one of them. He saw the Pace One reel at the time. He is their producer, and it turns out according to a crew-member resume I received, also a director. He thought Possession was a smart piece. I tried joking with him ("We can't exactly show it to clients," says he. "Try McDonald's.")
The conversation was good. Get a job out of it.
Since we spoke industrials, I am sending her more stuff: Macy's, KPMG and Mexico. Wanted her about Mexico. She wanted something with Mary's name (Paula to Orin: "He's seeking us his Mary's piece.").
Got the reel there on 8/14.
Sent her a total of two cards - one after the call to tell her I liked the reel, one after the meeting.
Called her around 9/1, she was in a meeting, did not return the call.
Call again around September 15 and with new stuff. Message on 9/16.

TELL IT LIKE IT IS

51
- 2nd DUMPER ST: WIPING A BIT JUMPY
- 2nd HOPPER SIDES TRIGGERS TURNING AROUND
- RUMMAGING PHOTOS (SC.4): WRONG BUTT TAKEN OUT (EYES PLENTY)
- ANG. PUNCH (MAG.) SLOW UP FILM
- HOPPER'S EYES TURNING?
- EXTEND NIGHT POT
- EDGE'S BIG SCREAMS WHEN FIXED UPON X:
- LONG FACES: CHANGE
- INDIANS ON SHOT IN SC.
- SKIP MUSIC AS LIGHT SHINES ON
- REMOVE LIGHT RIGHT AWAY
- "... BUT HE OR A MAN:" EDGE LOOKS AT
- ANGELA AT THE END, HANDS SQUEEZING HANDS
- GALLERY TOO JUMPY (ROLL TO MS)
- FOLLOW EARLIER INSTRUCTIONS FOR MONTAGE
- SEQUENCE: SINGING HEADS
- MUST BULLETS: TOO EARLY
- GUN ON RENSEN: NO SHOT
- IN SHACK: AT END: WIPING 2ND GUN IN
- ANG. + EDGE: LESS OF AN OVERLAP
- "SIT DOWN, YOU SHITHEAD. I'M NOT DONE YET!"
- LONGER SHOT WHEN L PASSES OUT
- MAJOR'S SPEECH: TOO STAGED, "LANDING INTO" TOO REPEATED, TOO STATIC (BEGINNING).
CAMERA TRACKS ACROSS TOP PORTION (1/3) OF SCREEN IS SATIN OR MATERIAL IN FG; BOTTOM IS BALUSTRADE IN FG.
DANCERS (TORSOS + FACES) ARE IN BG.
Before the Rain brought a vision of “Balkan conflict” to the world that caused a sensation in the mid-1990s, winning the Golden Lion in Venice and an Academy Award nomination. Five years of increasingly horrific news from the former Yugoslavia, with fierce fighting and massacres in Croatia and Bosnia, made Milcho Manchevski’s searing yet lyrical film timely to a degree that few filmmakers have ever achieved. But this is far from a documentary treatment of Balkan violence, and the country that Manchevski put on the map—his native Macedonia—was in fact the only Balkan state at that time not to have been engulfed by war or ethnic conflict.

Manchevski had not set out to explain the devastating sequence of events that started in 1991, as federal Yugoslavia dissolved during the year that saw the Soviet Union itself fall apart. Having grown up in Skopje, he finished his film education in the United States, where he began to make a reputation in music videos during the eighties. And the arresting images and teasing dramatic structure of Before the Rain draw something from this experience. But if Manchevski belongs to the generation of filmmakers who have grown up with the pop poetry of music videos as part of their natural vocabulary, his other inspiration is surely the western—an impression confirmed by his equally ambitious second feature, Dust (2001). Think of the westerns of Sam Peckinpah, eulogistic tributes to a way of life being crushed by modernity. Or of Sergio Leone, whose films were once contemptuously known as “spaghetti westerns” but were actually baroque variations on the great American western tradition, and influenced post-sixties filmmakers everywhere. Peckinpah and Leone dealt in myth rather than history, and weren’t afraid to use extreme violence for both artistic and realistic effect. The violence that rips through Before the Rain, on Macedonian hillsides and in a London restaurant, draws on such mentors for its impact. And when Manchevski insists that his film is not “about” Macedonia, or even just the Balkans, he’s surely aspiring to that same universality of late, great westerns such as Once Upon a Time in the West or The Wild Bunch. The figure that his hero, Aleksander, cuts is already a romantic one in London but becomes very definitely a Westerner back in Macedonia, as he returns to his old village, only to be immediately confronted by a gun-toting youngster.

The specifics in the film are carefully balanced, not to provoke a cynical response (“more Balkan mayhem”) but to make clear that this is an endless, cyclical process, as Muslim blames Christian and so provokes retaliation by Christian. The two armed gangs we meet in the film’s first part, both with their trigger-happy gunmen, are indeed equivalents, though one claims to be avenging Christian Macedonian honor and the other Muslim Albanian values. But we should be clear that neither is meant to be typical of modern Macedonians, of the kind we see briefly when Aleksander arrives in Skopje, any more than they’re typical of the idealists and opportunists everywhere that we call terrorists today.
Terrorism was certainly on Europe’s agenda when Manchevski first wrote his outline for the film in 1991, after paying a return visit to Macedonia. But bombs, assassinations, and kidnappings were then more common in Britain, Italy, and Germany, as we’re reminded by the radio news Anne listens to in her photo-agency office during the London episode. Irish republican bomb alerts were almost routine in England from the seventies to the end of the nineties, which lends authenticity and poignancy to her parting with Aleksander in a London cemetery. He’s leaving her in a London under terrorist threat to go back to “peaceful” Macedonia.

What is so striking about Manchevski’s circular form, like a Borges story or an Alain Resnais film, is that Anne is effectively seeing images from the future on her London light box. This is a world linked by violence: much of it mediated by photography and news but all of it potentially local and bloody, as both protagonists will discover so brutally. It was no doubt the sense that Manchevski could tell a truly European story, rather than merely a Balkan one, that engaged his supporters. Simon Perry, the producer of more than a dozen outstanding European films while heading the state investor British Screen, became a moving force behind the film; and Britain’s European Co-production Fund also contributed, as well as French producers and the Ministry of Culture of the still young Republic of Macedonia. For two decades, European governments and cross-border bodies have been wrestling with the problem of linking their individual film industries to become more effective and to tell stories that show the reality of a continent where London and Skopje are only a few hours apart, with people constantly travelling between them. Before the Rain led the way for other midnineties films that managed to do this, such as Ken Loach’s Land and Freedom (1995) and Lars von Trier’s Breaking the Waves (1996). All three of these were considerable box office as well as festival and critical successes in a number of countries. And all told tough, emotionally complex stories embedded in their landscapes and characters’ histories. Yet all were shot on shoestring budgets patiently assembled from diverse sources. And Before the Rain nearly suffered the kind of last-minute disaster that is a familiar feature of European filmmaking, when one of its original backers, Channel Four Television, pulled out, leaving British Screen to save the production.

One figure common to von Trier’s breakthrough film and to Before the Rain is Katrin Cartlidge, who died suddenly, at the age of forty-one, in 2002. After getting her start in television soap opera and comedy, Cartlidge emerged in the early nineties as a striking and courageous actor. She made her debut in Mike Leigh’s Cannes winner Naked (1993), playing a spaced-out addict in this bleak comedy of modern manners, then became the poster image for Manchevski’s film, before going on to star in two further Leigh improvisations, Career Girls (1997) and Topsy Turvy (1999). She returned to the Balkans in Danis Tanovic’s No Man’s Land (2001), set during the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict, playing a reporter. Cartlidge was never glamorous in any conventional way, but she brought presence and conviction to all her roles in a tragically short career. In Before the Rain, she manages to bridge the gulf between contemporary London and “timeless” Macedonia, between a modern career woman juggling job and relationships and a statuesque mourning figure in an antique landscape.
Der Kreis ist nicht rund

Die 51. Filmfestspiele von Venedig brachten eine Flut an Auszeichnungen für Außenseiter, eine Ebbe an Stars für das Massenpublikum und eine Welle an Gewalt auf der Kinoleinwand.


‘Before the Rain’ passa na Mostra de São Paulo
A Balkan Gyre of War, Spinning Onto Film

By WALTER S. WARD

The New York Times

Moving from a blood-streaked region, a great hard moral question to artists, and to the world.

The New York Times

Arts & Leisure
Rade Serbedzija, a distinguished Croatian stage actor and star of Yugoslav cinema and television, does the same, in reverse. He had lived in exile like the photojournalist he plays, an exotic figure in the film’s central London sequence, before he returns to Macedonia and tries to pick up the threads of his old life in a community that is now murderously polarized. Aleksander dies trying to rescue the young Muslim girl we have seen at the beginning of the film, when she is protected by an innocent young monk, touchingly played by the rising young French actor Grégoire Colin. Serbedzija’s own life has echoed his role in the film, as he has worked for peace and reconciliation in Bosnia, acting with Vanessa Redgrave in Sarajevo, while also pursuing a successful career in Hollywood cinema.

*Before the Rain* brought a certain image of the Balkans to a wide audience, and launched both Macedonia and Manchevski on the world stage—as well as being the first film to be shot partly in Macedonian. But with more than ten years of hindsight, we might wonder if its success was as much due to its timeliness as to its intrinsic qualities. I had the unusual experience of taking part in an international seminar devoted to the film, held in Florence in 1999, at which experts in many aspects of its background and context spoke over two days. The fact that the film could sustain such detailed discussion was already noteworthy. But what also emerged was how well Manchevski’s desire to create something that was not reportage or history or a political analysis had succeeded in leaving the film open to different interpretations.

For me, its use of landscape was especially intriguing. I only learned later how much Manchevski had actually created the landscape we might take to be typical Macedonia, patching up roads to inaccessible places and bringing together very different spaces to create a composite, as in the monastery around which the first episode is set. But what matters is not its authenticity as a place; rather it is the image of an apparently timeless pastoral landscape, as a contrast with a London that is, in reality, just as historic—and how he creates links, especially through the churches and cemeteries we see in both and through the graphic war photographs.

Anne is looking at in London while Aleksander is back where the images have originated. Perhaps the film’s greatest achievement is to address our images of certain kinds of places, and the stories we expect to find there, and to disrupt these by showing how they are connected and have implications for each other. Just as much as a classical landscape painting by Nicholas Poussin or a grainy war photograph by Don McCullin, *Before the Rain* is a film about images and how we relate to them—whether we take them seriously, or regard them as merely picturesque.
An image is an object, like the stained picture of Madonna we see, but it is also a link with another reality. This is a theme that Manchevski has since returned to, more explicitly, in Dust, but in Before the Rain he has made an important and, I suspect, classic statement—a film about images that may be properly mentioned in the same sentence as Marker’s La Jetée and Antonioni’s Blow Up.

He has also told a heartrending story of loss and brutalization, of the price that is paid daily wherever men take up guns to assert their identity, and especially the price that is paid by women caught up in such power struggles (it is the daughter of Aleksander’s youthful love, Hana, whom he tries unsuccessfully to save in this intricately plotted allegory of tribalism resurgent). Fatefully, the film is bracketed by predictions of rain that is overdue and coming. We might wonder if it is Bob Dylan’s Hard Rain, as Aleksander jokingly suggests in London, or a Europe After the Rain, as in Max Ernst’s great surrealist picture, painted in America during the Second World War, in which he shows a barren landscape, almost devoid of life.

The almost intolerably beautiful, yet bloodstained, landscape of Before the Rain invites us to consider just where we stand on the future of “European civilization.” Will it be the old tribal values, or new ones of tolerance and humanity?
Cyril's Room PT. 2

Door; Light Falls on Her, Door Closes

She's Asleep

She Rises

Crane Down

BEFORE THE RAIN


Anne oven doesn’t finish her words + sentences, trails away

Revise w/actors but don’t lead them. Just tape + watch + think, then take the next day!

Mix lines after a while.

Also, mom, Ian + Nick, so that Anne is fresh + confused.

POBOZIE

35 1. Cyril arrives – farewell
15 2. Zauba + Damian
2.5 3. Monks goodbye
1 4. Marco cases, monks
15. Damian smacks Cyril

9.5

5 1. Stradicam + B camera
2. Marco + Cyril dialogue
4 3. Tunnel P.O.V. window
Traité: on the ground

Refugees + escape

OFFICE:
Ian needs to be a bit more aggressive as a person
Schedule time to shoot inserts: Taj Mahal, Nova Nakadonjica, Rade’s CU during the computer scene, more computer CUs, etc.
Start live action stuff with Anne’s hand pulling out the tunnel photo
Pan from a cornel box to Anne
She checks for fever early on
The camera keeps away from her face early on
Anne’s body wipes the screen; she changes a tape
She puts on white gloves in CU; pan from drying flowers hanging upside-down to her hands putting on the white gloves, to her face
Top shot of light box which fills up the screen
In scene 75 Anne changes her mood, running along, then checking her forehead for a fever
Tilt down in CU from her face to the photos
Tilt up from the cassette rack to her face (in a reverse profile of the previous one)
ECU as Anne looks off (to the caterpillar) and turns around towards camera: the aisle is behind her.
Overlap the shot from over high her shoulder
Overlap with a very low angle of the same

2 4.6 Hallway: night – reverse 0.1 Cyril, Damian 5 shots
3 5 2. F – n-1 day – Cyril Again
Gangs come down
Cyril’s P.O.V.: ceiling
0.5 3.5 – n-1 night – Damian’s P.O.V. 12.00
1 4 4.5 – n-1 night – Marco looks out window
2.5 5.3 – n-3 night – M’s call on night – M.O. Cyril
1.5 6. F Search cell: day – Cyril before putting in band cassette himself
(Cream) Cyril sits on bed + monks
0.5 7. Bathroom: day – Cyril Again
Gang
1.5 8. F – n-1 night – Cyril Again 2
2 Luna

F: 10

5 6 + (c + escape in rocks) + cat + packing
Cyril's Cell: Pt. 3

1A

Crane up

1B 4

Rack focus

2

Juice drips down her arms
She eats the tomatoes, rolls over

Also do a CU of 2

Also a CU of 2
PART 2 BLOCKING

A. Resija ne sostoi vo pronamajanje na tonot na direkciijata. Pravecov, podsenata manipulacija, a ne vo dijagnosti.

1. Anne notices details, gets fixed:
   a. faces on photographs
   b. waps in plant leaves
   c. crack in the wall

2. Anne puts on make-up after throwing up and blue shower: a single shot in the mirror with her shoulders

3. Overlap coffee split over Madonna: three shots

4. Anne cleans dandruff from Nick’s shoulder in slow motion.

5. Pan from Nick to Anne during the conversation.

6. Pan and rack from moustached to Nick at the right.

7. Pan and rack from the turtle to Nick.

8. Anne is playing with four passport photos while waiting.

9. Cut-aways to junior waiter coming out of the kitchen in the area in front of the kitchen.

10. Is the other waiter serving Anne and Nick?

11. When do Anne and Nick get their food? Do they talk?

12. Is the red-headed waiter the bar-tender who was shot? (to Nick)

14. Anne is alone in the deck office. Light boxes lining the corridor.

15. We must be careful with what is seen outside the offices scene if we want to show her pov as she is in the area of the kitchen.

Cyril and Zamira in his Cell, Cell Scene #1: Cyril + Zamira

1. Cyril jumps up

2. Zamira’s face in the shadow

3. He pulls up his pants

4. He cringes

5. He puts on his habit

6. He realizes he’s shy and vulnerable

7. He looks off

8. She follows his glance

9. He moves to the door

10. She says a violent “Psh!”

11. He moves

12. She is already in his way to the door

13. He goes for the light switch

14. She darts to grab him by the forearm and pulls it on

15. He shivers

16. She has fallen to the ground, looks up at him

17. He is looking down at her; he is God

18. She speaks: “Mos me daro.”

19. He is surprised and embarrassed

20. She speaks again: “Ti nuk kupon Sship.”

21. He retracts

22. She approaches, says: “Sship, Un nam Zamira.”

23. He is afraid, retracts

24. She goes to the bed, takes her blanket

25. She passes by him proudly

26. She lies down in the corner

27. He stares at her foot

28. She covers it

29. He picks up the habit firmly

30. He darts out

31. She gets up on her elbow

CUs and INSERTS, CELL SCENE #1: CYRIL + ZAMIRA

CU of Zamira’s hand grabbing Cyril’s hand at the light switch: tilt down following the two hands being lowered. Zamira’s pleading, beautiful and angry face appears behind the hands. The hands are in foreground, but as we tilt down, following the hands, her face appears in the background. The camera stays on the face (perhaps racking focus), as the hands exit frame below.

Some inserts during the Cell #1 scene: Cyril’s hunched shoulders, Zamira’s hand clutching the blanket, the light bulb as it goes on (the light bursts), Zamira’s and Cyril’s feet as they slowly move towards the light switch like two cats choreographed dance, Zamira’s knees on the floor (as she kneels in front of Cyril).

a. From the Cornell box to Anne’s face

b. From Ian to Anne

c. From the food to Anne

19. Nick’s foot touches Anne under the table. He makes a shy face, smiles like the good old days. Feet as they play throughout the film.

20. Develop the motif of the cleansing water.

21. The motif of people with hands over their faces (in grief, pain, laughing, throwing up, etc.) should be repeated in all three parts.

22. ART DEPT and 1ST A.D.: We should find more motifs (visual, acting, musical, color, costumes, etc.) which will be repeated in all three parts.

23. ART DEPT and 1ST A.D.: Play up the circle as a symbol.

24. ART DEPT: Jars with water are great because they reflect parts of the picture, create new planes and new camera obscura frames within frames. Do use jars, jugs, glasses, aquariums, glass vases... Slick contrast to rough surfaces.

25. ART DEPT: Lime green bridge for a telephoto shot at the corner of Sinclair Rd and Sinclair Gardens. Good unnatural color; theme carries on from clothes.


27. Anne and Aleksandr: She is leaning against a mirror. He is talking to her, and being reflected in the mirror. Thus, they are both facing camera. (He is leaning with his hand against the mirror. A strong diagonal.)

28. Shoot the office scene as a bunch of independent shots. Looking at light-box, looking out the window, looking at photographs, dealing with Ian... They are unrelated, separate mini-tableaux. Have a way of cutting from one to the other: move the camera gently all the time.

Shoot light and wider versions of all tableaux. Cut to the beat of music. Cut the music as well as the picture. Tableaux not necessarily connected, but connected in context.

29. Wrought iron, spiked fence.

30. Nick keeps turning around during the fight (Anne’s p.o.v., behind Nick, it’s in her head); Anne keeps turning around for the retarded child (Nick’s p.o.v., it’s in his head).

31. Many reaction shots at the restaurant: peaceful and frightened manager, patron writing a check...

32. Cut-away through kitchen doors.

33. At the beginning, Anne should look around: the junior waiter should pass through before the mustached comes in. He smiles at her.

34. The mustached is absurd, funny, an idiot, the money business... so that the shoot-out is more of a shock.

35. Shots tilting down to Anne nervously playing with the silverware.
November 15, 1993

Dear Sally and Paul:

I need to bring to your attention the fact that so far all actors came to the rehearsals with an old - fourth - draft of the script, not the new - sixth - draft. As you can imagine, they learn the wrong text and prepare somewhat different characters.

As far as the location scout on Wednesday goes - I am very hard pressed for time. No storyboard time was allocated in the pre-production schedule. We also have a (relatively) new First A.D. I believe you will agree that a precise storyboard helps everybody in the execution of their work. However, I understand the need to lock down the location choices quickly and I am willing to do the scout on Wednesday. Still, in light of the tight schedule we have, I must tell you that we should follow an established procedure where the director sees photographs of the locations, makes choices and goes to see only the ones s/he and the art department find appropriate, instead of scouting again.

In light of the extremely tight schedule (the new costume designer was supposed to start working yesterday if we want to be at all prepared for the shoot), I also suggest that you check with potential costume designers and make-up people whether they are willing to do the job for the money before we interview them, have them read the script and do any further creative discussions. I interviewed and chose one and then second costume designer. It turned out that they did not want to do the job because the pay they were offered was too low.

Finally, I do not appreciate your inaccurate statements which seem like finger-pointing blame game. Re: one of your six faxes yesterday - Nick Gaster did not come to Macedonia solely on my request. He came there because there was a universally agreed-upon need for the editor to be at the shoot and help with his suggestions, since we did not get to look at the rushes and edit them in Macedonia as initially planned (which in turn affected the shooting ratio). There was also a need for a second unit director in order for us to catch up with an utterly unrealistic schedule and complete the shoot in time and under very difficult conditions, which we did.

I also need to inform you that I have not received a copy of the London budget, nor have I discussed it, neither with the producers nor with the First A.D.

I did request earlier that the First A.D. and the D.O.P. be in London for more extensive pre-production. My fax request was completely ignored. This is now causing problems in our preparation - discussions concerning locations, extras, shot breakdown, etc.

And, to paraphrase your last letter: if there is no storyboard completed and discussed with our new First A.D. by next Wednesday, I cannot work.

Sincerely yours,

Milcho
Skopje,
10 septemvri, 1993

Do
Premierot na Republika Makedonija
Branko Crvenkovski

Dragi Branko,

ti gi prilagam faksovite od ministerstvata za kultura na Velika Britanija i Francija koi svedocat za toa deka ovie dve zemji finasirat film na makedonski jazik od makedonski avtor koj vrabotuva makedonski lugje na makedonska pocva. Tie zemji sakaat da sorabotuvaat so nasata zemja. Za vozvrat, makedonskoto Ministerstvo za kultura im odgovara so birokratski zavrzlama koi svesno i nepovratno go unistuvaat ovoj film vo samiot start.

Na osum dena pred pocetokot na snimanjeto na rabotata), kako zacetnik i avtor na ovoj proekt, si zemam za pravo vo ime na onie koi so meseci vece rabotat na proektov, t.e. 25 clenovi na ekipata od Makedonija, 63 glumci od Makedonija, 24 stranski clenovi na ekipata (od Velika Britanija, Francija, SAD, Juznoafrikcka Republika, Jugoslavija, Slovenija, Bugarija itn., od koi 13 vece so nedeli se naogjaat vo zemjava i rabotat na proketot), tri finansieri od dve evropski zemji (Velika Britanija i Francija), eden televiziski kanal (Velika Britanija), 18 stranski glumci (od Velika Britanija i Francija), edna gramofonska kuca (od Francija) eden kompozitor (od Polska), edna kompanija za osiguruvanje, nekolku advokati, kako i vo ime na (vece) zainteresiranata javnost da te molam za odgovor -- dali vladata na Republika Makedonija saka da ucestvuva vo mojot film "Pred dozdot"?

Dali nasava zemja saka da komunicira so civiliziraniot svet ili so svoeto feudalno i birokratsko minato?

Se nadevam deka ova pismo i moeto prasanje ke gi primis dobronamerno i odnapred ti blagodaram na iskreniot i direkten odgovor.

Tvoj,
Milco Mancevski

kopii: Gjuner Ismail, Ministerstvo za kultura na Republika Makedonija, Stevo Crvenkovski, Ministerstvo za vrski so stranstvo na Repbulika Makedonija
May 18, 1994

Cat Villiers
Aim Rain Ltd

Dear Cat:

It was nice to get the letter from you saying how you need me to finish the film. Now, how about you doing YOUR job to finish the film? Or any of you producers - twelve all together: assorted producers, co-producers, associate producers, production associates, production and post-production supervisors, etc, etc, etc, none of whom are around to PRODUCE the film through the last phase. Sheila did a great job, but she's off to another film now. Fair enough. She was working for free long enough. Do you even know what the current status is of the film you are so proudly signing?

While you and Ms Counihan are hobnobbing in Cannes, there is no one to take care of production problems in London, and the film you take so much pride in signing has ground to a halt. You are not even here for the first print of the film, to see it - if not to take care of the producer's duties linked with the print (FYI: lab, opticals, credits, sound, clearances, etc, most of which are not in a great shape). You don't even know the status of the print. Do you know what the optical problems at the moment are? Do you have any idea when Mr Govey will be solving those? Do you know how that affects your budget and your delivery?

Nick and I went to the editing room to listen to possible music for the film today. We have no money to transfer all the music to mag stock and play it on the Steenback, so we'll play it on a boom box. Guess what - no one has arranged for a cassette player or a CD player to be in the (inadequate) cutting room. One more day lost. Fortunately, you are not in a hurry. After months of waiting, the chosen pre-recorded music has not been cleared, and we found out only last week (after the mix) that we need to choose new songs. I have to go buy the records myself. Fine. You say there is no money for cassettes. I can't compose the music myself. Three days lost (including the weekend) waiting for your clearance to buy the records. Did you get more money after the weekend so that I was allowed to get the tapes on Monday, or did you just change your mind after we lost three days?

All of this is fine by me, as long as you don't come and sit on my shoulder in three weeks time, applying pressure on me to somehow deliver the music and the print by some science-fiction unrealistic schedule which is already being affected by screw-ups like these. I was hoping you would learn about the domino effect
of undelivered planning by now. I was dumb. It's 10 o'clock, do
you know where your delivery deadline is? Do you know that at
this rate you probably won't have anything to deliver until late
June? Do you care? Think about your delivery requirements and
deadlines now, not when they come. Of course, you claimed you
went to Cannes to sort out the music. A week and a half after the
music crisis erupted, there is no result of this "sorting out." Not
a peep!

In the meantime, we are going over schedule because of amateurish
production problems: the optics are unresolved because there is
no producer to take a firm stand while our optics supplier is
talking and not delivering (we already have a first print, and a
third of the optics in it are unacceptable: density variation,
flickering, dirt, typos, and some are not even finished yet - you
can discuss them with the Technicolor timer or with our editor -
so the next print is again going to feature inadequate optics or
just plain black holes; how many prints do you want to produce and
pay for before we have a decent one?); the end roller is still not
ready; the music situation (as we know) is to laugh at; the
subtitles are being ignored in spite of my many warnings until
it's time for a last-minute panic-attack (for your information -
much of the film you are signing is in Macedonian, not to mention
the fact that the Albanian dialogue has not been checked,
regardless of my repeated requests).... and you are in Cannes
(unfortunately, it's raining), while I don't have a place to stay.
My lease expires tomorrow. I would leave if we were finished.
Serious business productions. If you decide that you are not
taking care of your responsibilities concerning the deadlines, YOU
need to provide for my extended stay here. No wonder you didn't
budget for the director to stay in London during post-production:
I am sure you were going to edit the film yourself - over the
phone from Cannes. I want to deliver the film, and I want to
deliver a good film on time, but I can't stay around for months
after the deadlines because of dumb mistakes, which I have been
warning about all along. In addition - I can't afford that. Why
don't you stay here yourself and worry about the film you are so
proudly signing, while I am doing my and other people's work?

Next time you take your DOP or your art director to a foreign
country, hire local or make sure they can find their own flat on
location, because I hope they will be aware of my experiences with
you and with the other eleven assorted producers.

By the way - the job is almost completely done, a year after we
started. I still do not have a work permit. Thank you.

Kind regards,

Milcho Manchevski

cc: Simon Perry, Frederique Dumas, Cedomir Kolar, Graham Easton
Cemetery

High Angle, like God

Kate throws in Al's camera (into the grave)

1 of 3
July 18, 1993

Dear Aim + Liara:

I want to sum up our casting positions so far.

Anne: Miranda Richardson or Kelly Hunter. We must know by August 1.

Cyril: Gregoire Colin, Jude Law or Jamie. We should have an answer from Gregoire by July 21 or we should go with either Jude or Jamie.

Zamira: nobody really. Jenifer has a great description of the part, a description which should be used in France and in the UK for further casting. Even after my repeated complaints and loud alarms (preceded by the unclear signals on whether to cast Zamira in the UK or in France, and then complemented by the French foot-dragging) we are seriously behind schedule and it looks like we will have to postpone the beginning of principal photography. I will expect tapes of additional candidates who fit Jenifer’s description (and no Nastasia Kinski, please). It takes time to do a good and thorough casting job. Once again I have to state for the record that we are in trouble with the casting of Zamira and that the situation is serious. And – we saw it coming.

Mustached and young waiter: haven’t started yet. Must ASAP.

Jan: the lead in “15.”

Manager, redhead waiter, etc.: should cast them soon.

I think we should secure the actors we are sure about and get on with finding the rest. I would also appreciate it if the producers and casting directors take over this kind of scheduling and alarm-sounding.

Sincerely,

Milcho

Simon Perry
BRITISH SCREEN
14-17 Wells Mews
London, W1P 3FL
May 5, 1994

Dear Simon:

I am happy, proud and relieved (post-natal depression notwithstanding) to announce the birth of “Before the Rain.” I am sure you are happy to hear this. Many people didn’t think it would happen, but lo and behold... I think you and can afford to crack a little smile now, with more to come. I cannot begin to thank you for EVERYTHING, but that’s another, longer story.

I would like to suggest that we unwrap the baby for the family (British Screen and PFI, and perhaps Noe, Polygram France and Vardar if they wish to come) as soon as we have a subtitled print. We should have one by the end of May if all goes well.

It sounds like I will have to leave London for good as soon as my job is done, right after this screening, so I would like to schedule it now (as far in advance as possible), so that we can all come to the screening. I suggest we show the film on Monday, May 30, 1994 at 6:00 at De Lane Lea. Of course, the date, the time and the place are very flexible, but I should be leaving shortly afterwards, so it would be good if we can keep it near the 30th.

Please do call me at 071/727-9228, so that I can coordinate this event.

Kindest regards, as usual,
FAX MESSAGE

Milco Manchevski
c/o De Lane Lea
London

Pariz, 10/05/1994

Milco,
ne znam ko Te savetovao, ali savetovao Te lose.

Milco, Ti nisi napravio film ništa za Oskara, pa cak ni za jedan jaci francuski festival. Uzco si sve manire "pravog autora" koji vode direktno u cor-sokak.

September 11, 1994

FAX TRANSMISSION TO:

JESSICA SYKES
ICM
London

From:

MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

Total number of pages (including this one): 1.
If you haven't received all pages, please call 439-4685.

Dear Jessica:

The Venice Festival called this morning and asked me to go back and accept an award. We don't know which one yet. I am leaving on Monday morning (the 12th) and returning on Tuesday afternoon.

Would you please contact Dogstar and let them know that I can't meet them on Monday and why. I can meet them Tuesday evening or Wednesday early morning (I'd prefer Tuesday). You can reach me through the Polygram office at the Excelsior in Venice. Please confirm with them that you got this fax.

Thank you. Talk to you soon.

Regards,

Milcho Manchevski
Al's Death

Extra Crane + Tilt Down

Overhead

Dolly Across

Dolly Across

GUN
December 7, 1994

FAX TRANSMISSION TO:

GILO PONTECORVO
Venezia/Roma

From:

MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

Dear Mr. Pontecorvo:

I believe that words are often too small to express certain feelings, but I will try in a very simple way: THANK YOU.

Have a Great New Year!

Warmest regards,

Milcho Manchevski

April 23, 1995

To:

BART WALKER
ICM
New York

From:

MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

Dear Bart:

I went to see BEFORE THE RAIN with a New York audience on Saturday. The theater was full.

However, as of yesterday (Sunday), the film is not playing in NY anymore.

There was not a single word of advertising over the weekend, not even to say "Last week" or such.

Also, the print was not good - it wasn't damaged, it was just a print with fluctuations in the light and color, particularly on reels 1, 4 and 5.

I intend to fight this incompetent creep to the end.

Talk to you soon.

Yours,

Milcho

P.S. Is it possible for us to get a good copy (there were at least 20) once they have been withdrawn from circulation?
Почитуван г-дино Манчевски,
Со голем личен интерес и возбуда ги следев активностите во врска
со делувањето на Оскарот. Вашот голем филм, Вашата уметничка дарба
денесник со претставија македонската култура како светска вредност.
Ви благодарам за своето уметничко и човечки ангажман. Сторните
многу за достоинството и афирмацијата на македонското филм и култура.
Номинацијата беше историски чин за нашиот филм и култура. Вие
всушност го постигнавте ова што изгледаше неможливо. Верувам новите успехи
доприна Ви престојат.

Примете ги моите најердечни поздрави,

Скопје
28.3.1995 г.

Кирил Лигоров
претседател на Република Македонија

"In the 1990's, I was cleaning my apartment. The TV was on, and all of a sudden a
very touching music came from the TV through a movie that was just beggining. I
stopped to do all stuff, just sit down in the floor, and then the best trip of my life came
in. After all these many years, I still don't know how to put into words all I feel about
this movie, the stories and esthetics of it, and most of all, the truth and reality mixed
with fiction: a piece of art. Since that moment, I knew, I don't know how or why, I just
knew that it has absolutely changed my view, my perspective, in a word: my life. The
movie Before the rain is the Best movie I've ever watched. The stories of Before the
rain are touchable stories of truth and fiction that invite our souls to feel. The creator
of all, Milcho Manchevski, is a great artist, he is one of the Best, but specially to me,
he is the Best."

Giancarla

> Dear Mr. Manchevski,
> I first saw Before the Rain in a screenwriting class, and later showed it in my
> composition classes. Students would often say it was the strangest film they had ever
> seen. I would then ask them if a film about human beings making choices was really
> more strange than a film (for example) about cloned dinosaurs larking about. Your film
> sharpened their sensibilities (mine too), and I thank you. I remain a big fan of the
> film, and wish you made more films, as I wish for the few people still maing good
> films. Needless to say, I would like to send you a screenplay of mine.
> I wish you the best and hope to hear from you soon.
> Kyle
Dear Mr. Manolievski:

I was looking for a # on the "WA" page in the phone book, and I got side-tracked to write this fax.

To write, i.e. that BEFORE THE RAIN touched and scorched my heart like no other film since I saw Tarkovsky’s STALKER. It is a brilliant, profound, and soul-searching film, and I want to thank you for making it.

I am Bulgarian by birth, and a photographer by profession, so the partiality is probably understandable. But – putting in "simple" words and images the enormous pain of the exiled mind – or self exiled, as in the protagonist’s case and in my own – was like a piercing song of our eternal will to connect, and the ultimate inability to do so. To connect, that is, both to our own self, and to the selves of others.

Which, to my mind, makes such an inconsequential connection as your film to Kafka’s mind all the more significant.

Thank you, and a lot of good luck on the road toward the impossible completion of the circle.

Best,

Raff

sum te videl po nju jork kako setas...vo 'before the rain' ti ubivas macka;risto siskov
vo eden film na kiril ceneski vo vrea zadavuva ziva macka...i toa li e umetnost? vo
ivojot film decata spaluvaat ziva zelka;od decata pravis nasilnici i inkvizitori...toa
li e umetnost?ti ne si umetnik tuku sadista...i pokraj toa sto te pocituvam 'moram da
ti gi kazam ovie roboti...jas tochno znam odkade si prevzel motivot so devojka vo
'before the rain'...od eden strip vo 'kotelec'...jas ke go napravam najdobriot
makedonski film...'jad'od 1975 na kiril ceneski go smetam za najdobar MK film;za ex yu
film 'sutjeska'...
jas sum torbesh...vegetarijanc i instruktor po aikido i muzicar/21g sviram
gitaru...filmot mi e pasija...roden sum 1975 vo gostivar...
tvoj sum fan milcho...
Dear Mr. Manchevski:

> I have seen Before the Rain at least 10-12 times & love it
dearly. My sincere compliments to you for making such a vital, intriguing,
beguiling, and altogether riveting cinematic experience. Can you tell me
whether you have any plans to re-release this film in DVD format? It has
become nearly impossible to even locate a used VHS copy. Make many of us
Cinephiles very happy & tell me that you actually have a release date for
the DVD.

> All the best,
> William******* (Los Angeles)

Dear Milcho Manchevski,

> > I don't know where to start...
> > I saw 'Before the Rain' about a year ago and I'm trying to get a copy on ebay
> > (Amazon, etc) but without success. This film is probably one of the best I've ever
> > seen!
> > It's on my top five best films ever list!
> > If you know a way how to buy a copy please let me know.
> > Till then Marry Christmas, Happy New Year, or just Happy Holidays to be politically
> > correct (I hate politics).
Hi! I'm not really sure why I'm doing this but here goes.

I've just recently got round to seeing your film "Before the Rain", I'd been meaning to catch the film for some time. On a recent visit to HMV I saw the video, "as good a chance as any" I thought, and bought it.

Anyway back to your film. I really had no idea what to expect. My family had talked about it, but to be honest I wasn't paying much attention when it came up in conversation. Too busy playing with nephews, nieces and cousins! When I finally saw it, I was cross with myself that it had taken me this long to get round to it.

I was struck by the beauty of the cinematography and by the actors' portrayal of these complex characters. I can truly say it has changed the way I look at myself. I'm sure many people can identify with the lives of these people, I know I can. Obviously the main point was to illustrate the futility of war and prejudice, and you should be commended on your excellent interpretation.

I've lent this film to many friends who have all expressed their thanks for introducing them to it. Living in Europe at this moment in history, we've been exposed to may horrors. These stories that bombard our TV screen are not of far away lands, but those of lands 2 hours from London. You should be commended for bringing these stories to light.

Question 10
A Macedonian film was nominated for an Oscar in 1994. What was it called?
- A: Before the Rain
- B: A Place in the Sun
- C: Singin' in the Rain
- D: Burnt by the Sun

Right!
The answer was A: Milco Manchevski's Before the Rain - a film about civil war in Macedonia made several years before it became a reality - won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1994, as well as an Oscar nomination.
Last week a student (I still teach one class a week at Columbia) told me she wanted to become a filmmaker because of "Before the Rain". I never mentioned I know you 😊

Hi Milcho, long time fan here. You’re films are wonderful and powerful, especially you’re first gem from 94’. Well done, you’re a great artist. Have you thought about filming a sequel to Before the Rain? It would be a great idea to revisit such a haunting film, 20 years on, in a different time and circumstances. It could focus on Alexander’s older son, whom he had never met, following in his father’s footsteps. I think part 4 of the story could be something special. Please think about it. Keep the films rolling!

CineDHebate
DireitosHumanos/2013
Exibição e debate com entrada franca na Sala Redenção da UFRGS

28/08 19h ANTES DA CHUVA
Drama Macedônio 1994 03 min. Direção Macho Manchevski
Debatedores: Giancarlo Brunetto (Liga DHEUFRGS)
Christian Perrone (Advogado)
Evert van der Zweerde (Radboud University, Holanda)
> 1000000000000...cestitki od Teheran...koga utrinava go procitav vesta na makedonskite
> vesnici bev mnogu radosen sto tokmu vasiot film e nominiran za 'Oskar' g.
> Manchevski...Jas vi posakuvam mnogu sreka i se nadevam na uste mnogu... mnogu drugi
> dobri filmovi od vas...stvarno vie ste mojata gordost ovde vo Iran...vo eden od
> nasite predmeti na fakultet...potocno na master...eden od najdobre iranski profesori
> na kinematografijata...vasiot film "pred dozdot"...go prikaza na nasiot cas kako
> primer na eden odlicen (kompletan) film...i normalno jas kako gragjanin na
> Makedonija...bev na centarot na vnimanieto...i bez dilema toa bese golema gordost za
> mene...se nadevam deka vo idninata...so mojot rad...ke mozam nekako do vi vratam za
> ovie odlicni momenti sto poradi vas jas gi doziveam ovde vo Iran...i uste nesto...jas
> letovo bev vo makedonija i gi dobiv vasite filmovi...mnogu vi blagodaram......
> 
> > So glema pocit...Agim
> >
> Subject: This is **** From Mexico
> Date: Sat, 26 Jun 2004 02:57:25 +0000
> 
> Dear Mr. Manchevski
> 
> My name is ****, I'm a Student of the University of the Americas in
> Puebla. The reason of this mail is because I wanted to say to you that I
> have had the opportunity of seen your works and I'm a big admirer of you.
> Before the Rain is the most fantastic fairy tales of all and I have seen it
> like 100 times, and Dust is a picture that reminded me very much my country
> Mexico at the beginning of the past century.
> 
> I want to tell you that pretty much because of your work I want to become a
> filmmaker. Please forgive myself if this is weird to you, but I think you're one of
> the biggest filmmakers of all time.
Hello, I'm an collage student from Costa Rica... I don't know if you had ever heard about this country, but that's ok, we are kind of unknown... The reason I'm writing you it's because I recently enter to a Cinema class, it's called: "Una mirada al cine contemporaneo", last week the professor made us watch your movie "Before the Rain (1994)", and I was surprised by the movie, it was excellent, a complete piece of art! Actually it had become on of my favorite movies.

So I decide to make an oral presentation about "Before the Rain", the problem is that there is not enough information about the process of creation of the movie, I had search everywhere, but I didn't find what I was looking for. I know that you must be a busy man, but it would be an honor to receive an email from you, so that I can showed it to my class and my professor. I just want to know what were your influences and how did you came up with the idea for the script.

Thank you, and I hope to hear from you. Keep making movies, because I honestly believe that you are one of the bests filmmakers of our decade.

Greetings from Costa Rica. Ricardo

[...]

You see, I have the French version of the movie and I think that it's not reflecting the identity at all.

First, when Kiril meets Zamira for the first time, she says: you refuse to talk to an Albanian?


Either they made a mistake in the translation (maybe for better comprehension).

Your movie is a rich experience for me full of details and meaning. There is so much to say that I could make my whole thesis on it!

---

Milcho Manchevski

"Времето никогаш не умира. А ни критик не е тркалеш."
Отец Марко во „Пред дождот“

There are also many fans of your movie in Japan.

every 5 years I re-watch 'Before the Rain' since 1994 & every time I find something new & beautiful... youtube.com/watch?v=HBQC4V... thanks @Milchom

Like · Comment · Share 454610

18 shares

Ne e...

Like · Reply · 1 hr

Reko dobra replika, kako filmska taka i životna...

Like · Reply · 1 hr

samo se nadevam deka bravucedot nema da izlaze dovolno glup pa da pocne pukat... obi sam ke se otele

Like · Reply · 1 hr

Omlenata mi 😔

Like · Reply · 52 mins

Pametko da je juce bitli... filozofija recena onome ko se zavetovao na cutanje... valjda smo svi razumeli... sve za vreme...

Like · Reply · 43 mins
Dear Sir,

> First of all I am very honored to write this e-mail to you. I am an Albanian
> R.C. priest working in the Cathedral of Tirana. I have seen Before the rain
> when I was in College many years ago and many other times, but it's quite
> impossible to find its version in DVD. I have searched in USA and most of
> the European countries with no result. Would you be so kind to indicate me
> how to find it? I am ready to pay any sum of money.
>
> Please accept my best wishes and regards
>
> Fr. ********

Hello Mr. Manchevski,

> I'm from Iran and I live in Tehran/Iran.
> When I found your movie, "before the rain", it was hard to find movies from
> Europe. But I was interested in European and East Asia movies. I found "before
> the rain", by accident and it was incredible: subject and structure...
> Its one of my favorite movies.
>
> Its about 8 year that I look for your other movies here, but there is
> nothing :( Even I couldn't find the DVD of "before the rain".
> I will travel to Poland in few months. I hope I will find some of your
> movies there, and I will take them to Iran. I'm sure those are the best
> gifts to my friends ;)
>
> Have a great life.
>
> Anahita ********

Hello

My name is Bruna, 19 years old, from Brazil. I'm film student and today I had a
class where my teacher talked about the film Before the Rain and I was very curious
to watch it, but he said he did not have in Brazil, he saw at a festival. And I really
wanted to know if you do not have a site that has this movie, or if you cannot send
it, or something like this. I as an aspiring filmmaker would like people to see my
movies anyway and
Anyway, congratulations for the work you do. I wait your reply eagerly.
Thank you.
Spinodal decomposition in thin films of binary polymer blends

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, op gezag van de Rector Magnificus, prof.dr. R.A. van Santen, voor een Commissie aangewezen door het College voor Promoties in het openbaar te verdedigen op maandag 16 december 2002 om 16.00 uur

door

Maria Eugenia Velázquez Sánchez

geboren te Mexico-stad, Mexico

- Extend a numerical method available for the prediction of morphology development in the bulk of a regular solution to polymer blends in the bulk and/or in the presence of a rigid wall.
- Understand the mechanism leading to a faster domain growth next to the wall for thin films of polymer blends, in the early-stage of the spinodal decomposition.

If you ever saw the movie Before the Rain of Milcho Manchevski it will be easier for you as a reader to find the links between the way as this work is presented and its real temporal development. Briefly, in this movie that is a collaboration of three countries, a story is told in three parts linked by characters and events that alternate London and the countryside of Macedonia. This thesis is also the result of a good collaboration between two Departments and persons of three different groups within this University. The presentation of this research

2. Английский (Приветственный диалог) - Општо образование

Просьбы

Како же прашање некого дали го гледал филмот „Пред дождот“?

> Thank you for this amazing, heartwarming, beautiful film. Is there any way to purchase it on DVD?
> Thank you.

> Thank you.
> Anna
Dear Mr. Manchevski,

Seven years ago I heard of a beautiful movie called Before the Rain, in the same manner perhaps as someone heard of a healer or a mystery man present in town in pre-modern times. It had a feeling of sweet and comforting mystery to it. I was excited therefore long before I got to see the film. Then one day a friend of mine rented the video and I came to watch it with him. From that first encounter I only remember the marvelous scenery of Genesis-like nature.

But nothing more, as I was perplexed by the movie and unable to figure it out. Several months later it was screened in the local cinematheque and I went to see it again. This time, at the end of the film, I was speechless. I left the cinema house overwhelmed by the story, stunned by the acting, and emotionally moved. I could not forget Before the Rain. And I saw it since then more than 10 times, and even arranged for a special screening at my university.

A few weeks later that year 3 friends of mine and I decided to make a trip to Macedonia and arrive at the church where the story begins. In the summer of 1998 we left for Macedonia, and after having travelled all over that fascinating country, arrived at Ohrid, and visited the church (but did not go in. perhaps that was left for some other time).

I am sorry to bother you with this insignificant story, but I did want to express my gratitude for touching me so deeply with that exquisite piece of art that has influenced me greatly.

Humbly, I thank you.
Mr. Gavriel
Jerusalem, Israel

SHAMANIC SOLITUDES

Prologue: Absent
(see the Epilogue)

It's going to rain.
The flies are biting.
Come on! It's time.
It's already raining down there.

[...]

Time never dies.
The circle is not round.

Milcho Manchevski, Before the Rain

A Kalange Röi child. Age: 10 years, height: 3' 11"; weight: 62lbs. His cranium is brachycephalic, with a flat face and unpronounced profile. His nose is very little pronounced with rather wide wings. His cheekbones are pronounced. The skeletal and cephalic indices are within the average for similar specimens. His hair is long, black and smooth. The Mongolian eye is evident: the palpebral rims is long and narrow. His skin is olive and, if it were covered and kept clean, would appear lighter.
Opening Scene

A lonely bird’s screech pierces the dark burgundy sunrise sky that segues into a close-up of tomato plants nestled in a luscious little vegetable garden adjacent to an ancient Orthodox Christian monastery. The land surrounding the monastery is criss-crossed with innumerable rhizome-like cracks that are covered with a thick layer of dust. Against the annihilating goldness of the sun, and the faded blue of the summer sky marked with gaseous milky traces of supersonic military planes, Kiril, a baby-faced monk, admiringly looks and touches the voluptuous crimson tomatoes as if paying homage to these divine fruits of the monks’ loving labour on this not so fertile piece of God’s land.

Male children dressed in worn clothes play with fire in which they toss a few unused bullets and a turtle. An elderly Orthodox Christian monk with an old sweet wrinkly face arrives to escort the young monk out of the garden. On the distant horizon dark clouds start congregating and one can hear the bolting of a thunder. For a moment, shivers of fear and uneasy foreboding permeate the face of the old monk. ‘Every time it thunders it jolts me. I think, here we go, the shooting has started here too’, he says to the silent young monk. As they walk away from the ancient monastery, they ingest the breathtaking beauty of an old stone church and a tall cypress tree that stand alone on a cliff cutting a bubbling emerald green lake.

The stunning view does not provide sufficient comfort for the weary body of the old monk. The space between the barren mountains is filled with a repetitive and unbearably irritating noise of millions of crickets—heralds of an ominous event just about to unfold in a most violent way. Hypercharged heat threatens to dissipate into a violent storm. Signs of human tension fill the space under the stage of this celestial drama. Eyes almost pulsate their way out of their sockets with force that follows the relentless rhythm of the crickets. The muscles and skin around the eyes contract trying to pull the eyes back in their sockets. The tensed up body and face of the old monk signify a premonition of something unthinkable dreadfully just about to hit the innocent and unsuspecting like a sudden summer storm.

1 The character is played by Gregoire Colin.
2 The old monk is played by Josif Josifovski.
As the monks’ gazes lovingly touch the rugged mountains and landscapes, skies ready to explode in gold and blue, monasteries and churches carved out in stone, barren lands scorched by the sun, elegant cypresses and wavy lakes, a deeply sensual and suggestive music impregnates the ascetic beauty of their surroundings with divine lusciousness. A warm, velvety melody in adagio tempo springs out of a lyrical guitar punctuated occasionally by the thundering of drums and the melancholy of a flute. The music heralds tempestuous emotional landscapes that are just about to unfold in a volatile land, fraught with simmering tensions, resentments, historical misunderstandings, tabooed passions, violent hatreds, dashed hopes, and quashed ambitions.

The music develops in a theme that suggests catharsis, a deep soul cleansing that will come after the tempest. Yet, at the same time, there is a nagging flickering of fear of being caught in the brutally indiscriminate whirlwind of the tempest without any recourse to the doors of the promised purgatory. Instead of a welcome possibility for sweeping away the evil spirits, the storm could turn out to be nothing but a futile exercise of power. By this stage the choreography of faces, bodies, words, voices, built spaces, natural landscapes and music on the screen sets off an avalanche of associations, identifications and emotions. I am utterly seduced by this opening scene that urges me to keep watching.

The Macedonian Imaginary: Synopsis of Basic Historical and Socio-Cultural References in Before the Rain

Thus begins Before the Rain (Manchevski 1994), a beautifully told (filmic) story about the tragedy of certain kinds of molecular desires and affectionate contaminations that are pulled apart by the molar gravity of social forces that push in the direction of social separation and purity between ethnic groups, nations, classes and genders (Deleuze & Guattari 1983). Manchevski, screenwriter for and director of the film, is particularly interested in examining some of the capillary effects of the ‘paranoiac fascizing’ pole of the Macedonian (national) imaginary—a group fantasy (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 277), a socio-cultural script massively reinforced by so many cogs in the Macedonian social machine, a carefully calibrated set of representations and moral imperatives obsessed with the purity of the ‘superior’ class and ethnicity (Lambevski 1999).

This is an imaginary that furnishes the motives behind the affects, the ‘immediately rewarding or punishing experiences’ (Tomkins 1995: 54), that criss-cross the flesh of Macedonia’s people. This group fantasy also assigns values, which happen to be socially valourised emotions, to cultural artefacts, practices and human bodies (Tomkins 1995: 54). Thus, some of these artefacts, practices and bodies become good, interesting, exciting, desirable, joyous, pleasant, or divine, while other objects attain the status of bad, vulgar, unpleasant, disgusting, contemptible, sad, evil and unbearably shameful things.

The Macedonian imaginary is a deeply fractured set of authoritative representations that is marked by inherent social antagonisms between classes, ethnicities, genders and sexualities in Macedonia. As such, it is regularly contested by those who desire an escape from its affective grip. The ethnic antagonism between Macedonians and Albanians overwhelms the split Macedonian nation to such a degree that it totally absorbs all other forms of social antagonism in Macedonia. Occupying completely opposing cultural
positions within the Macedonian national imaginary, where one’s ethnic identity is only established in opposition to the negatively defined supplementary figure of the other (Derrida 1974, Smith 1994: 24), Macedonians and Albanians keep insisting on their ‘purity and superiority’, so they do not have to dread the miasma of miscegenation and loss of identity (Lambevski 1997).

Forced by history to live on such intricately mixed territories, Macedonians and Albanians have developed elaborate ways of cultivating certain types of contacts and relationships with each other, on one hand, and of violently discouraging other relationships and contacts with each other, on the other (Lambevski 1997). While Albanians and Macedonians can be good neighbours, classmates, business partners and maybe even friends, they must never become each other’s lovers or spouses. However, living in such close physical proximity to each other, there is always the ever-present possibility of feverishly passionate intermingling between Albanian and Macedonian bodies of the opposite, or the same sex (Lambevski 1999). The thought of flows of bodily fluids, pleasures and passions between Macedonian and Albanian bodies, of their naked flesh, tense with fear from breaking the unwritten laws, and quivering with desire bigger than that fear, constitutes the unthinkable and unspeakable kernel of the Macedonian imaginary.

In other words, the Macedonian imaginary is an intertwined set of ideas about: (1) what a human body marked as either ‘Macedonian’ or ‘Albanian’ should do, think, say and feel; and (2) how the body politic of Macedonian society should be organised. Within this group fantasy, the body politic of Macedonian society is invariably imagined as a composite masculinist male ‘Albanian’ or ‘Macedonian’ body of an ‘impregnable’ master that comes complete with all its anxieties, macho fantasies, and defensive armours (Stojanovich 1967, Gjuric 1990, Gatens 1996, Lambevski 1997). The composite feminine female ‘Albanian’ or ‘Macedonian’ body plays a supplementary role in imagining Macedonia’s body politic by defining the femininity of the private sphere in opposition to the masculinity of the public sphere—the Macedonian nation-state and economy. This composite and very authoritative image of a ‘Macedonian’ or ‘Albanian’ woman usually figures either as a saintly mother, who is a giver and sustainer of (male) life, or as an ‘honourable’ wife, a domestic worker in charge of the man’s house that strives to please and obey her man completely (Lambevski 1997). Contemporary Macedonian political discourse, to a very large extent, still metaphorically configures the physical ground on which the Macedonian state, economy and nation are implanted as a ‘mother’ or ‘honourable wife’ (Lambevski 1997, 1999: 412–413) in service either to her ‘beloved son’ or in possession of her ‘master’ (Yuval-Davis 1993).

3 Proof of this taboo can be found in a poll conducted in the mid-1990s showing that less than two percent of the surveyed Macedonians and Albanians would marry a person from the other ethnic group. Arben Xhaferi, the leader of the Party for Democratic Prosperity of the Albanians in Macedonia, used this poll as ‘evidence’ for the need for complete institutional separation or apartheid between Macedonians and Albanians. He argued that Macedonians and Albanians lived in ‘cultivated antagonism’, meaning that they could live next to each other, but not together (Josifovski 1974, Australian Macedonian Weekly 1996).
Prima della Pioggia

Un film di MILCHO MANCHEVSKI
The nuclear and the extended family, as well as the clan, are put in charge of a gigantic substate social machine (Massumi 2002: 82), which includes one’s neighbours, school peers, work colleagues and the informal morality police—a motley crew of ‘concerned’ busy bodies. The role of this machine is to completely seal off leakages of desire outside this group fantasy (Tomasic 1948, Lambevski 1997). However, this fantasy leaks on all sides all the time. The more the Macedonian social machine tries to reduce life in Macedonia to a rigid symbol of the purity of the split Macedonian nation, the more it feeds ravenous microscopic desiring-machines, unpredictably assembled from detached segments from heterogeneous signifying chains (Lacan 1977: 33–113) of the Macedonian imaginary and from flying partial objects (Klein 1930)—bodies, artefacts and practices—to which this group fantasy attempts to impose the stasis of the law (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 78–100).

Against the appearance of rigid stability and order in the relations between the molar aggregates of ethnicities, genders, classes and sexualities in Macedonia, there is the explosive flux of molecular desiring-machines—Macedonian and Albanian eyes exchanging longing gazes, flaming tongues caught in tabooed kisses, febrile bodies rubbing against each other—capable of demolishing entire established sectors of Macedonian society (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 116). Within the ancien regime of the Macedonian imaginary, there is the electrifying current of desire, a sign of strength, tempestuous force that gives rise to new imaginations about new syntheses of singularities and signifying chains, intensities, becomings, new alliances, loves, and societies (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 111, 304–307).

This constitutes the schizzo (revolutionary) pole of the Macedonian imaginary that nourishes a nomadic subject who refuses the territorialisations of its paranoiac counterpart:

*I am neither Macedonian nor Albanian, neither a man nor a woman, neither upper or lower class, neither gay or straight. I am scum of the earth, a proud dweller in the dungeon of my shame. I have a two headed eagle taking off from my vagina, and the sun coming out of my bottom. You can take my body, but you cannot take my desire. It will migrate in many new bodies as soon as you gun me down with a spray of bullets. Remember that.*

The incessant battle between the paranoiac and the schizzo, two distinct Macedonian subjects each plugged in their respective register of the Macedonian imaginary, constitutes the main line of dramatic tension in *Before the Rain* (Manchevski 1994). Manchevski uses a series of very effective cinematic devices to represent this titanic struggle between these two subjectivities. In the next few sections I will pay special attention to the diegetic, photographic and auditory structuring of this battle in the film.

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4 Clan structures and loyalties are only significant in certain rural and semi-rural Albanian communities in Macedonia.

5 A stylised two-headed eagle represents the Albanian national symbol, while a stylised sun with eight or sixteen rays represents the Macedonian national symbol.
In this stunning directorial debut, Manchevski adopts an elliptical narrative structure to tell three love stories that are connected by people and events. Each part includes scenes from the other two stories, thus creating a feeling of circular temporality where the present and future constantly loop into each other. Each part also returns to the opening scene that I described earlier. This scene serves as a narrative puzzle and as an overture to the full range of emotions that the film represents. With each return, Manchevski masterfully adds bits and pieces to this scene, managing to keep the viewer’s suspense as to its fuller meaning to the very end of the film.

There is something both paranoid and schizoid about the scene. The old monk with his jumpiness represents the paranoid register of the Macedonian imaginary, while the ecstatically serene baby-faced monk represents the schizoid register of the Macedonian imaginary. The camera constantly shuffles between their respective gazes. While the old monk sees ominous signs of an impending doom everywhere—in the distant thunders, the explosion caused by the children dressed in worn clothes, the milky traces left in the sky by supersonic military jets and the nerve-wracking noise produced by innumerable summer crickets—the young monk detaches himself from the thunderous political climate of his country, metaphorically hinted by the celestial drama played out in the opening scene, with sensual daydreaming. His perfectly unwrinkled face punctuated by a permanent grin sits in odd contrast to the creased and tensed up face of the old monk. The young monk’s face suggests that he is prone to flights of fancy. His gaze constantly evades the solidity of the mountains and the rocky

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6 The film received wide international critical acclaim, winning thirty international film festival awards, including the coveted Golden Lion for Best Film at the 1994 Venice Film Festival and an American Film Academy nomination for Best Foreign Language Film in 1995.
ground, as well as the claustrophobic regulation of flows in the built environment depicted in the film. His gaze is always already somewhere else.

The scenes in the first part of the film, which immediately follow after the prologue, will only confirm the young monk as someone who is ready to escape the paranoid designations of his Orthodox Christianity and his Macedonian ethnicity. The first part is a study of the insurmountable difficulties faced by Zamira, a Moslem Albanian girl, and Kiril, the already mentioned baby-faced Macedonian Orthodox Christian monk, in living the love they have for each other. Their affections for each other develop under the most extraordinary circumstances.

Zamira is a beautiful, but somewhat ‘mischievous’, Albanian girl. Curious about the other men (the Macedonians), she approaches them too closely. Against the backdrop of serious ethnic tensions between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians in a remote Macedonian village, Zamira crosses the Macedonian/Albanian paranoiac’s boundary. Her desire for the other men threatens to trigger a civil war in the village, since it questions the entire established order between genders, ethnicities and religions in the village. Manchevski does not show us how she actually crosses this boundary. This is an amazingly effective narrative device in showing the tragic absurdity and irrationality of the paranoid-fascisising register of the Macedonian imaginary. The paranoiacs on both sides of the ethnic divide do not need evidence. They conjure up a paranoid accusation out of a few disconnected pieces of ‘proof’. There is a corpse of an ethnic Macedonian shepherd in a hut on a top of a hill. Zamira is seen running, presumably away, from the hut. Given this ‘evidence’, armed Macedonian villagers accuse Zamira of seducing and then murdering this Macedonian shepherd. The armed Macedonian militia men search for Zamira in order to administer their ‘justice’.

Zamira somehow manages to find refuge in Kiril’s monastery cell. Huddled in fear, she pleads to Kiril in Albanian to protect her. Kiril’s initial impulse is to report her to the deacon of the monastery, since Zamira’s presence as a woman and Moslem defiles the monastery’s male Orthodox Christian ‘sanctity’ and ‘purity’. However, Zamira’s pleading eyes, filled with fear, anxiety, anticipation, and gratitude, trigger an avalanche of emotions in Kiril that question the very core of his identity as a male Macedonian Orthodox Christian monk. He abandons the dogmatic proscriptions of his monastic life for an ethics based on an unexpected love. He feeds her with the juicy crimson tomatoes he collects in the opening scene and vows to protect her against all odds, even if it requires lying to his spiritual brothers and God’s representatives on earth. To this gesture, Zamira responds with her own unexpected emotions. Her fear gives way to a loving surrender to Kiril’s hallucinatory protectiveness.

Bearded and raucous armed Macedonian militia men ransack the monastery in pursuit of Zamira. They fill the dignified air of the monastery with extremely vulgar slurs and threats addressed to Zamira. The Macedonian militia men do not find Zamira. They decide to camp outside the monastery and guard all its exits just in case Zamira tries to slip outside in the deep darkness of the night. The monastery’s deacon orders his own search and finds Zamira in Kiril’s cell.

The deacon reluctantly plays the role of the upholder of the ecclesiastical law. Kiril is defrocked and his vow of silence is invalidated. The deacon’s fury is, however, immediately subsided by a deep understanding of Kiril’s motives and the long monastic tradition of providing refuge for persecuted

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7 Zamira is played by Labina Mitevska.
8 The deacon is played by Kiril Ristoski.
people regardless of their religion and ethnicity (Cornakov 1991). The deacon makes arrangements for Zamira's and Kiril's safe escape from the besieged monastery. The deacon lovingly hugs and kisses Kiril before he leaves. Kiril, knowing well that his and Zamira's life in Macedonia would be a living hell, promises to take Zamira to his uncle in London, a Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer working for a famous photo agency. They both manage to slip safely out of the monastery.

However, they get intercepted by Zekir, Zamira's grandfather, her brother and a group of Albanian armed villagers. Her brother asks about what she is doing with that 'Christian scum'. She responds that she loves him. Apart from Zamira and Kiril, who obviously does not understand a word of the Albanian discourse taking place in front of him, everyone else suppresses cynical laughter.

In an emotionally charged disciplinary move mirroring Kiril's earlier disciplining by the deacon, Zamira's grandfather slaps her face hard, while her brother calls her a whore. Zamira's grandfather’s face and voice are torn between two contradictory impulses: the first comes from his somewhat reluctant playing of the role of enforcer of the Albanian way of life, while the second impulse springs from his almost unconditional affection for Zamira. Her brother and his friends have their hands ready on their machine-guns' triggers. Her grandfather gives Kiril an ultimatum: he would either stay to face certain death as a sign of his love, or would leave Zamira immediately. Everyone's eyes are on Kiril now. Zamira's brother's eyes are filled with triumphant knowledge that Kiril will run away with the tail between his legs. Zamira's grandfather threateningly, and yet pleadingly, gazes at Kiril signalling to him that he should leave. He has not only the burden of upholding the Albanian tradition, but he also, as an Albanian elder, shoulders the responsibility for peace in the village based on the tradition of self-imposed apartheid between its two ethnic communities. Zamira's grandfather knows that Kiril's death would lead to Macedonians' avenging his death by killing someone in Zamira's family or clan.

After a few agonising moments, Kiril drops his shoulders and lowers his head as a sign of utter defeat and humiliation. He slowly and very reluctantly makes his first steps. Zamira runs after him, screaming in Albanian that she loves him. This proves too much for her brother who sprays her with bullets. Zamira falls on the ground, her body convulsing with the last breaths of her life in Kiril's embrace. There is shock on the faces of the Albanian witnesses of this fratricide. Zamira's grandfather's face and body signal his utter exasperation with the trigger-happy excessiveness of his grandson's action. Zamira's brother's face is paralysed by grief. There is the realisation of the heavy price one pays for listening to the shrill voice of the paranoiac within oneself. The remorse for the murderous enforcing of the Albanian way of life gives way very quickly to the understanding of the 'necessity' of this action. The paranoiac is busy at work here flaunting his terrorising imperatives: better fratricide in the name of the purity of one's ethnic group and family, than the dread of miasma, miscegenation and loss of ethnic identity.

Zamira's brother takes her body, but cannot take the desire that temporarily occupies that body. As the film shows in the following scenes, this desire does migrate in other bodies as soon as one body is gunned down with a spray of bullets. It runs in the family.

---

9 The historical records are not very clear on whether a persecuted sole Albanian Moslem woman would be given a refuge in an exclusively male Macedonian Orthodox Christian monastery (Cornakov 1991).
10 Zekir is played by Abdurahman Shalla.
Anne and Aleksandar

In the second part of the film, there is a phone call from Kiril to Anne, an editor in a photograph agency in London. Kiril asks in French for his uncle Aleksandar Kirkov, a war photographer in the agency and Anne’s lover. Anne answers the phone in her soft, fragile voice, while kneeling down on the floor and writhing with pain caused both by an unexpected pregnancy, and the sickening war images sent to her by her lover. As soon as she manages to say to Kiril that his uncle is not there, the haggard looking Aleksandar enters the agency.

His gait is a mixture of fury, resignation, anger, and hope. He quickly grabs Anne from the agency in order to ask her whether she would join him on his trip to an ethical ‘purgatory’ that Kirkov localises as ‘Macedonia’. He tries to explain to Anne why he urgently needs to undergo through some sort of purification. Documenting the Bosnian war in the early 1990s, Aleksandar finds himself traumatised by his complicity with the Western media’s perverse search for a ‘good’, meaning particularly bloody, Bosnian story at any cost. He complained to a Bosnian Serb soldier that there was nothing to report today. The soldier pulled his pistol out and killed a male Bosnian Moslem prisoner in front of him, saying to Kirkov: ‘Well, here is your story now’. The realisation that he was an accessory to a murder infuses Kirkov with unbearable guilt and self-disgust.

He finds the polite civility of London, where monstrous things happen under polite disguises all the time, unbearable. It is in his construction of Macedonia as a purgatory, where Aleksandar stumbles over his fantasy of Macedonia as a place of decent, peaceful and hard-working men and women unsoiled by the malaise of the Western civilisation, or the ‘irrational’ violence of the other (non-Macedonian) Balkan ‘tribes’. ‘Macedonia’ as a symbol here sets off a particular desiring machine within Aleksandar which is plugged into a network of heterogeneous signifying chains (Deleuze & Guattari 1983), which stretch from his uncritical reading of ancient Macedonian history, and glamourising the backbreaking harshness and banality of the ‘scraps, rags and patches’ of Macedonian daily life (Bhabha 1993: 297), to his smoothing over the inherent ethnic, class, gender and other social antagonisms in contemporary Macedonia. Aleksandar’s desire for return to an (impossible) state of purity, or ethical integrity, is predicated upon the existence and the productive force of the fantasy he manages to conjure up about Macedonia.

Anne for a moment is tempted by the seductive power of this desire of Aleksandar’s. Her voice and speech signals she would love to escape the territorialisations of her Englishness, middle-classness, conjugal femininity and career ambitions (Deleuze & Guattari 1983). However, Anne rejects this offer of creating a new life out of flying bits and pieces from their respective personal biographies and social milieux. She proves to be a fatalistic, and a depressing, realist.

Aleksandar gives Anne a one-way air ticket to Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, just in case she changes her mind. Anne says she needs to take care of urgent business in London, without telling Aleksandar that she is actually pregnant. Manchevski does not conclusively tell us whether the father is Aleksandar or Anne’s estranged English husband, Nick. Anne arranges to see Nick in a posh London restaurant in order to tell him about her pregnancy. One gets a sense here that Anne wants to see Nick’s reaction to the news of her pregnancy before she decides whether she wants to keep the baby. There is a very awkward attempt

11 Anne is played by Katrin Cartlidge.
12 Aleksandar is played by Rade Sherbedzija.
13 Nick is played by Jay Villiers.
"ANTES DE LA LLUVIA" ES UN MILAGRO, UN RELATO MÁGICO DE SOBRECOGEDORA BELLEZA.
La perturbadora magia del film es consecuencia de su osada estructura y de su sorprendente y apasionante final. - Todd Mc Carly / VARIETY

**Antes de la Lluvia**
(BEFORE THE RAIN)

Un film de Milcho Manchevski
at rapprochement between Anne and Nick, particularly on Anne’s side. While Anne and Nick are trying to re-establish some sense of normal communication, there is a loud altercation between a waiter and a customer, who argue in Serbo-Croatian.

The posh restaurant, supposedly removed from the violence of the world, a place where little nice, plain chats occur, suddenly becomes a stage for a brutal explosion of paranoid miscommunication on many levels. The Serbian customer with his long unkempt beard, cocky gait, vulgar speech and gauche suit demands ‘respect’ for his ‘equal’ status not only from the ‘lowly’ waiter, but also from the restaurant’s upper-middle-class guests. The paranoid feeling that he is looked down on, although in reality no one pays attention to him, pushes this gauche customer into making a huge scene, thus demanding everyone’s attention. He showers the waiter with hundreds of large denomination pound notes signalling to everyone that he is so rich he can buy every one of them. The waiter politely asks this customer to leave the restaurant, which the customer refuses.

The stiff English restaurant owner attempts to get rid of the nuisance, by sacking the waiter, who bears no responsibility for the scene at all, and by suggesting with contempt that the ‘two of them’ should continue their ‘Balkan’ fights outside the restaurant. This only further infuriates the raucous customer. The gauche attention-seeker leaves for a moment, just to return with a handgun in his hands. In a fit of rage he starts shooting indiscriminately around the restaurant. Many of the guests and staff are killed or maimed. There is shooting, panic and screaming. In the chaos of the moment, the camera finally focuses on Anne and Nick huddled together under their table. Anne lifts Nick’s head to find a bloody stream coming out of one of Nick’s gouged eyes. His handsome face is completely disfigured in the same way as her hope for a return to a ‘normal’ English middle-class life is shattered.
The Narcissistic Wounds of the Democratic Paranoiac

In the microcosm of this stylish London restaurant, Manchevski metaphorically condenses the paranoid misperceptions between the affluent, civilised, and democratic West and its ‘nemesis’, the Balkans, and the narcissistic wounds they keep inflicting on each other. Manchevski subtly mocks the Western liberal for his/her narcissistic construction of ethnic or racial violence as a remnant of some primitive and distant past untouched by the civilising mission of the project of liberal democracy, modernity, and rationality. When the owner apologises to the guests for the scene, before the armed paranoid customer returns, Nick cheerfully dismisses the incident by saying that ‘these things’, as far as the British are concerned, happen only in Ulster. The owner, ironically, is incensed by this comment and replies that he is from Northern Ireland too. Nick immediately understands the stupidity and offensiveness of his comment. For Manchevski, ‘the Balkans’ is not the Western European past. It is rather the European present in its Northern Irish otherness.

The uncivilised, violent Other is a limit inherent to Western democracy (Zizek 1993: 200). It as an Other produced and generated by it. There is

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14 Zizek here notes: ‘The more the logic of Capital becomes universal, the more its opposite will assume features of “irrational fundamentalism” … the Western gaze upon the East encounters its own uncanny reverse usually qualified (and by the same token disqualified) as “fundamentalism”: the end of cosmopolitanism, liberal democracy’s impotence in the face of this return to tribalism … The traditional liberal opposition between “open” pluralist societies and “closed” nationalist-corporatist societies founded on the exclusion of the Other has thus to be brought to its point of self-reference: the liberal gaze itself functions to the same logic, insofar as it is founded upon the exclusion of the Other to whom one attributes the fundamentalist nationalism, etc’ (Zizek 1993: 220–222).
a paradox at the heart of Western democracy, when it is constructed as expressing someone’s ‘superior’ composite (national, ethnic or regional) political being. The belief that all people are created equal is fundamental to a democratically organised society. When one person expresses contempt for another person because of the latter’s ethnic, class, religious, gender, sexual or any other identity, the latter is ‘more likely to experience shame than self-contempt insofar as the democratic ideal has been internalised’ by the shamed person (Tomkins 1995: 139). Shame is an intensely toxic affect that the latter will try to minimise according to any strategy of negative affect minimisation at her disposal (Tomkins 1995: 67).

He/she will either try to recast the person who shamed him/her into a shameful position, or seek some sort of reparation or retribution from the person who inflicted the shame damage on him/her. Both strategies contain the possibility of resorting to anger, as an emotional response to being shamed. Anger is the most antisocial, most toxic, most contagious and least controllable affect (Tomkins 1995: 197–201). Anger, whether it underpins a recasting or reparative strategy of negative affect minimisation, almost invariably involves some form of violence. Sometimes this violence is directed towards the person or situation that triggered the shame–anger response, but many times it escalates into an indiscriminate aggression towards everything around the angry person. The name for this aggression is rage.

The stylish London restaurant in Manchevski’s film lends itself to being read as a metaphor for the exclusive club of affluent Western (European) democracies. A motley crew of ratbag Eastern European democracies,

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15 ‘Of all the negative affects it is the least likely to remain under the skin of the one who feels it’ (Tomkins 1995: 198).
as represented by the gauche attention-seeker, are desperately vying for membership of this club. The membership rules and entry into the club are arbitrarily and capriciously policed by a stodgy and arrogant political bureaucracy of the ‘old Europe’, which is represented in the film as the stiff English owner of the restaurant. The pleading and servile new Eastern European governments in the film are represented in the character of the spineless Serbo-Croatian speaking waiter. The gauche-attention seeker metaphorically condenses both Western prejudices about Eastern Europe and the Eastern European internalisation of the democratic ideal of the West. He enters the restaurant demanding that he is afforded the respect of an equal, however he is shown to the door mainly because of his apparent lack of cultural and social capital (Bourdieu 1984). Manchevski clearly alludes to the possible political and social dangers of such a Western European approach towards postcommunist Eastern Europe, and particularly towards his native Macedonia.

Homecoming

From the carnage in the restaurant, Manchevski immediately transports us into Aleksandar’s Macedonia screened through the lenses of his fantasy about his homeland, mentioned earlier. There is a two-and-a-half minute homecoming sequence that signifies Aleksandar’s long overdue and anxiously anticipated trip from London to his native village. This sequence also marks the beginning of the third story of the film. Manchevski, an award winning director of music video clips for MTV (Andonovski 1995), treats us to beautifully edited succession of smooth aerial shots of rugged Macedonian landscapes that immediately segue into aerial and ground shots of Aleksandar’s gazing at objects and residents of the Macedonian capital from his bus. Everything in this sequence has been edited in a way to reinforce the fantasy Kirkov has about Macedonia as a harmonious society, as a refuge from the metastases of Western Life, as a peace oasis untouched by interethnic wars, as a home where simple, decent, hard-working, honest and innocent people live. There is a certain warm glow to the light that illuminates everything that appears on the screen, while the film music tickles the viewer with a whiff of joy. The camera beautifully descends from a ‘Skopje from air’ plan to a ‘Skopje from a UN tank’ plan.

Almost every shot in this sequence prominently features a woman going about her daily business. There is a quick procession of peasant women doing their backbreaking labour, elegant middle-aged urban women busily walking the streets of Skopje with their shopping bags, funky young women arguing with their not so funky boyfriends. They all walk on the ground of the land called Macedonia, thus metonymically signifying Macedonia as a home where women do most of the emotional and other work in order to create a refuge for their men—husbands, sons, brothers, fathers, partners—from the harsh demands of the male-dominated public sphere. One gets a sense that Aleksandar’s perception of Macedonia as a (feminine) oasis in an ocean of alpha-male dogs is plugged deeply into the traditional Macedonian imaginary as I described it earlier. The juxtaposition of these female images with other potent Macedonian images and sounds in this sequence only further confirm Aleksandar’s fantasy about Macedonia as an ideal, harmonious, immaterial, and ancient order that shines with divine beauty. There is an abstract and deeply potentialising quality of the images and sounds deployed here (Massumi 2002). Behind the triviality and banality of the scraps and patches of Macedonian daily life that Aleksandar encounters on his trip from Skopje Airport to his native village there is a Thing that has the potential to turn these objects, people and practices into sublime objects of desire. Suddenly, a virtual Macedonia springs from the wells of desire that transcends everything: small or great empires, communist or democratic republics, thugs killing and pillaging in the name of their ethnic groups, and UN soldiers observing a volatile people.

This Thing is not a substitute for anything anterior and should not be confused with Aleksandar’s empirical objects of desire (Lacan 1992: 52). The Thing does not form part of the desired object, but constitutes,
causes, the desire for that object (Grigg 1991: 34). The constant metonymic evasions through which Macedonia slips from one object/practice to another in the film just demonstrates Aleksandar's inability as a Macedonian to pin his desire for Macedonia to any particular thing. Macedonia here appears, to put it in Derridean terms, both as a spirit and a spectre (Montag 1999). It is a spirit, since Macedonia is extra-filmically embodied in multiple material objects, practices and bodies. The spirit pierces these objects, practices and bodies with an identity that escapes definition. Manchevski reproduces this spirit as an apparition, a spectre, a recording of a longing without a name.

The Macedonian Sonic Imaginary

The music of the ethno-rock band Anastasia brings the elusive quality of the Macedonian Thing to the forefront where symbolisation fails, and one finds oneself immersed in an unbearable joy/pain. Their music is interwoven with all of the features of the Macedonian way of life shown in the film, illuminating what is present in them, what appears through them, what is more than just rituals, objects, landscapes, and so on. Anastasia cultivates a particular music style that belongs to the tradition of the second wave of Macedonian ethno-rock, which in the 1980s moved away from the forms of classic electro-rock in order to develop a new, hardly rock, music form based on Eastern Orthodox Church singing (Lambevski 1992: 55). Ideologically they belong to a group of music and art bands loosely connected in a Macedonian retro movement interested in reconstructing the spiritual and intellectual heritage of Macedonia (Lambevski 1997: 139–170). As such, Anastasia draws from highly coded music representations that have already proven their capacity to produce certain effects in its listeners.16

By using traditional Macedonian folk and sacral music forms Anastasia is able to immediately evoke a familiar sonic imaginary, a landscape of sounds, expressing emotions and images with which Macedonians identify. Most Macedonian traditional folk songs and dances were created by Macedonian peasants during the Ottoman rule of Macedonia. These songs and dances served as a particularly useful creative outlet for dealing with the extremely harsh conditions under which they found themselves in Ottoman Turkey (Lambevski 1997: 15–19). In song and dance, Macedonian peasants were able to symbolise their tragedy caused by their tyrannical rulers, to vent out an enormous range of negative affects (anger, powerlessness, envy, frustration, sadness, deep depression, rage, hopelessness, fear, worry) in the face of this tragedy, and to imagine sweet revenges against their rulers.

In other words, Macedonian peasants were able to emotionally cathect the songs and dances they were collectively creating with affects that were produced in relation to the peasants’ social/material reality in premodern Macedonia. While the modern Macedonian nation-state wove and still weaves a Macedonian nation out of these scraps and patches of folklore (Lambevski 1997), the affective cathexis that contemporary Macedonians develop in relation to these songs and dances is quite different to that of their premodern ancestors. Feelings are very ‘much linked to people’s material and psychosocial conditions of existence throughout their embodied experience’ (Collins, quoted in Williams 1998: 62). The feelings

16 The music codes refer both to the coding of music styles and performances, as well as to the meanings/effects produced in the listener when listening to these styles and coded performances. In the case of Anastasia’s music, we can speak about the use of different performing styles (solo, a group of three voices, or a group of two voices that sing in parallel terzas, etc.) that Macedonians were taught to recognise as their own styles (Ristovski et al. 1974: 19, 25–26), through the ideological apparatuses of the Macedonian state (the family, the Orthodox church, the educational system, and the media) We can speak about the 7/8 and 13/16 rhythms of the Macedonian ora (folk dances). On this level we can also speak about the ambitus (the use of intervals) in Macedonian folk melodies in which the big and small sixth and pure fifth prevail (although many Macedonian melodies use ninth, tenth and eleventh), or the structure of the tonal series in its melodies.
that contemporary Macedonians invest in traditional Macedonian folk songs and dances have a very different material and psychosocial basis to that of premodern Macedonians (Lambevski 1997). The socio-economic and political reality of contemporary Macedonia is very different to that of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Macedonia. However, the reproduction/remake of these traditional folk songs and dances constitutes a convenient vehicle through which a direct link between the Macedonian past and present can be imagined, thus establishing a connection between the affective landscape of contemporary Macedonians and that of their premodern ancestors.

The Music of the Macedonian Depressive

Macedonian peasants developed a particularly bleak outlook on life, prominently placing the theme of death and dying as a final refuge from the enormous pain in their lives in most of their songs and dances. In this way they codified a particular representation of Macedonicity as a journey through poverty, misery, injustice in the face of arbitrary power, disease, rape, heavy taxes, constant warfare, loveless marriages and backbreaking manual labour. Macedonian peasants cultivated a set of images of the Macedonian as a tragically heroic depressive. This set of images constitutes, after the paranoiac and the schizzo (revolutionary), the third register of the Macedonian imaginary. This depressive was
on a journey that needed to be hurried, since life was joyless and meaningless, so she could meet her final refuge—death. What gives particular power to these images and narratives of death are the music rhythms and tones with which they are reproduced.

The extremely fast paced (7/8 and 13/16) rhythms of Macedonian folk dances (ora) and songs are nothing but affective signs of this rush towards the final destination. Thus, Macedonian folk music abounds with representatives of (manic) depression that constantly vacillates between hyper-liveliness and a depressive monotone. Many Macedonian folk dances and songs are rhythmically organised in a tripartite movement: slow fast slow. Here, the music theme develops slowly with a grieving singing voice that cries over a Macedonian boy's or girl's tragedy until it is suddenly broken in the middle into an unbelievably fast theme full of life and determination to break from the self-pity, and returns in the end to a much slower journey towards silence. Anastasia brilliantly taps into this triple-themed song of traditional Macedonian folk music in their soundtrack for Before the Rain, thus immediately transporting the Macedonian listener to the sound landscape that I described earlier.

Most of Anastasia’s scores for the film follow this formula. The main music theme or phrase slowly develops through a repetitive slow playing of the theme by a guitar accompanied by a tapan (a type of drum). The lyrical guitar is juxtaposed to the dramatic epic beat of the drum, and the voice of the singer (Goran Trajkovski). Together they produce an unusual sonic effect of rounded sharpness, or of unsettling warmness. The intermediary part is usually purely instrumental and rhythmically represents a typical Macedonian oro (dance).

The encounter between the Macedonian language and the voice of Anastasia’s lead singer (Goran Trajkovski) is marked here by a displacement from the symbolic-imaginary field (signification) to the field of the real where signification fails (Barthes 1977: 181). This displacement is a signifier of jouissance, which Barthes names the grain of the voice (Barthes 1977: 181). This signifier is in a position of ‘dual production—of language and music’ (Barthes 1977: 181). There is something particularly unsettling about the voice of Anastasia’s lead singer. His voice penetrates every word of the song, impregnating every word with jouissance. There is something here that goes beyond any meaning that could be conveyed by the words of the song he sings, the style of the song and the way he sings it. There is something about the materiality of the cantor’s body that disturbs. There is a vibration that penetrates the body and that seems to come from ‘deep down in the cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilages, and from deep down in the Slavonic [Macedonian] language, as though a single skin lined the inner flesh of the performer and the music he sings’ (Barthes 1977: 182). There is nothing personal or original about the cantor’s voice, since all lead singers in the second wave of Macedonian ethno-rock have very similar voices. However, this particular voice touches in a particularly intense way. This voice has a separate body that refuses to make itself intelligible or expressive. What one stumbles across here is the grain of the voice, ‘the materiality of the body [singing] its mother tongue, perhaps the letter, almost certainly signifiance’ (Barthes 1977: 182).

But jouissance/signifiance cannot be reduced to the voice only. There is something also in the way the players play their instruments, in the materiality of the instruments they play, in the way they manage to develop the transition from slow to fast, from unsettling pain to unbearable enjoyment. In the fast movement of this particular track, Anastasia speeds up the melody into a crescendo where it has to explode in a ‘shhhh’ sound because the stimuli of the unbelievably fast oro are unbearable. It is a flash of the Thing where meaning dissolves into a pathetic sound that signifies nothing and everything at the same time.
Hana and Aleksandar in the Tragic House of Macedonian Desire

A ‘shhh’ sound is delivered at the moment when Kirkov finally gets to his old family house in his native village. His fantasy about Macedonia as a pure, peaceful oasis wrapped in unconditional feminine love is cracking on all sides. Not only he has to fight his armed Macedonian teenage cousin, who obviously does not remember him, to get access to his village, but he also finds his whole village on the verge of a nervous breakdown. As he walks the dusty streets of the village with the machine-gun he seizes from his teenage cousin, an elderly Macedonian mother figure refuses to return his greeting, staring at him with contempt and fear.

The way Aleksandar’s family house is filmically and diegetically framed touches on some fundamental impasses in Aleksandar’s desire for redemption that is fuelled by his fantasy about Macedonia. While his house looks like a typical rural Macedonian house from the end of the nineteenth century, its cracks serve a metaphoric reminder of the cracking of his fantasy about Macedonia. He comes to the realisation that his native village and country are as sickeningly banal and perversely crazy as the malaised London he just left. Sleazy slobs of Macedonian men cheat on their wives, who are cloistered in the claustrophobic world of domestic, sexual and emotional servitude. The speech of these men is filled with paranoid fantasies about final solutions to the problems of ‘dirt’ and ‘thievery’ that the men of the other ethnic group pose, while at the same time they could hardly stop salivating while imagining forbidden pleasures they can have with the women from the other ethnic group.

Against this background of intense hatred and intolerance between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians in the village, Aleksandar attempts to recreate the lost ‘innocence’ of the village by visiting the family home of his beloved Hana, an Albanian woman whom he has not stopped loving since his school days in the village. Hana is the mother of Zamira. Hana’s house is guarded by the same armed Albanian militia men we see in the first part of the film. They reluctantly let Aleksandar in after he mentions that he is bringing gifts for Zekir, Hana’s father and Zamira’s grandfather. Aleksandar is welcomed by the affable Albanian elder, who is certainly aware of the emotions his daughter and Aleksandar have for each other. Zekir shares Aleksandar’s disbelief at how bad the relations between the two communities in the village are. Hana, who patiently waits behind the curtained door leading to the guest room, is finally allowed by her father to serve coffee and sweets to Aleksandar. After catching a glimpse of Hana’s prohibited love for him, Aleksandar’s body signals that he is now ready to drift away into deadly melancholy, since his return to his village did not materialise his hopes for redemption.

However, a possibility for redemption comes knocking on his door in the most dramatic way. In a particularly intense scene, Hana, who is not supposed to talk to and be seen by any other men without the permission of her father, visits the half-naked Kirkov in his house on her own. Having covered her body in accordance with Albanian custom, she is reduced to her sublimely beautiful face, filled with pleading sadness, and to her piercing gaze signifying so many things. With the resigned dignity of a woman

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17 Hana is played by Silvija Stojanovska.
who has nothing but her maternal duty, she asks him to save her daughter from the wrath of the Macedonian male villagers who accuse her with a seduction and then murder of one of them. Against the background of Anastasia’s music that hauntingly captures the tragic nature of the impossible and prohibited love between Hana and Kirkov, she appeals to him in a hushed voice saying: ‘Do it as if she was yours’. He unflinchingly rises for the opportunity not only to redeem himself for what he has done in Bosnia, but to commit an act of sublime love for Hana (New Formations 1994). Both understand that this is a life-and-death issue for everyone involved in this tragedy.

Aleksandar refuses to accept the authority of the armed Macedonian male villagers as enforcers of the paranoid unwritten laws governing the village, who tell him to stay away from this since ‘he is not from here’. He finds Zamira being held hostage in a shepherd’s hut full of snoozing armed Macedonians. He pulls Zamira out of the hut and protects her with his own body. They both are within the angry Macedonians’ machine-gun range. Aleksandar signals to Zamira to run away. Zamira finally runs and Aleksandar is sprayed with bullets by one of his own cousins.

While Kirkov is lying dead on the scorched Macedonian soil, being mourned by the cousin who kills him, Anastasia’s music floods the Macedonian viewer with a tidal wave of emotions, images and associations. At this point, the viewer hears a deeply unsettling female voice (that of Vanja Lazarova-Dimitrovska), vibrating with unspeakable grief. She sings a funeral song dedicated to the heroic death of a Macedonian fighter against the Ottoman Turks, thus already diachronically weaving the pro-filmic image of Aleksandar’s death into the fabric of the already mentioned extra-filmic Macedonian imaginary of the (manic) depressive.

While the Macedonian male villager recoils in horror from the murder he has just committed against his own cousin, the female voice brings the final pulsations of depression both in the lyrics she sings and in the maternal grieving sonority of her voice. The finality of death is punctuated by the marching solemnity of the drum, briefly allowing the maternal voice to catch her breath between strophes in the song. As the camera catches the imprints of bewilderment on Kirkov’s murderer’s face caused by his obedience to the paranoid and mercilessly violent imperatives of the law of the Macedonian nation, in whose name he kills his own cousin, the maternal voice drives the final nail in the coffin about the futility of Macedonian life: ‘With pain I was born and with sadness I’ll die …’ (Anastasia 1994). We see a repeat of the opening scene, now with Zamira running near where the two monks gaze at the lonely church and the emerald lake. A heavy summer rain starts pouring.

As the scene is brought to full closure, I am swept by an emotional tidal wave. Cries and shakes of unbearably painful distress colonise my body. In the semi-deserted theatre hall in Sydney’s Pitt Street I am painfully reminded of the Macedonia I thought I had escaped.
The Paranoiac, the Schizzo and the Depressive: Three Main Modes of Macedonian Subjectivity

The battleground on which the Macedonian/Albanian paranoiac and schizzo face each other, both plugged into their respective registers of the Macedonian imaginary, represents the foundation of the drama depicted in Before the Rain (Manchevski 1994). The Macedonian depressive, a subject deeply immersed in a culture that celebrates death, is a compromise formation in this titanic struggle between the paranoiac and the schizzo. Manchevski offers a powerful analysis of the paranoiac, the schizzo and the depressive as three basic, and deeply intertwined, modes of Macedonian subjectivity. The battlefield where these modes of existence face each other is littered with emotions: crushing humiliation, shame, disgust, disdain, fear, startle, misplaced pride, self-righteous indignation, anxiety, lustful interest, envy, sublime love, raging hatred and resigned melancholy. Manchevski’s filmic representation of the relentless struggle between the paranoid codings, the schizoid escapes of desire, and the depressive compromise formations, of the constant push and pull traction between the molar and molecular social forces, is in itself an exercise of cinematic relentlessness. He forces the viewer to make her choices of reading the film: according to the paranoiac, the schizzo or the depressive in her. While I am certainly cheering for the schizzo and her brave flights of fanciful desire, the film indicates a claustrophobic and lonely shuffling between the paranoiac and the depressive as the only realistic, and very distressing, outcome.

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“Stunning, often hypnotic… Almost has the impact of a masterpiece… Shakes you up… Coming seemingly out of nowhere, it’s a movie that seems somehow fully formed, unshakably confident, the work of a filmmaker alive and inventive in every shot he takes.” (Chicago Tribune)

“Powerful and passionate… Its greatness rests in the timeless truths of its narrative… Some of the most luminous closeups since Ingmar Bergman discovered color… Together, the filmmakers and performers create scenes of such emotional opacity that at times we seem to be reading tiny fluctuations of the soul.” (Dallas Observer)

“Eerily beautiful film… Stunning...Meaningless death can be transformed into meaningful art.” (Richard Schickel, Time Magazine)

“Filled with passion, blood and urgency… Bold, hard-hitting, grandly arched, yet intimate and immediate.” (Boston Globe)

“One of the year’s best films – brilliant directorial debut. Work like this keeps me going. A reminder of the nobility that film can attain.” (Roger Ebert)

“Director Manchevski has made a debut so astonishingly assured in writing and technique he is guaranteed a footnote in movie history even if he never makes another movie. ‘Before the Rain’ is stunning. It is the sort of remarkable debut that reinstalls faith in the movies as genuine art.” (Miami Herald)

“Fierce poetry, but also a sense of authenticity. . . An amazing feature debut. Conveys the passion that cannot be concocted, even in Hollywood.” (MacLean’s)


“Brilliant… An important new director announces his arrival.” (Gene Siskel)

“Macedonian masterpiece” (Los Angeles Reader)

“Master from Macedonia” (Outlook Rave!)

“High calorie visual feast.” (Max Alexander, Variety)

“Visually and narratively stunning...Heartfelt, poetic and violently anti-violent.” (Deborah Young, Variety)

“Rugged, passionate, lyrical, haunting and wildly improbably poetic, ‘Before the Rain’ is one of the most memorable motion pictures we’re likely to see this year.” (Anthony Lane, The New Yorker)

“A remarkable achievement.” (Entertainment Today)

“A gleaming virtuosity and visual panache.” (Michael Wilmington, Chicago Tribune)

“A finely crafted lament on the cyclical nature of violence… Testament to how film can probe ancient themes while remaining thoroughly modern.” (The Toronto Star)

“Stunningly photogenic, often poetic, cinema-savvy.” (Boston Phoenix)

“A rare, heartfelt gem.” (New City, Chicago)

“The editing here is a great lesson in the art of mood-cooking… The last forty minutes or so of this movie are as tight and luminous as anything you’ll see onscreen this year… With its flashes of rapture and its groundswell of good sense, ‘Before the Rain’ is a movie that doesn’t even dream of solving or dissolving the nightmares in the former Yugoslavia - it just shows a few people trying to behave decently and getting nothing for their pains except more pain.” (Anthony Lane, The New Yorker)

Before the Rain bears consideration as one of the most important films of the 1990s. (Ann Kibbey)

“Poignant examination of individual pain and […] a fascinating historical rumination.” (Dallas University News)


“Striking.”(Chicago Reader)

“Impressive film.” (Tacoma’s News Tribune)

“Beautiful craftsmanship… strong performances.” (San Francisco Chronicle)

“A powerful cry from the heart.” (The Boston Sunday Globe)

“Self-assured sweep and coherence of visuals… A poetic statement.” (People Magazine)
“Thought-provoking... suspenseful... rich.” (The Island Ear)

“Stunning and poetic.” (Dallas Morning News)

“Manchevski’s achievement is all the more admirable. He’s made an art film in a hostile climate.” (LA Village View)

“The movie casts a special kind of spell.” (Detroit Free Press)

“Manchevski succeeds on a grand scale with a groundbreaking film of love and war. Cinematographer Manuel Teran brings grave beauty and telling detail to Manchevski’s stirring cry from the heart.” (Peter Travers, Rolling Stone)

“It has the look of a slick Hollywood production, yet makes no effort to soften or simplify its complex issues.” (New York Newsday)

“Perhaps the most impressive aspect of Manchevski’s drama is the masterful way he sustains an air of profound foreboding.” (The Houston Post)

“A guarantee: it will haunt you for days.” (Premiere)

“Remarkable... Extraordinary sense of simultaneity.” (Rick Groen, Globe and Mail)

“Stunning triptych.” (Angela Baldassarre, Globe and Mail)

“Weirdly beautiful ethnic fable.” (San Jose Mercury News)

“This film, made by sophisticated filmmakers for mature audiences is a profound musing on humanity.” (*****) (The Toronto Sun)

“Edgy, unsettling movie that I find extremely hard to shake.” (Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

“A work of art this finely wrought renders conversation redundant.” (Dallas Observer)

“He has made an important and – I suspect, classic statement – a film about images that may properly be mentioned in the same sentence as Chris Marker’s La Jetée and Michelangelo Antonioni’s Blow-Up.” (Ian Christie)

*Essays partial listing:

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Director makes dazzling debut in Rain

By RENE RODRIGUEZ
Herald Movie Critic

At rainclouds loom on the horizon through much of Before the Rain, and by the time they burst open, in deluge, the release carries the weight of soul-shaking catharsis. First-time director Milcho Manchevski has made a debut so astonishingly assured in writing and technique, he is guaranteed a footnote in movie history even if he never makes another film.

The movie is told in three chapters: The first, Words, is set at a 12th-Century monastery where a young, Macedonian monk (Gregoire Colin) who has taken a vow of silence discovers a girl (Labinia Mitevska) hiding in his chamber. The second, Faces, takes place in London, where a photo editor (Katrin Cartlidge) and reconciling with her estranged husband (Jay Villers). The third, Pictures, follows the photographer as he returns to his native village in Macedonia.

Throughout each of the stories, the threat of civil war continually intrudes on the characters’ lives. No one — not the peaceable monks, not the simple peasants, not even the civilized Londoners — is spared the consequences of the struggle raging in the former Yugoslav Republic, where longstanding hatred between Albanians and Macedonians seethes unchecked. “There is no reason to fight here,” the photographer tells a villager upon his return to his childhood home. “They’ll find a reason,” his resigned friend replies. “War is a virus.”

The genius of Before the Rain is in how Manchevski toys with narrative and time. The three stories cover a lot of emotional ground, exploring issues of faith, devotion, love, responsibility and jealousy. The movie is rich with accessible themes.

But Manchevski doesn’t stop there. Much like Quentin Tarantino did in Pulp Fiction, Manchevski plays with the movie’s chronology. Things don’t always take place in the order you think they do. But unlike Pulp Fiction, whose structure was an entertaining trick, the continuum here is used to illustrate the futility and devastation of war as it intrudes on innocent lives.

Manchevski cleverly links his three stories by actions, images, and even sounds (including, of all things, the Beastie Boys!) and ultimately uses the structure to accentuate the sad irony of his tale. The device is much more effective than having the characters simply voice Manchevski’s anti-war message. Movies are about showing, not telling, and Before the Rain exemplifies that credo, growing even more haunting as you piece together its bewitching puzzles after the credits roll.

On a cinematic level, Before the Rain is equally stunning. Manchevski has a superb command of editing, using rapid-fire cuts in one scene to heighten tension and suspense to unbearable levels. He also knows the power of a memorable image: One long conversation takes place in a taxi cab where the city streets are reflected on the car’s windows, providing a large scrolling backdrop to the increasingly intimate talk.

Manchevski, whose best-known previous work is the music video of Tennessee for Arrested Development, already has the eye of an accomplished filmmaker. Before the Rain is the sort of remarkable movie debut that reinstills your faith in the medium’s viability as genuine art.
deutschen Kinos
Mazedonisches Meisterwerk: „Vor dem Regen“

Von REINHARD TSCHAPKE
Wunderbare Landschaften und harde Schüsse, lebende Frauen und ärmlinge Männer, reich an Waffen; ein wütender Western vom Balkan! Milcho Manchevski's Mazedonien, eine Republik von Jugoslawien, wirkt eher wie ein Paradies im Wartezustand. In drei geschickten Miteinander verkümmerten Episoden erzählt der junge Regisseur und Autor von drei Menschen, deren Biographien auf tragische Weise mit Mazedonien verbunden sind: Kiri, der schweigsame junge Mönch, Anne, die Frau zwischen zwei Männern, schließlich Aleksander, der international renommierte Fotoreporter, der nicht findet, was er sucht, weder im Bezug noch in der Liebe.


BEFORE THE RAIN

Written (in Macedonian, Albanian, and English, with English subtitles) and directed by Milcho Manchevski; director of photography, Manuel Teran; edited by Nicolas Gaster; music by Anastasia; production designers, Sharon Lamofsky and David Munns; produced by Judy Counihan, Cedomir Kolar, Sam Taylor; and Cat Villiers; released by Gramercy Pictures. Running time: 116 minutes.

With: Katrin Cartlidge (Anne), Rade Serbedzija (Aleksandar), Gregoire Colin (Kiril), and Labina Mitevska (Zamira).

In a sedate London restaurant, two people meet to discuss their marital troubles. They agree that they need more time, not realizing that there is no time left. In the background, away from the main action, an unexplained argument has begun to brew, as a waiter is taunted by an increasingly wild-eyed stranger. "Sir, I didn't do anything," the waiter insists to his boss. He appears to be right. It doesn't matter.

We will never know what the stranger's grievance was, only that it proved the point of Milcho Manchevski's devastating Before the Rain: that violence escalates organically and mysteriously, in ways that mean there can be no innocent bystanders in an explosive, hair-trigger world. In a film that unfolds unpredictably, with a Mobius-strip structure oddly like that of Pulp Fiction, the one constant becomes an air of foreboding. The birth of a lamb, a pregnant woman in a cemetery, the sight of a small boy toying with a machine gun: any of these things may signal sudden disaster.

"War torn" is the preferred cliché for events occurring near Mr. Manchevski's native Macedonia, but this film takes a more intuitive view of violence than that. "War is a virus," suggests a doctor in the film, providing a suitably unruly model for the uncontrollable peril Mr. Manchevski explores. The rain of the title is the hard rain Bob Dylan described. And the Macedonian hilltop setting where much of the film unfolds is divided by such stubborn bitterness that different parts of the landscape experience different weather.

It's a red-letter occasion when two first-time directors with films as hugely effective as Before the Rain and Lee Tamahori's Once Were Warriors make their New York debuts on the same day. Of the two, Mr. Tamahori has the brute force, while Mr. Manchevski has the poetry. Working in a sophisticated, elliptical style, he joins filmmakers as disparate as Krzysztof Kieslowski (Red) and Atom Egoyan (Exotica) in finding his story's deepest meaning in hauntingly oblique connections. Ideas that defy reason, like the immutability of hatred and violence, may be best approached this way.

Before the Rain, opening today at Lincoln Plaza, begins with and returns to a remote Macedonian monastery, which might seem a safe haven from random bloodshed. It starts off peacefully, with the sight of Kiril (Gregoire Colin), a beatific-looking young priest, working in a vegetable garden. When he returns to his bedroom, he finds a surprise: Zamira (Labina Mitevska), an Albanian girl with oddly close-cropped hair, is hiding there. There would be a language barrier between these two anyway, and there is the added obstacle of Kiril's vow of silence.

As the monks meet for prayers, death makes its entrance: armed Macedonian villagers have arrived, demanding to search the monastery in their hunt for Zamira, who they say is a killer. So edgy that they wind up machine-gunning a cat, these intruders do not see in Kiril the purity that is apparent to the audience. They soon rob him of any refuge he may have known as a young monk, leaving him absolutely adrift when the episode is over. Mr. Manchevski needs no
more terrible image of an uncertain, treacherous world than the sight of Kirill lost at the end of this episode.

This opening section of the film is called "Words." The next story that is told, "Faces," is seemingly separate and may or may not occur next in time. Set in London, it features Katrin Cartlidge (who was so memorable in *Naked*, and is fine again here) as Anne, who works in a photo agency. When first seen, Anne is looking at two bare chests, one Madonna's, the other that of a hollow-eyed, starving man. Before the Rain uses such juxtapositions with chilling authority, to powerfully ironic effect.

Anne has been involved with Aleksandar (Rade Serbedzija), a rakish Pulitzer Prize-winning Macedonian photographer with a weary view of war. "Peace is an exception, not a rule," Alex maintains. Meanwhile, Anne's mother accuses her daughter, who is pregnant, of a different sort of nonchalance. "No problem is so formidable that you can't just walk away from it," her mother says icily. In fact, Before the Rain proves an overwhelming argument for the opposite point of view.

Breaking off with Anne during the London sequence, Alex returns to his family for an episode called "Pictures." (Mr. Serbedzija, a forlornly magical presence, seems much more at ease during the film's non-English-speaking segments.) Not having visited the place in sixteen years, he finds his home half-destroyed and armed friends and relatives, who are Macedonian Christians, patrolling the tiny village. Nearby, at a neighboring settlement, Albanian Moslems are doing likewise.

Alex's former sweetheart, who could be Anne in a different life, lives in the Moslem village and barely dares speak to him. That is not Alex's only reason for sensing how absurd and dangerous these divisions have become. Casually, he takes a weapon away from a half-naked boy and finds that the child's uncle looks angry, it's not clear whether the uncle thinks the boy was endangered or is simply irritated to see him lose his gun.

Mr. Manchevski's taste for ambiguity sometimes leads him to act out bluntly paradoxical, so that it does not unravel quite the satisfying completeness that *Pulp Fiction* did; after this film circles back to its denouement, a minor narrative thread involving photographs of Kirill and Zamira is left deliberately unexplained. Neither the presence of such loose ends nor the film's slight straining of its rain metaphor diminishes the final impact of an overwhelming vision.

Transfixed in horror, Before the Rain watches the promise of victory seep into every last aspect of its narrative. Mr. Manchevski tells his story elegantly and leaves his audience with a warning too strong to be ignored.

—J.M., February 24, 1995
Tre racconti, un solo grande odio

“Before the Rain” primo film (in concorso) del macedone Manicheski

Incontro con Kaif Nadjati, interprete del film di Manicheski

“La Macedonia e la Bosnia non sono così lontane da noi”
Before the Rain ★ ★ ★ ★
NO MPAA RATING, 114 m., 1995

Rade Serbedzija (Aleksandar), Katrin Cartlidge (Anna), Gregoire Colin (Kiril), Labina Mitevska (Zamira). Directed by Milcho Manchevski and produced by Judy Courishan, Cedomir Kolar, Sam Taylor, and Cat Villiers. Screenplay by Manchevski.

If you are the average consumer of news in North America, you have been hearing about the Bosnians, the Serbians, and the Croats for years now, and you are not sure quite where they all are, or why they are fighting, or which are the people and which are the places. They are basically all a lot of people with mustaches who hate each other, and the UN can’t do anything about it.

It’s not entirely your fault. The news reports concentrate on today’s violent developments; we get stories we can’t understand unless we already know so much that we don’t need them to begin with. Yet if I were to tell you that Before the Rain provides a context for those stories, you would still probably be indifferent, because it’s simply not your war.

There is another reason to see Before the Rain. This is one of 1995’s best films, a brilliant directorial debut for a young man named Milcho Manchevski, born in Macedonia, educated at Southern Illinois University, now a New Yorker who made award-winning MTV videos before returning home to make this extraordinary film. Work like this is what keeps us going, month after month and film after film: After the junk, this is a reminder of the nobility that film can attain.

The movie is made in three parts, two in Macedonia, one in London. The story circles back on itself, something like Pulp Fiction, and there is a paradoxe, a character who seems to be dead at a time he is still alive. Manchevski was not influenced by Tarantino; they were making their films simultaneously, and in Before the Rain the circular structure has a deeper purpose: It shows that the cycle of hate and bloodshed will go on year after year, generation after generation, unless somehow men find the will to break with it.

The London sequence is the most chilling for North American armchair news viewers who think Bosnia is not their concern. I cannot describe it without giving away its shattering surprise. It involves a photographer named Aleksandar (Rade Serbedzija), born in Macedonia but now a citizen of the world, who leaves the war in Bosnia in disgust and returns to London, where a married British woman, Anne (Katrin Cartlidge), has long been his lover. We think this segment will deal with their story, and so it does, but in an unexpected way which shows that no war is really very far away, and no man is an island.

The first and third parts of the film take place in Macedonia, which, like Bosnia and Serbia, was part of Yugoslavia. The fighting has not reached there, but there is great tension between Muslims and Orthodox Christians, and the atmosphere, Manchevski feels, is heavy with anticipation and foreboding, as before a heavy rain. In the first part, an Albanian Muslim girl is suspected of having killed a Christian, and takes refuge in the cell of a bloodless youth who, as a monk, has taken a vow of silence. In the third segment, Aleksandar returns to his homeland to see the Muslim woman he once loved, and almost has his throat slit by his grandson.

Manchevski tells his story in a clear, ironic, elliptic style: This is like an art film about war, in which passions replace ideas. The character of Aleksandar is the most compelling one in the film; played by Serbedzija, the best-known movie star in Yugoslavia, he has a worldly, weary attractiveness, something like Bruno Ganz in Wings of Desire. The first and second parts of the film, while working on their own, also function as a setup for the extraordinary payoff, in which he goes home to find that home as he recalls it no longer exists, that childhood playmates are now bitter enemies, rehashing the details of crimes so old they are merely hearsay.

Aleksandar’s return is fueled by guilt. “I killed—my camera killed—a man,” he explains. While shooting in a war zone, “I complained I wasn’t getting anything exciting, so a guard pulled his gun and shot his prisoner for me.” He finally decides to remove himself from this circle of hatred, and Manchevski has said in interviews that the seeming “time paradoxes” in his film—the moments when things happen that shouldn’t be able to happen—are his way of showing that we are perhaps not trapped by time, that sometimes there is an opening, an escape.

The construction of Manchevski’s story is intended, then, to demonstrate the futility of its ancient hatreds. There are two or three moments in the film—I will not reveal them—where hatred of others is greater than love of one’s own. Imagine a culture where a man would rather kill his daughter than allow her to love a man from another culture, and you will have an idea of the depth of bitterness in this film, the insane lengths to which men can be driven by belief and prejudice.
It isn’t often that you can go up to friends and say, “Hey, guess what, I just saw this cool Macedonian movie!” Here’s your chance. “Before the Rain,” which is written and directed by Milcho Manchevski, has picked up an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Picture; there are plenty of slicker works gunning for Oscars, but none more impassioned or wiser to the perils of passion. It also happens to be instructive, although, since it deals with the niceties of Balkan politics, you should be warned that “instructive” means “likely to leave you twice as confused as you were when you entered the theatre.”

The plot is divided into three parts, which makes it notably more coherent than Macedonia itself—the only patch of the former Yugoslavia, incidentally, where American ground troops are serving with the United Nations peacekeeping force. If they have any idea what’s going on, good for them.

When the action begins, it doesn’t feel like action at all. We find Kiril (Gregoire Colin), a young Orthodox monk, happily tending his tomatoes in the middle of nowhere. The landscape around him could be the background of a Giotto—cool blue heavens, mammoth gray rocks that seem to fold and pile on top of one another instead of jutting out. Manchevski lingers over all this beauty just long enough to make us dream of timelessness, of a country adrift from history, and then snaps his fingers and cuts the idyll dead. Time starts up: a bunch of small boys torture a tortoise and cry “Go, Ninja Turtle!” In Kiril’s monastery, the monks’ chanting rises like smoke in the dome, as it has always done, but the frescoes around them are lurid with plague and torment, and the camera soon catches a pair of boots on the threshold of the church, announcing the arrival of armed thugs. Although it’s easy
The New Yorker, March 13, 1995

Mitevska, a member of the Albanian minority, and the thugs are looking for her. She killed one of their relatives—with a pitchfork, it turns out. One shudders to think what he was trying to do to her. From this one infectious act—which, like the offstage wailing of a Greek tragedy, we never see—the entire story roots and spreads. When the monk discovers Kiri and Zamira together, the two are sent out into the world to make their own way. But they don’t get far; Zamira falls into the bosom of her family, and the welcome there is even more virulent than it is elsewhere.

This first section closes with the sound of a storm, which melts into the hiss of a shower, under which a young woman is raising tears—the start of Part Two. This is typical of Manchevski: he doesn’t just make connections but floods you from one narrative to the next, spooling together lines and images that have only the faintest kinship. We are now in London, dropped without warning into the life and loves of Anne (Karin Cartledge), who appears at first to have nothing to do with Kiri and Zamira. Slowly, the details sharpen: Anne has fallen for Kiri’s uncle, a bear-shaped photographer named Aleksandar (Rade Serbedzija), and he asks her to accompany him to glorious Macedonia—not so much a vacation, more a way of life. Somehow, she manages to turn this delightful offer, choosing instead to go out to dinner with her estranged and winship husband. They settle down to a cozy argument, but gradually realize that their fracas is just a warmup act. The main attraction is a bearded customer who shouts at a waiter, leaves the room, and then returns to drive home his point with a pistol. The editing here is a great lesson in the art of mood-cooking: Manchevski increases the pace of his cutaway shots until the surrounding anxiety starts to simmer, and you find yourself narrowing your eyes and preparing for the flash point. Oddly, really, because you don’t actually believe it for a second. After all, where is this place?


This middle section of “Before the Rain” is by far the weakest; the dialogue stiffens up, and for a while you can smell the self-importance rising from the movie. And I think we’ve had enough of photographer heroes, with their automatic guilt trip about detachment versus responsibility. Manchevski doesn’t need to lay his moral worries before us for our inspection; most of his film is so skilled that we can glimpse them out of the corner of our eye. Fortunately, Serbedzija is far too strong and confident an actor to let a few hunched lines get in his way, he turns Aleksandar into something richer than a case study in professional tension. The man’s cars seem bound up with his lusts; as he drives himself toward danger, he starts to look like a one-man state—armed in history, starchy with appetite, masing Anne in the back of a London taxi. The sheer bulk of him takes over the movie; it comes as no surprise when, at the start of the final section, he flies back to Macedonia, bringing the plot home.

The last forty minutes or so of this movie are as tight and luminous as anything you’ll see onscreen this year. Details double back on themselves, tying knots that you can’t quite unpick. When a sour, Charkovian veterinarian delivers a lamb and tries to wash off the blood and afterbirth, muttering, “Will these hands ne’er be clean?” you can’t help recalling a casual exchange from the second part of the movie: Anne is discussing the trials of the heart with her mother, who says, “Then conscience doth make cowards of us all.”

The film is crammed with people not understanding one another, or not wanting to, and this flicker of a shared culture, scraps of Shakespeare tossed up on either side of a continent, gives you a sudden, ridiculous stab of civilized hope. Other conjunctions are harder to spot; for instance, the climax of “Before the Rain” seems to take place after the opening scenes, but I’m still not sure. Manchevski isn’t fooling around with chronology merely for effect; he’s not trying to be difficult, although he is suggesting that the experience of people such as Zamira and Aleksandar is itself so emotionally difficult that they can barely make sense of it. A brother shoots a sister in the back; a local half-wit, leaning against a smile, is hauled a gun and told to join a march; a village divides down the middle, Orthodox Macedonian against Albanian Muslim. That sounds too heavy for an evening at the pictures, I know, but Manchevski takes the situation and distills its dramatic spirit until he arrives at a pure, almost lightweight image: Aleksandar, with a plastic bag of presents from the West, crossing enemy lines to see a former sweetheart. He is stopped by guardsmen on the path to her house; around him, little boys grin at the promise of public violence; eventually, he is allowed past. While her father accepts the gift of a Zippo, her son, less courteously, offers to slit the visitor’s throat.

The Quick and the Dead” starts... Sharon Stone as a mysterious gun-slinger who rides into the town of Redemption and squares off against a local bully named Herod. All of which should make it clear that here is a deeply unserious picture, whose croupin concern is to show us what Sharon Stone looks like in leather pants. She looks just fine, but the attempt to clothe her in Clint Eastwood restraint is a lousy fit. Given that Stone also co-produced the picture, it’s amusing to see how often she dawdled.
The hard Rain

A film rich with a richly deserved Oscar nomination, Before The Rain emerges today as a passionate, poetic, visionary tale about nationalism and war.

As with most of the film's scenes, the war is visible, with scenes of the war in the former Yugoslavia. The war is seen as a byproduct of nationalism, which is seen as the main cause of the conflict. The film is about the struggle to maintain identity in a world of constant change.

Bruce Kirkland: P. 71

Errol Nazareth interviews Chuck D: P. 70

Claire Bickley on Bart
The Brat Simpson: P. 74

Errol Nazareth interviews Chuck D: P. 70

Claire Bickley on Bart
The Brat Simpson: P. 74
Political exile – the sense of belonging and not belonging – has inspired great film-makers from Andrei Tarkovsky to Milos Forman. Now Milcho Manchevski has joined the out crowd.

Distant voices

Andrew Pulver

As exile immigrant community film-makers like Ang Lee (Brokeback Mountain Woman, The Wedding Banquet) and Wayne Wang (The Joy Luck Club) come up with their vision of global ethnic melting pots, spare a thought for Milcho Manchevski. Born in Macedonia and now residing in New York, his film Before the Rain (reviewed on page 27) attempts to disentangle the web of beating egos in the heart of his homeland. Although the fate of Manchevski’s film is revered from the war zone, it offers an invaluable insight into the complexities of the region.

Before its Balkan origins, Before the Rain is a weird hybrid: divided into three parts, it bookends a hard London set episode with two finely shot perspectives on the same tale of teenage inter-sectional love (Macedonian Christian and Albanian Muslim).

“I see myself culturally schizophrenic,” explains Manchevski. “But it was my experience of homecoming, after studying and working in America, that gave the movie its form. There was a great tension, on all sides, that something positive was about to happen.”

With rare casting of Rade Serbedzija playing the film’s dominant figure (a returning exiled photographer), the Serbian-born, ex-Croatian resident actor’s wise experience reinforces the mood of dislocation.

Similarly, Kusturica’s The Underground (currently being re-cut despite being awarded the Palme d’Or at the recent Cannes Film Festival) is an attempt to encapsulate an imitable historical situation. Hailing from Sarajevo, Kusturica has, like Manchevski, gone abroad in search of stability.

Significantly, the double Palme d’Or winner Kusturica’s work has changed markedly since the onset of the Bosnian war. The conflicted, according to Kusturica’s burning desire to revisit the trauma of the former Yugoslavia, and to Hollywood, Kusturica finds salvation in his home country. The film, on the other hand, is a depiction of the lives of young people on the run from the conflict, and the toll it takes on their personal lives.

Still, Tango: The Exile Of Gardel… Solanas’ spirit of the nation piece about a group of Argentine exiles’ escape from the criminal regime of Peronista Eva Peron – a saga of internal exile, the film evokes the despair of those who have been forced to leave their homeland.

“Before the Rain” is a rare symbol of activism across the national landscape. Solanas’ submerge to the shadows at the hands of an unknown gunner in 1991 (after staging President Carlos Menem with a series of hostage newspaper articles) has, however, given Solanas a status he can hardly have anticipated.

The post-colonial movement of film-makers in China have also struggled with the problems of dislocation. While not literally in exile, Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige and Tian Zhuangzhuang, to name but three, have all experienced some sort of “internal exile” whereby they make their films in China but with funding from abroad, and post-production often completed in countries like Taiwan. Once completed, the problems start; many films made have found themselves banned at home because the Chinese authorities don’t like the end result although they initially sanctioned the project. Despite this, “Before the Rain” is a rare symbol of activism across the national landscape. Solanas’ submerge to the shadows at the hands of an unknown gunner in 1991 (after staging President Carlos Menem with a series of hostage newspaper articles) has, however, given Solanas a status he can hardly have anticipated.

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Critica de cine
«Before the rain»: la muerte también llama siempre dos veces en los Balcanes

La primera película de Manchevski gana el León de Oro de Venecia, pero después de haber tenido una estrecha crítica, con el grito atado en la garganta y los ojos llenos de su historia balcánica y volcánica en la que, además de los «buenos», muere también la esperanza, porque la paz es una excepción.

Macedonia es un lugar que toca, por un lado, Albania, y por el otro, la laguna del ojo del huracán. Allí, aunque lo que se nos sirve ahora es una película, lo que de verdad se cuecen son odios, amarguras y tiranteces. «Before the rain» tiene la peculiaridad de ser película Macedónica y de ser la primera que hace Milcho Manchevski, un jovenísimo director que ha sabido meter en algo menos de dos horas la verdadera naturaleza de la armónica armonía que desde hace años muele en la trituradora de los Balcanes. Una historia tan redonda, que no acaba; un guión tan bien dibujado, que no se ven sus líneas; unas imágenes tan elaboradas, que están llenas de verdad; una película tan rica, que abandona las canes por dentro y que transforma la solidaridad en una ideología en el líquido sin forma de una idea.

«Before the rain» está dividida en tres episodios en los que cada uno de ellos es princi-pal y fin del otro, dándose a la película un sentido filosófico tan circular y a la vez abierto que marca a la razón. El final, o el principio, según quiera mirarse, lo deja a uno tan pedagógico a los parafrasis del día como la papeleta de la TV. Según se va des-velando la historia, y uno empapándose de ella, la película adquiere los tonos ocres de la letra de un tango, con la añadidura de que, aquí, las cosas que pasan no son tantas, aunque sí propias del abrall humanismo.

Con que pasar: Una joven albanesa es perseguída por macedonios, pero caza por albaneses. Un fotógrafo macedónico vivirá el odio albanés, pero morirá ante la rincosfera balcánica. Desde Bosnia se puede llevar a Londres la idea de que la paz es una excepción... y de que el disparo de una cámara de fotos también puede matar. Cuando uno deja de ver la guerra por un varor, cuando una quién ha muerto, la muerte se revela en sus propios líquidos. Siempre hay tantos dispuestos a cambiar la compañía del burro por la de la metrañeta. Siempre hay leños que cambian metralletas, como quemas, por armas. Un balazo en un restaurante de Londen mata con la misma ceguera que en Bosnia. El odio es contagioso, como la muerte, y crece en proporción inversa al valor de la vida de los demás. En ocasiones (y es un magistral golpe de guión en la pelícu-lla, la fotografía de una niña muerta es tan sólo el presagio de su muerte que la realidad, o la instantánea que hubiera recogido un fotógrafo de no haber muerto horas antes (porque, como dice Clint Eastwood en «Sin piedad»), cuando matas a un hombre no le queda sólo todo lo que tienes, sino también todo lo que puedes tener... o quizás Manchevski quiera dejar en esa foto la idea de que la sini-tranza iguala la cara de las niñas muertas, o que siempre muere la misma, o que nunca muere del todo...
Legenda o nepotrebinoj smrti

Milčo Mančevski, scenarij i režija, "Before the Rain", 1993, igraju Katrin Kartlidić, Rade Šerbedžija, Gregor Kolen, Labina Mitrevska i drugi, englesko-francusko-evropsko-makedonska korupcijalna

Dokom Miloča Mančevskog ima nedvozglašenu formativnu namenu, nema žalostne sjećanje. Da je to namera nešto neobično, filmi su supermno popularni po svetu, doista se javno vidi iz ratne filmske produkcije, na primer u moralno nedefiniranim Pavlovičevim Dvoranom, ili u neobično ljupkom filmu Mi stvaram svet, koji je jedini problem što nije bio snimljen do dvadesetih godina ranije. Raini sarađivanje dokumentacije Knoevića i grupe SAGA, već zbog uloga u kojima su rađeni, spadaju u savremenu drugu kategoriju, i podležu drugim kriterijumima. Miloč Mančevski, autorski lokalni i univerzalni, legendo koju podjednačak dobro čitali oni prezačeli znamenjem i unosom o tvrtkoj življenju, i oni savršeno neobavesteni o komunikaciji su uključeni, kao i treba, svi aktivni učesnici. Ako je trenutak zaboravljiv svetski uspeh i Zlatnom lava, Miloč Mančevski je lako rešio predmet kod sljedećim problemom jugoslavenske kinematografije: nedostatak dobrog, logičnog i udubljenog scenarija. To što je jugoslavenska kinematografija više namena, može se dešavati kao pravilna kamena i saznanje "paške škole", za sve državljane i javnim tretijem, izgleda mašnice neobično pred ovim makedonskim mladnjakom koji ode, nauči i uspe ne objašnjavaju uspet svima što sve ne može da postigne. Sve što može da naprave scenario u kojem ništa ne vidi i nije gurnuto pod tepih, i dijaloge koji vracaju - specifično u luksuznoj epizodi - Mančevski umesto da pruži hranu, ne što u što dohvarom nisak ne može da pređe kazališku prag. Tek sa tom hranom ljetnja postaju funkcionalni: iznenadno noćno pojavljuju voljene bene, povraćanje kao reakcija na nasilje, puknute v voda. Samo sa se srednjim scenarijima rafinmanom mogla skočiti mehanička priče koja je, sa manje kontrolom i više samoživotoljanja, mogla zaviti u pas- tenijsku jednostavnost i u mladozrlih, Nijednog jedinog iskustava nema u konstrukciji, u krunom, kao rešenja, ali to je tek savršena podloga za autoričarstvo i umravljavanje temelja. Mančevski je bio svestran da, uključujući ostane na nivou legende, rizicuje tajno da ovih ne razumijemo u vezi s dramatičnom, s obzirnom je- dinom legendom, legende i da postigne nivou je nerazumljivo potrebno da se štiti ra- stome. Stoga je morao uneti osve otišćenih, intelektualnih, noćnih, ciničnih, nostal- gičnih za trivije kompanije intervencije, koje osnovnom legendu dekonstrui- du i dovede u svrhu svakog molitve za osobstvo jednostavnog rešenja. Tako je, na primjer, potpuno jasno da je pretelodna generacija (Žekir, Aleksan- dar, Hana) bila bilingvalna i da su deca bila zaljubljena u film; Harina kome je članica. I igre sami albaneci. Aleksan- drovci mladi smički je monaški početnik: on je preuzem zavet četnica, koji je simboliska sila češće jedne ge- nacije. Stereotip o "petrostogodišnjem popot- nici" izguravanju samo unesivučadljivi. Tre- bala bi doduše, biti glumac kao što je Rade Šerbedžija, da bi se iz njegovog pogleda čitalo kako Hana nekada nije bila zabrana. Iz ovih se primera i kako Miloč Mančevski zahteva od svoje publike: ne više nego bilo drugi so- lijni američki režiser nekog trikera u kojem se sve važno za zaplet izgovara u jednoj rečenici. Ako bi se htjeli da nekako klasi- fijsimo simboličke slike Mančevskog, dobili bi bismo dosta komplikovanu strukturu: uvedne slike nasilja, kao što je tlačenje korijene, zatim plasiranje pa uživanje mačke, rađanje dvoje najveće unutar ovog dijela, pogleda na ljudi, negativiziraju re- minovitost tragičnog razrešenja; slike almanah, kao što su dijelovi UN- PUBLIKU u makedonskom bespuću, slike iz teta u Bosni, smirnici, cokulja, dijalo paradozalskog podloga događa- nja; divlja lica naoružanih, sa pravo- slavne i albanske strane, ne ostavljaju neku usmjernu, nađa joj važne postoje- tajev bar tri hronicka definirane sveta, sponevaju i žuti pjevač danju, pročestu korijen, mlada, mladost plava noć, vreme do- kvoće i pjevištva, i najzad radošću, sa pokojom bojom, svet Zapada, u kojem korijački sretne, plave u akvati- jumu pre nego što zapušta neki lučak - ponosak iz Belgrađa, a ponosak i sa Ba- kana. Sa petrostogodišnjim razlozima, da, ali ne stalno i svuda, i ne kao pritom. Konačno, tu su i one simboličke slike koje mogu razumjeti samo "do- maći" i koje su njima namenjene kao poseban kanal za komunikaciju: stari broj "Novo Makedonije", kutiji cvrse "drinez", pesme "Indeksa", i jedan ne- hotimni znak na tom kanalu, na ljudi: površa Abdullahuna Salja, glumački koji je u filmu odlučio starog Albanaca Zet- kića, i zatim samo. Informacija za one na ljudiševedenim vezama, odnosno na jed- no tako "narodno" i lice i uloge tipskih Albanaca iz doba kada je država pustila na to kako se za "pikane" onda je ona izgledalo nezgrizno, u vezi s odnosima propala od te države, a ostalo samo to, možeći biti, paradozalno, opisala i ta država. Ili bar ne bi bilo toliko mršave, Abdullahuna Salja, time što je posled- nju ulogu odigrao u ovoj filmu, dodao je svojoj glumackoj karieri i nemunjujućoj humanosti misli. Socijalne grupe u filmu precizno su podeleone po odnosu prema nasilju: deca, ona što kruža metke i automatne i dvere se odražaju, odaju boguše, mučenje korijen, negativiziraju mirajuću bu-
### MILCHO MANCHEVSKI: ...prima e dopo la pioggia...

**Diana Grima**

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### Scheda introduttiva

Volendo organizzare un’analisi strutturata dell’opera del regista macedone Milcho Manchevski, ho ritenuto di suddividere la materia da trattare nella tripartizione suggerita dal regista stesso nel lungometraggio *Prima della pioggia*: “Parole”, “Volti”, “Istantanee”.

La sezione intitolata al “Tempo” prende le mosse dall’attenzione dedicata da Manchevski alla struttura e il funzionamento del tempo, in relazione alla Storia e al racconto.

In “Il sentiero circolare dell’eroe” ho affrontato la problematica specifica del percorso intrapreso dai personaggi di Manchevski in relazione agli archetipi della tradizione orale, letteraria e filmica del racconto mitico e leggendario.

L’ultimo capitolo prende in esame il rapporto del regista con il mondo del cinema nel suo complesso.
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HISTORIC OSCAR
Records loom in big races

By KATHLEEN O’STEEN

Tonight’s Oscar show could be one for the history books.
If Paramount Pictures’ “Forrest Gump” wins all 13 categories in which it’s nominated, it will surpass the record-holder, “Ben Hur,” which picked up 11 statuettes.

Or, if Tom Hanks wins his second consecutive Oscar, it would be the first back-to-back best-actor win since Spencer Tracy in 1937-38. (Jason Robards accomplished this in ’76-77 in the supporting race, and Luise Rainer, in ’36-37, and Katharine Hepburn, ’67-68, did it in the

Macedonia flap hits Academy

By MAX ALEXANDER

A last-minute flap over the name of a country has sparked new controversy over the foreign-language Oscar, and may result in a boycott of tonight’s Academy Awards by the filmmakers of “Before the Rain.”

Milcho Manchevski, who wrote and directed the Macedonian entry, said on Sunday that he and other representatives of the film have told the Academy they will not attend tonight’s ceremony if the Academy insists on calling their country “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.”

Manchevski, along with five of the film’s producers, three actors and three government officials, including the Minister of Culture, are demanding that their country

Macedonia’s Greek to Oscar

Continued from page 1

be referred to simply as Macedonia.

Academy president Arthur Hiller said a final decision won’t come until today.

While seemingly trivial, the name of Macedonia is fiercely contested by Greece and has become a political hot potato in Washington and Western Europe — and now apparently in Hollywood.

Macedonia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and immediately drew complaints from Greece and Greek Americans over its choice of a name. Greeks contend that “Macedonia” is the ancestral name of their country and should not be adopted by the new country, which lies on the northern border of Greece and comprises 2 million people.

The United States and the United Nations recognize the new nation but not the name. Both are provisionally calling it “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.” That’s the name the Academy decided to use over the

last few days, after much hand-wringing due to the receipt of some 300 letters of complaint from Greek Americans, according to a source.

But on Saturday night, producer Gorjan Tozija from Macedonian state film agency Vardar told Academy press representative Frank Lieberman that the name was unacceptable, particularly since “Before the Rain” had been billed as simply being from Macedonia until a few days ago.

“In the larger picture, the name is a small thing,” said director Manchevski. “But it would be like calling the U.S. ‘the former British colony of America.’ It’s an insult to the people back there (in Macedonia).” Manchevski, a former director of TV commercials and music videos, lives primarily in New York.

Ironically, “Before the Rain” is about taking sides in the Balkan conflicts, and it argues that neutrality does not prevent involvement, even for countries and individuals far from the region.

The film, co-produced by Vardar, Polygram France and British Screen, won the Golden Lion at last year’s Venice Film Festival.

Kathleen O’Steen contributed to this report.
КРУЖНО ОБНОВУВАЊЕ НА ЗДIVEЕНОСТА

ФИЛМ

ЖОК ФИЛМУТО "ПРЕД ДОЖДОТО", СЦЕНИРАВО И РЕЖИМА МИЛЧО МАНИЧЕВСКИ, ДИРЕКТОР НА ФОТОГРАФИЈА МАЊЕЛ ТЕРАН, СО РАДЕ ШЕРБЕДИЈА, ГРЕГОАР КОЛАН, КАРИН КАРТИЦИ И ЗАБИНА МИТЕВСКА

Како Македонец или Албанец или Англичанин од филмот "Пред дождот" тало ке ве заболи стомакот. Како човек ке ве заболи душата. "Ама нема зошто туга да луке. Лу-гело туга се пилнома", — вели главниот јунак на филмот, каде Македонија, Босна, Елбани, Лондон во покажо со кои се споредува мирот и сигурнос- та на еден прстор. Билката во душата се јавува кога филмот овама реченица буквално ке ви ја луке пред очи како најгорката заблуда. Дека не може да се каже: има туга, тие таму питати, отк здивеноста нема врска нато е ова туга му од она Таму, му со Нас до Нив. Таза има врска само со синод човек посебен, и окажа, завиду е дел од неговата генерален запас. Затоа, "Пред дождот" е дрзка психолошка драма за постоенот конфликт меѓу дивото (диво- јанчаното) и пилното во човеч- ката душа. Заличен избор на срошуја лудињата на овие две певачки својствени, на исполнување спротивставени страни на самоот собесеби. И за трагисмот на овој човек.

Тоа дрзост на човечката душа, во своето прекрасно, распрострањувано филм, релаксовото и сиропреторерското што описува Милчо Маничевски во детал на студира на оригинален начин и повечекласно. Во вид на концентрирани буквени - како карактер филм во вода - во филмот се разложува конфликтот диво - пилно, од нивото на којто се појавува оваа на етичкото колективистичко, како и на нивото на нивото, исполнување. Девството е разложен на три (во соштав на љубовните) приказани, драмски изведен гумит и визуелно расказани, чие мотиви и структура има форма на круг (што не е трислен) со ликови и настави што се исполнуваат нивиот врвига игра со времето (што ниве не умира).

Во "Збирови" македонските мажи Кирил (Грегор Колан), заветуваан на мок, која се ослободува од своите живо- ти на една црева Албанка Замира (Лабина Митеевска), која група македонскиот елека ја бара за убиство на нивото робинка. Во "Лиди", англичан- ка Ен (Каратин Каратин) во Лондон, треба да избере мајка или своеволниците на луобановото: Александар, македонскиот фо- ротелсир (Раде Шербери), и здравственото на сигурен соб. Ник (Џоун Вилк) и при тоа случениш е сведок на масак- рот во еден ресторан. Во "Слики", Александар се врзува од Лон- дон во Македонија, за да стот преку кој разгледува- ното на конфликтот диво - пилно го врзува поединич- ното со колективистичко ниво. Решавајќи да се постави во своите пилни искреноста од двете наци- ја, тоа ќе се извесна и ги- претвора во радарен насил- ник, со насилство како цел за себе. Преку споменатите, своите речи вулгарно ги играат, Ило Дорото Босковски, Петар Мирчевски, Мито Јовова- новски и Сицила Стојановска.

"Пред дождот" важност има отворен крај - дождот што на крајот ќе ги коине животот на символ во поносно охрабрување на градовите, во крхката структура на филмот импилицира дека нивното, нивното во компликованата и скометната, што се спи- нова (змиенато като?) се обновува како нешто дина- мично врзано за човечката природа. Во таа смисла, и во видувањето како на филмот, прекрасните пијања во Маке- донија и како контраст сниво- лото во Лондон, се исто така знак за универсалноста на диво- то без разлика дали е отворе- рено или прикриено, толку или студено. Видени ниви ка- мера на Макејел Теран, македонските персонажи постојат како првична сцена во овој филм, па со што тоа го губат и локалноста на значење. Направен, заштитен, копир и техничките интереси во сливка (свистено свидетелство), претстава нивото на локациите и да дава на ба- ковдирка универсалност. Филмските прикази, со својот начин скицован и страничен на раз- сејување и македонската музика на "Анакасија".

"Пред дождот" на Милчо Маничевски е филм кој што живее што запорава, едно од оние што леала на уметноста што се при- маат со душа и оние што се навежаат. Филм што враќа в класи.
deportacje, znęcanie się nad dziećmi i nędzę ludzi z Trzeciego Świata. [...] W ten sposób z cierpień świata nieoleam nic nie zostanie pominięte”. Wspólny z Kieślowskim jest też producer filmu Marcin Karrat, który od tej pory produkuje wszystkie filmy Hanekgo, a także odtwórczyni głównej roli Juliette Binoche, która na temat współpracy z austriackim twórcą stwierdziła: „Czuję się, że jest coś takiego jak prawdziwa myśl za kamerą. W odbiorni sposób Michael Hanek przypomina mi Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego”.

W roku 2018 Grand Prix ex aequo dla Kieślowskiego (Niebieski) i Altmana (Na skrocie) Złote Lwy otrzymał w Wenecji Milcho Manchevski za swój debiut Before the Rain (Macedonia–Francja–Wlk. Brytania, 1994), stając się tym samym jednym z najbardziej obiecujących europejskich reżyserów młodego pokolenia. Londyn i chwiejąca sytuacja polityczna w Macedonii stanowią to dla trzech społecznych ze sobą historii miłosnych, których bohaterami są: młody mąż, zaangażowana dziennikarka i pozbawiony iluzji reporter wojenny. W trzech epizodach połączonych ze sobą postaciach i wydarzeniach film przenika bezwzględną naturę wojny, która wciągają w swoją otchłani wszystkich bez wyjątku. Trzy odrębne historie, retrospektywnie składające się na całość (albo historia w trzech częściach), podzielone zostały na rozdziałach napisami Words, Faces i Pictures: Words to synonym werbalnych i interkulturowych barrier porozumienia; Faces – zmieleniwanych twarzy wojny; Pictures z kolei odwołują się do serii fotografii przedstawiających egzekucje, podsuwając temat ambivalentnej roli mediów w czasie konfliktów zbrojnych.

Oryginalność kompozycji filmu wskazywała na Manchevskiego jako na możliwego spadkobiercę Kieślowskiego. Związana z tego prologu: „Czas nigdy nie umrze. Koło nie jest okrągłe”, zakreślające główne trop filmu – konieczność podejmowania decyzji ostatecznych, dokonywania wyborów w sytuacjach bez wyjścia – powraca w odniesieniu formie w epilogu, dzięki czemu (przynajmniej na poziomie struktury opowiadania) śmietalna spirala przemocy może zostać przełamana. Dopiero w epilogu okazuje się, iż tragiczny koniec trzeciego epizodu stanowi początek pierwszego, a chronologia całej historii zaczyna się pośrednio, w drugim epizodzie, ujemnie skomponowym w Londynie. Forma ta prowokuje irytujące pytania, na które odpowiedzi muszą znaleźć się widzowie. Istotną rolę – podobnie jak u Kieślowskiego – odgrywają tu fotografie kodujące śmierć, w funkcji emblemów nieuchwytnych przyczyniające się...
"Пред дождот" ја впиша Македонија на светската мапа', напишта легендарниот американски филмски критичар Рожер Иберт во февруари 1995.

 Во јапонските весници цртаа мапи на Македонија за да објаснат од каде доаѓа филмот и како се изговара името. "Македонија, љубов моја", "Од Македонија, со љубов" и "Мајсторот од Македонија" беа наслови во весници во САД, а "Милчо Македонец" во Италија. Со помош на "Пред дождот" се изучуваше македонскиот јазик на универзитети во САД и Полска, а во Кореја - англискиот. Во 2008, Македонија го доби својот прв светски признат класик - американскиот издавач "Крајтирион" го издаде "Пред дождот" во едицијата светски класици: Бергман, Буњуел, Годар, и други.

 Од практички аспект, во Македонија, цела една генерација домашни филмски работници и актери се школуваше со практична работа на македонските копродукции на Манчевски. Врвни светски професионалици со огромно искуство и талент од дури 14 земји, добитници на најпрестижни национални награди, работеа на македонско тло и ги споделуваа своите искуства со нашите филмаџии и актери.

 Манчевски има филм кој "Њујорк тајмс" го вброи меѓу 1.000 најдобри на сите времиња, и има спот кој "Ролинг стоун" магазин го вброи во 100-те најдобри на сите времиња. Кога "Пред дождот" во 1994 го освои Златниот лав за најдобар филм, тоа беше прв (и засега единствен) пат македонско дело од било која област да учествува во светска конкуренција, ам и да победи.

 Од глобален аспект, македонската кинематографија етапира нова фаза во современата кинематографска продукција во Македонија (први национални копродукции, воведување кастинг процес, сториборд, сублиминален тон; претставување македонски играни филмови на фестивали од А-категорија, светска кинодистрибуција на македонски филмови, и друго).

 Неговите филмови етапираат нова фаза во современата кинематографска продукција во Македонија (први национални копродукции, воведување кастинг процес, сториборд, сублиминален тон; претставување македонски играни филмови на фестивали од А-категорија, светска кинодистрибуција на македонски филмови, и друго).

 Иако живее во Њујорк, Манчевски својот професионален ултег и искуство секопат ги носел во Македонија. Конечно, во македонската култура преку македонските копродукции на Манчевски влегола директни инвестиции од странски партнери и власти (Велика Британија, Германија, Франција, Италија, Бугарија и Еуримаж) во вредност на над 15 милиони евра, при македонски влог од околу 3 милиони евра. Со други зборови, 5:1.

 Манчевски е роден во Македонија, но е школкуван во странство и неговата кариера е главно во САД и Европа (работел за ХBO, МТВ, Бритиш Скрин и други).
To Universal Studios- PLEASE release BEFORE THE RAIN

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Comments
the best film of all the times

REFOIR THE RAIN IS A GREAT FILM PLEASE RELEASE IT ON DVD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THIS FINE FILM SHOULD HAVE BEEN RELEASED BY NOW ON DVD OR IS THERE PRESSURE FROM THE GREEK AMERICAN LOBBY NOT TO HAVE THIS FILM RELEASED ON DVD.

579. GOGHE
578. Kiril
577. Hakon Thyrr
576. Bosko Stankovski
575. Roger Arnald
574. Mikko Ekberg
573. Michael Young
572. Evridi Vea
571. Phil Hasel
570. Michael Hansen
569. Alina Nadzovski
568. Thomas Joseph Chang - great movie, please release!!!

Пред дождот

Милчо Манчевски мег този ден иден филмски световни и на него посебен братски начин ме подготвува за мојот Александар Македонски.

Милчо е „Степски волк“ во Скопје. Одемна со нешто даблоко равен, тешко ја лекува својата горчина и не пушта никого во своето нежно срце. Александар, главниот лик во филмот Пред дождот, всушност е тој, нако, како што ми рече во Лондон, го пушкал според мене. Но се покажа дека Александар сум и јас. И во мене пукаше некој „родина“ во Белград.

Александар, според Манчевски, ги помирувал одамна раскараваните световни. Неговото храбро и смело одење во едно албанско село потсетува по малку на вестерн, во кој Александар, во некоја мала селска визба, како вод шатор, го прива „индигијански гламур”, а таа со треперлив, бела рача, служи кафе од филцан и се наведнува смртном напред неговото лице, одважно прякго погледнувајќи го даблоко во очите.

Хана (ја игра Силвија Стојановска), сè уште занимствува, веќе не е девојче туку зрела жена, чие гармонично и негувано тело не можат да го скријат сите шалвари и затегнати свилени шампи.
Milorad Krstić: Kézbeszéd

A Macedon '70 RIGHT: Címu Film Rövid: Kézbeszéd
A Macedon ALTALANTALOPLME: RÁSA

Macedonia, Mon Amour
A new director moves deftly between 2 worlds in 'Before the Rain'

brand new screen

THE WINNER OF THE grand prize of last year's Venice Film Festival, Milcho Manchevski's 'Before the Rain' is a masterclass of style and craft. The film explores the relationships between principal crises and national tragedies.

The action revolves around a beautiful, melancholy episode of the former Yugoslavia when it was divided into two parts and Albania by the river. The film is set in the late 1990s in the capital, Skopje, and the city of Bitola. The story follows a young man's love affair with a woman who is from a different village.

In 'Before the Rain', the director uses the visual language of poetry to convey the emotional landscape of a nation torn apart by conflict. The film's narrative is told through a series of flashbacks and dreams, creating a sense of depth and melancholy.

'Before the Rain' is a striking piece of filmmaking that offers a powerful exploration of love, loss, and the complexities of national identity. It is a film that will stay with you long after the credits roll.
Theory of the Image

Introduction

The theory of the image is an elusive topic, even though there is arising awareness of the importance of the image in modern society. The image is a cultural construction of the most fundamental kind, yet social and political critiques continue to focus on the content of images without considering the importance of the image itself as an ideological construct. The widespread interest in the economic history of the film and television industries has developed as if it were far afield from theories of the image. However, it would be strange if the U.S. film industry, so highly capitalized in studio production and distribution, did not also have a capitalist theory of the image informing its films.

This book begins with a historical critique of the ideology of iconoclasm to locate the sources of the modern capitalist theory of the image, a path of inquiry suggested by Jean Baudrillard. He proposed that the capitalist theory of the image could be traced to the dynamic interaction between Protestant iconoclasm and the concept of the commodity. However, Baudrillard himself made only a half-hearted attempt to follow this line of investigation. Unlike Baudrillard (and more recently W. J. T. Mitchell), I have gone back directly to the Protestant sources on iconoclasm in early modern Europe to understand why early Protestants attacked images. What I have found is a paradigm far different from our common assumptions about the motives of the iconoclasts. The initiating premise of iconoclasm was a belief in true images rather than a hatred of false images. Because early Protestant iconoclasts believed there was such a thing as a true image, the significance of images as a source of power for them has been greatly underestimated. As I demonstrate in this book, these early sources show not only a belief in images, but specifically a theory of the image that binds a person to corporate identity through the consumption of commodities as true images. Protestants defined the crux of this social relation through the trope of metonymy—a concept qualitatively different from representational art or the idea of metaphor.

By taking a materialist approach to the Protestant semiotics of the image in Essay One, I show the congruence between the Protestant sacramental image and the commodity of Marx’s theory. As well, I explain how corporate distribution and consumption add another layer of mystification beyond what Marx described in the fetishism of commodities. I also critique the image theories of French post-structuralists Barthes, Debord, and Baudrillard, and briefly consider the psychoanalytic theory of Lacan, to show how these widely regarded critical

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1 Baudrillard, “Precession of Simulakra.”
2 Mitchell, Iconology
theories stayed within the parameters of the iconoclastic/capitalist theory of the image, describing its effects rather than offering an alternative. This limitation also informed the development of post-structuralist film theory from the 1960s to the 1980s. This era of film theory was fueled by an iconoclastic assault on the false images of Hollywood film, from the theorists of the cinematic apparatus to Laura Mulvey’s famous essay on images of women in film.3 Like the French post-structuralists, Mulvey elucidated the workings of the iconoclastic/capitalist image, but she did not critique it.

Because society has strongly linked women with imageness and vice versa, a critique of images of women in film can be a point of leverage for a larger critique of a whole system of images in contemporary society. Recent feminist critiques in media studies have focused on the social content of images, but without attending to the ideological structure of the image itself. Consequently, this approach has veered away from the central theoretical problem, the conceptual symbiosis of woman and image. There is nothing inevitable about this symbiosis. It is important to understand how it is socially constructed, to break through it and thereby liberate ‘woman’ and ‘image’ from each other. To do this requires new theoretical models.

One place to find new theories of the image is contemporary film, and especially transnational films where cultures collide and where women are major characters in the narrative of that collision. Such films are well situated to create a more complex and variable relation between people and images. There are many contemporary films that might be considered here. However, rather than discuss many films in a cursory and superficial way, the second and third essays in this book explore in depth the significance of two very different transnational films. Each dismantles the symbiotic relation between woman and image, but they go about it quite differently, and with different consequences. My intent is not to find a single grand theory of the image—I doubt that any exists—but instead to articulate the specific theories of the image that inform these films.

Essay Two, “Liberating a Woman from Her Image,” is about Ebrahimian’s The Suitors4 an Iranian-American film that was made in New York but nonetheless draws on Persian artistic and narrative traditions. This film directly engages cultural differences between American and Middle Eastern women through its main character, Mariyam, a veiled Iranian woman who immigrates to New York and relinquishes the practice of veiling. Mulvey’s iconoclastic theory considered the problem of woman and image from an exterior frame of reference, emphasizing the dependence of the image on Woman. This film shows that actual women experience this symbiosis in its reverse form, as the ideological threat that a woman ceases to exist without her image. For American women viewers, this film resonates deeply at a figurative level, especially in the black screen sequence, where Mariyam removes her symbolic cinematic image as well as her symbolic veil. To demonstrate the complex interaction between audience and screen image, my discussion of this film draws on individual interviews with more than thirty people who saw the film in the U.S.—some of them Iranian, most of them American. I quote extensively from individuals to demonstrate how the film’s imagistic and narrative structure allows ‘woman’ and ‘image’ to move freely in variable ways—not only in the film, but in the minds of viewers as well.

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3 Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.”
4 Written and directed by Ghasem Ebrahimian, 1988.
Essay Three, “Relief from the Production of Certainties,” develops a film theory that is adequate to the unusual features of Manchevski’s Before the Rain,5 one of the most acclaimed transnational films of the last decade. In its multi-sided narrative, the film goes back and forth between London and the ethnic conflicts of the Balkans in the 1990s. Linear narrative and nonlinear narrative face off, producing a conflict of meaning that brings the theory of the image forward as the film’s subject—in relation to ethnic conflict, the realism of photography, the effects of globalization, and through all this, the pivotal role of women characters whose quest for social equality necessarily disrupts the theory of the image that structures linear narrative. This film not only arranges provocative collisions within itself. It also collides with one of the most basic Western ideas about photography, namely, that photography records rather than makes an image.

The cultural belief that photography and cinematography record images underlies the work of theorists as diverse as Peirce, Bazin, Barthes, Mulvey, Deleuze, Metz, and Wollen, to name just a few. Bourdieu asserted that belief in photography as a recorded image is a social construction of great significance for the middle class. 6 To understand the ideology underlying this belief, in

5 Written and directed by Milcho Manchevski, 1994.
6 Bourdieu, Photography, ch 2.
both its social and its cinematic impact, the last essay begins with an analysis of the theory of
the image in the works of C. S. Peirce, an American social conservative, and Sergei Eisenstein,
an Eastern European leftist. Each brings out what is most distinctive about the other. As a
careful consideration of Peirce shows, the concept of the natural or indexical sign, the belief
in linear narrative, the semiotics of racial prejudice, and the theory of the photograph as a
recorded image all share the same basic semiotic philosophy.

*Before the Rain* demands a different theoretical approach, and for that I turn to essays by
Sergei Eisenstein. Eisenstein’s essays on cinematography offer a theory of the photographic
image based on a concept of the image as a dynamic relation, not an immobilized, fetishized
thing. Eisenstein’s theory of montage, understood in this way, serves as a point of departure
for an analysis of *Before the Rain* in terms of Manchevski’s own description of his work as
cubist narrative. A film that is cubist looks nothing like a painting that is cubist. The apparent
realism of Manchevski’s film is quite convincing at the outset, indeed well into the film, but
no viewer forgets the jolt of finding out that the film is actually constructed in a completely
different way.

Although all three essays in this book involve capitalism, contemporary film, and women, each
takes a different approach to the theory of the image and generates a different emphasis. The
essays overlap in their themes, but since each has an independent point of departure, the
essays can also be read separately. I hope they will demonstrate how important transnational
cinema can be in the increasingly international culture in which we live our lives.

**Relief from the production of certainties**

**Overview: Pierce, Eisenstein, Manchevski**

Although set in Macedonia and London at the time of the Bosnian war in the 1990s, *Before the
Rain* (1994) is a film that could be about social conflicts in many places. As writer and director
Milcho Manchevski explained, “The story was inspired by the events unfolding in Yugoslavia,
but it was not about them.” It was about people in any country who stand in front of large
events that are about to engulf them.” Reflective of the director’s concept of his work, people
in just about any country have been interested in seeing this film. *Before the Rain* has been
screened throughout the world. From Italy, where it garnered the first of its more than thirty
international awards, to Australia, Peru, the Philippines, the U.S.—these are just a few of the
many countries where the film has been shown. Manchevski is even a prophet with honor in his
own country. The nation of Macedonia bestowed its highest civilian award on the Skopje-born

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7 Manchevski, “Rainmaking,” p. 130.
The filmmaker for *Before the Rain*, his first major film. The worldwide commercial success of *Before the Rain* demonstrates that art cinema does not necessarily mean abstruse films for small audiences and cult-followers. This film has defied the usual distinction between art cinema and commercial cinema. A truly international narrative, it also exceeds the boundaries of nationalist and ethnic cinema. Like the phenomenon of globalization that is refracted in its story, this film shakes up traditional categories of thought in many ways.

The purpose of this essay is to develop an approach to the film that can address the theory of the image informing its most prominent characteristics — the “cubist” structure with its compelling dislocation of linear narrative; the unusual attention to documentary photographs; and the innovative deployment of women characters who are crucial to understanding what is socially and artistically innovative about this film. To do this involves a reconsideration of basic ideas about the photographic image, and especially a critique of the general cultural presumption that a photograph records an image. Two theorists who confronted this issue of the photograph, what it is and what it isn't, are Sergei Eisenstein and Charles Sanders Peirce. Wollen and Deleuze both have recognized the potential importance of Peirce's philosophy of signs and Eisenstein's theory of montage. Unlike linguistic theorists, both Peirce and Eisenstein developed complex theories of the image that did not derive from either linguistic models or psychoanalytic structures. However, this advantage has also been a disadvantage in contemporary theory. Neither Peirce nor Eisenstein has been carefully considered with regard to their theories of the photographic image.

A comparison and contrast of the theories of the image in the work of Peirce and Eisenstein can open up major questions about the politics of the image in photography and cinematography. Each brings out what is most distinctive in the other, but it would be reductive to cast them as a binary opposition. Their theories of the image are paradigms that hold some ideas in common, but diverge on the matters most crucial to each of them. Eisenstein's primary emphasis was on the social character of the film image as an iconic sign, a socially constructed image with variable possibilities. While Peirce also had a concept of the iconic sign, his crucial social idea was his concept of the index, which he developed into a theory of the photograph as a recorded natural image. The discussion of Peirce and Eisenstein is the basis for the primary distinction I make in this essay between “indexical” and “iconic.” The second half of this essay undertakes an analysis of *Before the Rain* as an iconic film. *Before the Rain* actively seeks new political and intellectual

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8 *Before the Rain* (*Pred dozhdot*). Written and directed by Milcho Manchevski, 1994. A British, French, and Macedonian co-production. Produced by: Aim Productions, Noe Productions, and Vardar Film with the participation of British Screen and the European Co-Production Fund (UK) and in association with Polygram Audiovisual and the Ministry of Culture for the Republic of Macedonia. Currently available on VHS. International recognition for the film began with the Golden Lion Award for best picture at the Venice International Film Festival in 1994 and included an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Film in the U.S. in 1995. See the reviews on the Manchevski website, a valuable resource on the film and Manchevski's other work. There were more than 3,000 reviews and articles about *Before the Rain* worldwide. Selections on the website are from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, the former Yugoslavia, Germany, Greece, Great Britain, Holland, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, and U.S.A. See also the comments from Korea, Philippines, Peru, Chile, and Czech Republic on the Amazon website. Additionally, see Horton, “Oscar-Nominated”; Rosenstone, ed., special issue of Rethinking History; and Cohen, “Balkan Gyre.” Manchevski’s new film, Dust, was released in New York and Los Angeles, August 2003, as this book was going to press. I have not commented on the film because I have not yet had an opportunity to see it. Dust is scheduled for release on DVD (Lion’s Gate) in November 2003. For more on this film, including articles about its making and its controversial reception in Europe, see the Manchevski website.

9 See Wollen, Signs and Meaning in Cinema, pp. 19-73, 116-74; and Deleuze, Cinema 1, esp. chs. 3, 6, 11, 12; and Deleuze, Cinema 2, esp. chs. 2, 7.
Citizen Milcho: Oscar Nominee Milcho Manchevski on Before the Rain and After... by WADE MAJOR

L’anno di Manchevski
Il regista macedone (Leone d’oro) sta conquistando il mondo

Worte, Gesichter, Bilder
Der mazedonische Filmermacher Milcho Manchevski und sein phänomenales Kino-Debüt „Vor dem Regen“
ideas, articulating its own theory of cinema that critiques a belief in indexical meaning and develops an iconic cinema that goes beyond anything Eisenstein imagined. The theory of cinema articulated by this film rivals previous cinematic theories in its importance for the international, global society of the twenty-first century.

**Before the Rain: An Iconic Film**

A European co-production, *Before the Rain* straddled a major cultural and political crisis, the breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The intervention of both the United States and the United Nations in the conflicts within the former Yugoslavia transformed a regional ethnic conflict into a major international crisis. *Before the Rain* emerged in the midst of these complex social conditions, which seemed to shift continuously almost overnight. The individual experience of writer and director Milcho Manchevski was at least as complex. Born in Skopje, Manchevski went to film school in the U.S. and spent a decade in the U.S. media industry before he began work on *Before the Rain*. He wrote the first version of the script as a citizen of Yugoslavia, obtained the first support for it in Britain, and made the film as a citizen of the new country of Macedonia, which also provided funding for the film. It is not surprising, then, that *Before the Rain* is a transnational film that is grounded in iconic meaning rather than indexical meaning. The indexical image is evoked in the viewers’ expectations for the purpose of exposing it as a fiction that exploits rather than respects people. Through its highly imaginative narrative composition and cinematography, *Before the Rain* dramatizes the social construction of indexical thinking in many different forms, including documentary photographs and linear narrative as well as ethnic conflict and prejudice against women.

In its openness, this film’s iconic way of thinking gave it a relation to the events in Yugoslavia that was different from the docudramas and documentaries about these conflicts. As Manchevski explains, it was important that the film have “realistic detail”; the “concrete” aspect of filmmaking required that it take place somewhere, among specific people living in specific places. Nonetheless, the events portrayed, the stories told in the film, are fictitious: “What is important is that I do not mean my film to be taken as a documentary of actual events.” A “fable” rather than a historical or journalistic work, the film is “not a documentary about contemporary Macedonia.” The iconic quality of the film was part of its original conceptualization. British Screen’s Simon Perry, the film’s first backer, recognized the difference between this film and realist films about the Balkan conflict even in the earliest version of the work: It was a very topical story but it wasn’t a piece of realism. It was always a piece of

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10 For production and distribution information, see note 8 above.
11 There are more than one hundred films about the wars that accompanied the break-up of Yugoslavia. See Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, for a comprehensive analysis and filmography.
13 In Horton, p. E5.
14 Manchevski, “Rainmaking,” p. 131
The artistic director of Slovene Cinematheque, Silvan Furlan, who screened the film in Slovenia when it was released in 1994, also saw the difference. With Slovenia awash in television documentaries and journalistic reports “we are full of those pictures”—Furlan saw something else in Before the Rain. Manchevski’s work “opens a new imaginative register, even for the public of ex-Yugoslavia, which lives this reality every day.” As Furlan’s comments imply, the film’s relation to its audience is different, too. Because it is not just about the former Yugoslavia, it challenges the perspective of the audience as much as it challenges the viability of ethnic conflicts in Macedonia. It is in its imaginative, iconic register that the film is distinctive, both politically and artistically.

For Manchevski, the iconic, artistic dimension of storytelling is not merely a question of aesthetics. He asks through this artistic dimension: How does someone determine what is real to them? Not in a secure environment, not in distanced philosophical speculation, but on the edge of a social crisis of great magnitude from which there can be no escape. The film begins with the foreboding voice of a poet that sets the tone: “With a shriek, birds flee across the black sky. People are silent. My blood aches from waiting.” It is a visceral feeling—“my blood aches”—but unlike Peirce, whose visceral feelings translated themselves into reductive indexical certainties, this poet takes in the surrounding uncertainty. He hears the eerie silence of people who wait, as he does, for what may be a cataclysmic shift of meaning and reality. The present moment has already been emptied of its familiar certainties, and so also of its comfortable presentness. The present has reality only as a moment “before” something else still unknown, radically contingent on new meanings yet undisclosed. Manchevski has described it as a “before the rain feeling,” as “a feeling of impending something—a change, an explosion, something bad, but also perhaps something promising and optimistic.”

The idea of alternative realities has often implied both a dominant, stabilizing point of view and alternatives to it that may be sought out. Before the Rain is more radical in its conceptualization. Every reality one can imagine is an alternative reality, and these realities collide with one another in unanticipated juxtapositions that change the lives of the people to whom they happen. How do people react when what they thought was real suddenly collapses? The film’s imaginative register dramatizes not only the contingencies of people’s lives in the collapse of what is familiar, but also the feeling of shock and surprise when it happens, a surprise that the viewer is drawn into as well. “I was stunned!” wrote one critic in describing his reaction to the final events in the film. The response is all the more intense because the primary characters in this film are not naïve. They are acutely aware of social fluctuations and conflicts. They try to protect themselves from crisis—they think they are thinking. Nonetheless, they don’t know how their own lives will suddenly be engulfed beyond all expectation, and the viewer is no more able than the characters to anticipate what will happen next.

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15 Quoted in Pall, “Journey to Macedonia.”
16 Quoted in Pall, “Journey to Macedonia.”
17 Manchevski, “Rainmaking,” pp. 130, 129.
18 Woodard, “Living/Reliving.”
“Thunder always gives me a jolt,” remarks the old priest in the film’s opening scene, an apt metaphor for the experience of the colliding juxtapositions in this film. The montage of the film moves the characters through juxtapositions of images that jolt the viewers into recognizing the limits of their initial impressions. Lightning doesn’t strike in the same place for every viewer, but these jolts do happen in any viewer’s experience of watching the film. They are the viewer’s experience of a montage of collisions, and their effect is quite different from Eisenstein’s concept of them. The collisions in Before the Rain have a centrifugal force, preventing closure or a unified system of meaning. Conventional expectations might lead one to assume that the film is therefore a descent into chaos, but as I will discuss later, that is to seek another kind of certainty that this film avoids with equal adroitness. This film presents something more complicated that was eloquently reflected in the words of critic Andrea Morini:

> I can still remember exactly how I felt at the end of that film: It was a mixture of intense joy and bitterness, the thought of what I had seen pained me, and—yet—at the same time, I was exhilarated by the way in which the story had been presented. This film was not a simplistic reproduction of reality, it was much more. It had distilled, interpreted and given its audience reality in the form of a refined language with a series of metaphors producing infinite variations of meaning.19

These variations of meaning typify what the exhilaration is about: a feeling of imaginative freedom in the experience of iconic openness and variation itself. “It comes as a relief to drown our certainties,” comments Morini on the feeling and state of mind the film inspires in the viewer. This feeling is not a fantasy that rejects reality, nor does the film reject its realist elements in an allegorical leap to a ‘higher’ level of thinking. Rather, Before the Rain takes an iconic approach to its subject, finding its political significance in the discovery of its imaginative register and the complex, seemingly contradictory feelings it draws out. In this director’s refusal to drown his stories in certainty, even the temporal flows of the stories are drawn into the speculative and variable dimensions of iconic thinking.

The film says at the outset that the story is “a tale in three parts,” but the telling of the story interweaves this montage of three stories so deeply that, as the film progresses, it becomes difficult to say what is the beginning or ending of the tale, or to assign a definitive meaning to any of the three stories, even to the point of saying what the plot is. Nonetheless, there is an order of presentation, the order in which the viewer sees the stories. The first is set in rural Macedonia and begins very simply. A young priest, Kiril (Gregoire Colin), is picking tomatoes in a hilltop garden. As storm clouds gather, an elderly priest approaches and tells Kiril, “It’s going to rain. The flies are biting”—an indexical truism of rural Macedonian life. The old priest observes that it’s already raining “over there” on the horizon. Like many lines of dialogue in the story, the old priest’s words take on a greater significance very quickly. As Kiril and the old priest leave the hilltop together and go to their church at a monastery, they hear children

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19 Morini, Review of Street. Morini compares the film’s artistic qualities with those of Street, a published collection of photographs by Manchevski that has also been internationally exhibited. See the Manchevski website.
throwing bullets into a fire. The sounds of exploding bullets make them flinch as they have their religious service. The seclusion of the monastery suddenly seems very fragile, as does the peace of Macedonia, the only part of the former Yugoslavia that has not broken out in open warfare. In the surrounding villages, ethnic antagonisms pit Orthodox Christians against Albanian Muslims, two groups that had formerly lived peacefully together but have now armed themselves against each other.

Later that night Kiril is shocked to discover a fugitive hiding in his room—a young Albanian Muslim woman, Zamira (Labina Mitevska), who has been accused of killing a Christian man. Kiril gives her food and tries to conceal her presence, lying to his fellow priests the next morning. Zamira’s presence in the monastery disrupts its seclusion, and the boundaries of Kiril’s life rapidly fall away. The monastery is ransacked by the local Orthodox Christians searching for her. They then stand guard outside, convinced she is inside even though they can’t find her. When Zamira is discovered by the other priests, she and Kiril are evicted, leaving together in the middle of the night. Amazingly they get past the guards and flee on foot over the hills to a mountaintop overlooking a highway. His priesthood gone, his vow of silence gone, Kiril suddenly finds himself a citizen of the world, suitcase in hand. Zamira finds herself willing to flee with him to London, even though she seems never to have left her rural village until now. Suddenly they are accosted by a group of Albanian Muslim men, led by Zamira’s grandfather. These men have been searching for her, too. When Zamira refuses to leave Kiril, her brother suddenly shoots her in the back. The group of Albanian men are in disarray, frustrated and confused by the sudden and deadly violence that has occurred. A montage of collisions typifies the lives and deaths of these characters. The montage of collisions is more than an editing of images in this film. It is the social realism of the story. The cinematography needs an iconic, provisional, problematic sense of relations just to narrate what happens in these rapidly shifting social juxtapositions.

Montage not only characterizes the shifting realities in the Macedonian countryside on the verge of war. It is also describes the second story, set in London, which focuses on a thirtyish British woman, Anne (Katrin Cartlidge), who is an editor at a photographic agency. The story begins with her at work, looking through photos. When she picks up some photographs about the violence in the Balkans, a thematic resemblance with the first story resonates. As she goes back and forth between work and telephone interruptions, her daily life emerges for the viewer. It is a montage of conflicts that involve her husband, her mother, her job, her pregnancy, and a war photographer who is her secret lover, Aleksandar (Rade Serbedzija). When her mother and Aleks collide on a London street, her carefully compartmentalized life begins to unravel. Her mother finds out about her affair and conveys her disapproval. Anne turns to Aleks, who convinces her to take a taxi ride with him so they can talk things over. During the ride, it becomes clear that both of them are anti-war, so when Aleks tells her he has come back early from Bosnia because he killed a man, they are both upset. Her compassion does not outweigh his disgust with himself. He tells her he has resigned his job as a war photographer, notwithstanding that he has just won a Pulitzer Prize. Anne is amazed, and although it is clear
she has a strong emotional tie to him, when he asks her to marry him and leave with him that night for his home in eastern Europe, she pleads for more time to decide.

With Aleks suddenly gone, Anne returns to her office, where she broods over more photographs the agency has received. There are more disturbing scenes of violent conflict in the Balkans. This time they are photos of Zamira lying dead with Kiril sitting next to her—and United Nations personnel surrounding them. That evening, Anne meets her estranged husband Nick (Jay Villiers) at a chic restaurant for dinner. When she tells him she’s pregnant and that he’s the father, Nick is eager to reconcile with her. He also wants her to quit her job and suggests they move back to Oxford, but she tells him she wants a divorce. In the midst of their troubled conversation, an unknown man suddenly enters the restaurant and sprays it with bullets. Anne survives the screaming chaos but her grief and shock are acute when she finds Nick lying dead on the floor, shot in the face. Violent deaths have taken both Aleks and Nick away from her, each in a different way.

The third story is just as unpredictable, offering a new collision of juxtapositions even though it contains some familiar faces. The story focuses on Aleks, who, it turns out, is not only from Macedonia, but from the same rural area where the first story took place. On the long bus ride to his old home, Aleks displays a morbid sense of humor when the soldier in the seat next to him warns him of the dangerous hostility now in Macedonia, that he might be killed. “It’s about time,” Aleks responds, words that will profoundly echo over the ensuing events. Aleks walks into his village and finds his family home, long abandoned and much deteriorated. Along the way, he meets men whom the viewer recognizes—men who were part of the gang that ransacked the monastery. Aleks’s cousins welcome him, barely recognizing him. They’ve heard of his fame, and they find him much changed, now part of the culture of western Europe. They are amused and skeptical when he says he’s come home to stay, but they take him at his word, invite him to dinner, and offer to help him fix up his house.

Aleks is distressed by all the guns he sees and refuses to carry one himself. He wishes to remain neutral in the local conflicts between Orthodox Macedonians and Albanian Muslims. When he asks after Hana (Silvija Stojanovska), an Albanian Muslim woman in a neighboring village who was once his sweetheart, he finds out how strained and divided the community has become. They tell him things are different now, and when he insists on going to see her, they warn him to be careful. It seems there will be another collision, but the ethnic conflict that is expected does not happen. Instead, Aleks is warmly received by Hana’s father—whom viewers recognize as Zamira’s grandfather. Here he seems a mild-mannered man, and he and Aleks lament the divisive hostility that has occurred in the community. Hana behaves as a traditional Muslim woman, her head wrapped in a scarf, speaking briefly to Aleks only when she enters the room to serve tea to the two men.
Fyrir reðnîð

Meistarlega byggð, ugvgæsleg og ógnarafjögur.

***Ó.H.T. Rás 2

Frábær mynd, sem spunnur örlagavef persóna og atburða í sláandri striðsáðellu og minnir ú til hvers er var og hver sem við erum. ***Mbl.

...övenjöglæsileg kvikmynd. ***½DV

Fyrir reðnîð

Gættir í Feneyjum 1994

Verðlauna 1995.
When Zamira suddenly peeks out from a curtained doorway for a look at the visitor, a collision occurs for the viewer. The “before” and “after” of the film’s tale suddenly reverse themselves, unsettling the temporality of the entire film. Since Zamira is still alive, this third story must be a prelude to the first one—the ending of the tale has already occurred earlier. After Aleks returns home, his cousin is killed in the sheepfold, run through with a pitchfork. The demand for revenge mounts, but Aleks still refuses to join in. At night, Hana comes to his home and asks him to rescue her daughter Zamira, who is held captive by Aleks’s relatives. Aleks knowingly courts death by taking Zamira from his relatives. As they walk away, his cousin fires, shooting Aleks in the back. He falls, telling Zamira to run. She does, evading bullets and escaping over the hills as the rain begins to fall. The Macedonian men pursue her, but Zamira is well ahead of them. She pauses to catch her breath, and turns her face into the wind, welcoming the rain as she is drenched by the storm. She then sets off for the monastery in the distance.

In the startling juxtapositions that disrupt the lives of these characters, the film shows how different groups of people rely on indexical meanings to understand what is happening. The most obvious one—and the one the viewer most expects to see in a film about violence in the Balkans—is ethnic conflict. The basis of ethnic conflict is an indexical semiotics that assumes biological identity, genealogy, is the determinant of character and social behavior. In the first story, the line of conflict is drawn between Orthodox Christian Macedonians and Albanian Muslims.

Both sides arm themselves, presuming hostile intentions of the other side, polarizing the community into a binary oppositional structure. There are disparaging comments from both sides, akin to racial epithets. For example, when Zamira and Kiril are suddenly surrounded on the mountaintop by men from Zamira’s family and village, the Albanian men denounce Kiril as “Christian scum.” The viewer fears for Kiril’s life because the logic of ethnic conflict would seem to demand his death. He is the only Orthodox Macedonian there, and when the Albanian Muslim men rough him up, his death seems eminent. Zamira pleads with her grandfather, telling him that Kiril hid her from the Macedonian men who were searching for her. Her grandfather denounces her, calling her a whore, but then, in a surprising move, he also orders the Albanian men to let Kiril go and they do. The grandfather tells Kiril to “clear off.” Kiril hesitates, then walks slowly away. It seems that the conflict is over, that death has been averted. The lines of ethnic conflict are still intact, but its violent consequences seem to have been averted—at least for now. The narrative tension starts to dissipate, and there is a sense of closure to the episode. Suddenly Zamira yells to Kiril, “Don’t!” and runs after him. Her brother Ali steps forward out of the crowd with his machine gun ready and yells, “Sister, no!” She doesn’t stop. He shoots her in the back, pumping her full of bullets. The viewer sees her face as she is hit and falls to the ground. Kiril comes back to her and turns her on her side. He says, “I’m sorry,” but she puts her finger to her lips, apparently gesturing him to be quiet. Her life ends with this enigmatic gesture—usually an indexical sign, but here an iconic one: Why she does this, what it means, is left open. Kiril stays with her, in effect refusing to “clear
off.” After she dies, Kiril sits on his suitcase, staring at Zamira. This final shot emphasizes how this supposedly ethnic conflict has actually turned out: Zamira has been killed by one of her own family, while Kiril remains unharmed.

It is because the audience expects Kiril to die that the murder of Zamira comes as a shock. Led along by the beliefs of the majority of the characters—surely they know who their enemies are?—the viewer adopts the explanation of ethnic conflict just as the characters do. When Zamira dies, viewers feel the sharp contrast between what they anticipated and what actually happens. That experience is reprises at the end of the third story, when Zdrave shoots Aleksandar in the back, again in a moment of crisis defined by ethnic conflict. In both murders, the threat of violence that circulates around ethnic conflict fails to explain what actually happens: each side kills their own. However, the film’s narrative refuses to settle into a comfortable ironic reversal, as a more conventional film might do. Having shown that the categories of ethnic conflict do not explain the killings that occur, it then shows the characters’ failure to see this. The film dramatizes how indexical certainty closes down any sense of alternative understanding, any possibility of thinking otherwise. For example, when Aleks is shot, his family gathers to pursue Zamira with renewed anger, as if she were the cause of their shooting Aleks. Because the viewer has followed the complicated lives of the characters who will become victims, when the killings occur the viewer sees how ethnic conflict, and especially the violence of it, is reductive and mistaken, that the real situation is much more complicated. The viewer also perceives that the characters, themselves, cannot or will not see their mistaken-ness. For the characters, the indexical certainties that form the basis of ethnic conflict are not lessened by their failure to explain the violent deaths that occur—they aren’t even seen as failing.

The Western viewer may carry a sense of cultural superiority after the first story, a self-congratulating belief that ethnicity is a Balkan problem, not a Western European one. The second story dispels this. In England, simplistic binary oppositions of ethnic identity also fail to explain the deaths that occur. When Anne tells Aleks it’s important to “take sides,” she means take sides against war. Although this sounds like a more sophisticated cultural idea, in practice her binary opposition is drawn between ‘we’ in England who live in peace (conveniently omitting the “troubles” in Ireland), and ‘they’ in the Balkans who are at war. She believes London is safe as the Balkans are not, even warning Aleks that he shouldn’t return home to Macedonia because it is a country that “isn’t safe.” Her own understanding proves just as illusory—as the mass killing at the upscale London restaurant demonstrates. Her belief in this simplistic binary opposition is shown by her failure to recognize the dangers in London. The radio news in her office reports that “a bomb went off in Oxford Street,” but she pays no attention. At the restaurant, there is plenty of warning that violence is likely to occur, but she ignores this, too. The man who ultimately terrorizes the restaurant appears first as a customer who walks in, stands at the bar having a drink, and starts a fight with a waiter—angry words in a foreign language. After a fistfight he leaves, and the owner fires the waiter as if he were the cause of the fight—despite the bilingual waiter’s protest.

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20 He speaks Serbian, but since the film does not provide subtitles for this dialogue, many Western European and American viewers are positioned to share the ignorance of the English characters in the film.
Before the Rain

ビフォア・ザ・レイン

1994年ヴェネチア国際映画祭グランプリ（金獅子賞）ほか9賞受賞
第67回アカデミー賞外国語映画賞ノミネート

ミルチョ・マンチェフスキー監督作品

天才ミルチョ・マンチェフスキーが放つ衝撃の映像美

カトリーナ・カートリッジ
レード・セルベッジア
グレゴワール・コラン

マケドニア－ロンドン交錯する愛は時を超えてぬくら逢う

Before the Rain

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of innocence. Many patrons of the restaurant leave; Nick, Anne’s husband, also wants to go, but Anne begs him to stay, and they sit down again. She’s not thinking about danger because she’s in London, where it’s peaceable because it’s London and not Yugoslavia. To calm himself down, Nick tries to joke with the owner that “at least they’re not from Ulster,” but the owner is not amused—he’s from Ulster, he says—yet another case of ethnic conflict as misperception. When the stranger returns with a gun and starts shooting, people scream and dive for cover, Anne among them. As she is engulfed by terrorism herself, it has finally become clear to her that London is not safe either, that it is just as subject to arbitrary violence.

The film portrays cultural ignorance and provincialism on all sides, so that no cultural viewpoint is privileged in this film. In all three parts of the film, characters project the threat of capricious violence onto a cultural ‘other,’ unable or unwilling to recognize their own act of imagination in doing so. As a consequence, other people literally fall victim to their illusions. Those victims are not just people who threaten the viability of these cultural boundaries, like Aleks and Zamira. The victims include Nick, a white male English conservative who wants to go back to Oxford, who wants a stay-at-home wife, who sees just about everyone as a threatening ‘other.’ No individual viewpoint is privileged in this narrative, as no cultural viewpoint is privileged. There are neither outright heroes nor outright villains. Because there is no authoritative, unifying perspective from within the story, the effect of the film’s narrative is to foreground the cinematography and montage for its semantic value in constructing a viable perspective on the plot. Unlike the rigid polarities of ethnic conflict, the cinematography opens up the possibilities of variant interpretations and meanings by foregrounding the problematic relations among images. Through its cinematography and montage, the film constructs an iconic perspective that allows the viewer to question and challenge the deadening certainties of indexical meaning.

Just as indexical categories such as ethnicity do not fit the characters, the images of this film are not identical with the characters. The cinematography in this film is highly visible to the audience because it creates and maintains an iconic sense of juxtaposition between the camera and its subject. While Eisenstein could imagine the work of the camera as it generated a semi-abstract image, as a creative engagement with the action being performed in front of it, he ultimately conceived the camera as something to be used to tell the story, as a method of storytelling that was subordinated in importance to the story itself. Manchevski does something else. For him, the camera is more than a method. He values the cinematography in its own right, as a storyteller that is just as important as the story, and always distinguishable from the story though still related to it in some way. The camera is not devoted to any character’s point of view, it is not omniscient, and it is not stationary. What the viewer sees is a filmed juxtaposition of the storyteller and the story. That is, the story and the storyteller are juxtaposed, but they never match up exactly—or if they do, it is an unusual moment, distinctive for its sense of matchingness. More often, there is a sense of a shifting...

21 Manchevski, “Rainmaking,” p. 131, commented, “Is it a real ethnic conflict we are dealing with in Yugoslavia, or is it old-fashioned thuggery and land-grabbing masked as ethnic conflict (by the participants) and explained away as ethnic conflict (by the complacent world).”
fault line, between the story and the image. This is a concept of montage that opens up another
dimension of film-making. For Eisenstein, the montage on screen generated another dimension,
the undepicted image. Manchevski’s cinematography adds yet another conceptual dimension of
montage, between the story-as-story and the camera that tells the story. The story moves, and
the storyteller moves, too, so the nature of the juxtaposition is always changing. There is no way
to look through the camera to the story without seeing the camera. The viewer is always aware
that the camera is there, composing images. These images tell the viewer something about the
story and something about the image as image, the camera as composer. This is what makes the
cinematography cubist. The montage works in a similar way, announcing its presence at every cut.
There is no way to see the film without seeing the cuts.

For example, early in the first story there is a funeral scene that gives the audience their initial
view of the Macedonian community outside the monastery. It occurs after the sequence of night
scenes in which Kiril discovers Zamira in his room, but where the scene actually begins is left
open. The film cuts from shadowy close-ups of two individuals in the dark interior space of Kiril’s
room, to an ancient gold cross against a bright daytime sky. Next there is a soft-focus shot of a
rural hillside village in a closed frame. The image looks like an old landscape painting—with little
attention to perspective, no people, and a geometric emphasis on the curvature of the roads and
the shapes of grouped houses. The montage then cuts to a point-of-view shot, the perspective of
several women walking uphill, making a strong diagonal across the screen that draws the eye to
a distant group of people as their destination, but the viewer still doesn’t know why the group
of people are gathered or what they are doing. There is no linear sense of how the funeral scene
relates to the prior narrative in the way the film cuts to it.

Following the point-of-view shot, the montage moves to the first image that seems sequential,
implied by the previous image, as the camera is now close on the group of people who were
previously in the distance. However, the cinematography is not attached to any specific character’s
perspective, instead suggesting someone walking around the perimeter of the group, looking in
between people to try to see something of the burial rite. The camera moves continuously for
the next two minutes of the film. Initially focusing on a cantor whose voice accompanies the
cinematographic movement, the camera pans horizontally and diagonally, looking up and down and
between the backs and torsos of people for glimpses of the cantor and the two men lying in open
coffins. The camera’s movement gives the viewer extreme close-ups of people at the funeral, but
not the kind that stops on individual faces to establish character. Instead, these are semi-abstract
parts of bodies that are interposed between the viewer and the burial rite, interspersed with other
shots that pass across faces in the way someone might look around momentarily at the other
people who are present. Although the camera moves continuously, this is not a single take by any
means. There are as many cuts as usual in a scene, but here the cuts emphasize both the differing
angles composing the shots and the content of the shot as thematic. For instance, there is a
horizontal panning shot of lower bodies—legs, shoes, skirts, pants, food baskets on the ground,
Slav of New York

BEFORE THE RAIN

GOOD EYES

Vahva auton Makroniasta
Kun naapureista tulee vihollisia
and a machine gun dangling at someone’s side. The effect is to more strongly engage the viewer’s interpretive mind because the formal structure of the film image is brought out—the shapes of the human form within the shot, continuously changing with the moving frame, and the unusual angles of the shots in relation to their subject, an activity of the camera that calls attention to the perspective and imagination of the photographer composing the shots.

In a conventional film, this take might be simply an establishing shot—with a still camera, a single take, and an inclusive shot of a group of people all placed within the frame, to provide a sensation of orientation and a unified, omniscient camera perspective. Here, however, the film’s treatment of its subject is quite different. The camera asserts a physical closeness to its subject, but the meaning of the scene remains problematic. There is a provocative collision between the subject matter, largely static, and the actively moving camera that searches the scene but without reaching any cinematographic conclusion about what is most important or significant. Legs, shoes, food baskets, wine bottles, scarves, jackets, coffins, and escutcheons get equal attention. Although the camerawork is suggestive of point-of-view shots, the cuts and the moving diagonals give the viewer multiple perspectives rather than the point of view of a single character, or even successive characters. The camera’s movement is not dizzying, even though it is continuously moving. It gives the viewer a searching impression of the funeral scene. The women, an elderly one grieving more than the rest, are dressed in black, their heads covered with scarves. The men are bareheaded; some are middle-aged, some are younger; each is dressed differently. No one seems well-to-do, but no one seems truly destitute either. The escutcheons flapping in the breeze, some of them tattered, suggest traditional identities of some kind. The viewer glimpses the details of some of the burial rites—the
faces of the dead are covered with white cloth, and red wine is poured on the cloths. Manchevski has described his film as a “cubist narrative,” and in the montage of this scene, this sense of multiple, colliding perspectives on a single subject is brought out strongly. At the same time, it conveys a physical reality that prevents the scene from becoming abstract—if anything, it seems far more materially real than “realism.” This is achieved through a lively sense of the imageness of the image, an awareness of the complex act of seeing, that actively prevents a collapse into the content of the shot at the expense of an awareness of the interpretive qualities of the image.

The conventions of indexical camerawork have led to the belief that the form and the content of the shot are antithetical, that a viewer can look at one or the other, but not both at the same time. In this film, the viewer does see both at the same time because Manchevski’s cinematography locates the construction of the image in the relation between the camera and its object, not in the object itself as indexical semiotics does. In keeping with its cubist interpretation, the cinematography also refuses the use of renaissance perspective. For instance, as the camera moves to a tall man on the perimeter with a machine gun on his shoulder, the viewer sees his face clearly, but the camera does not rest on his face or follow his gaze. In a more conventional, indexical semiotics, the next shot would be a point-of-view shot, scanning the horizon for the enemy, valorizing this man’s gaze because he has the means of iconoclastic violence at hand, setting up the structure of a binary opposition between this man and the group of people he guards, and some enemy—two sides that will divide the designation of good and evil. Manchevski’s cinematography treats this subject in a very different manner. When the moving camera leaves the man’s face, it moves vertically up to a shot of the sky, then cuts to a high-angle shot looking down on the group and showing them gathered around two open graves.

What does the scene mean? It isn’t located in a linear narrative. It is simply located in daytime on a hill. It seems to be primarily an ethnographic scene that shows a small rural community of Orthodox Christians in Macedonia engaging in a ritual practice they have performed many times—an implicit evocation of cyclical time. The viewer doesn’t know who is being buried, nor does it seem to matter. The viewer sees—but does not feel—the sadness of the funeral. The cinematography has brought the viewer physically to the scene, but it has maintained an emotional boundary between the viewer and the viewed. The tone momentarily shifts as the camera pans the outer ring of the gathering and the viewer sees the man armed with a machine gun. The technology of modern warfare collides with the impression of old and enduring local customs. When the international idiom of machine guns provides entry, the viewer suddenly steps into the culture imaginatively, with a heightened emotional interest. Yet the cinematography does little more than pique the viewer’s curiosity, because it passes on to other elements of the scene that receive equally deliberate attention.

There is still more to the funeral scene. Near the end of the sequence of shots, something like an establishing shot is introduced, a long shot of the group of people gathered in a circle around the graves. However, it looks very different in this film because the camera immediately moves away from it in the beginning of a horizontal pan that radically opens the social frame of reference outward to include individuals whose relation to the scene is geographically established
but otherwise inexplicable. In this long, long panning shot, a single take that includes seconds
when no human being is in the frame, the camera moves horizontally away from the crowd across
the landscape and finally stops on a woman standing far from the crowd, alone, looking at the
funeral. The camerawork emphatically asserts the importance of this woman because, after moving
continuously for two minutes, the camera stops on her face. This shot conveys a sense of vast
space (but not time) between the funeral gathering and the solitary woman. The camera cuts
directly to the priest, then cuts again back to a close-up of the woman. She has some relation to
the funeral, but not as a member of the Macedonian community. Her gaze is emphasized when she
removes her sunglasses, but the back and forth cuts also emphasize that no one in the gathering
returns her gaze, or even notices her. What is she doing here? That feeling is heightened when she
says out loud to herself—in English, with a British accent “Oh my god.” This is the only dialogue
in the scene and it’s a monologue, a dialogue only with herself. What is her involvement? What
does she know?

Again, no answers. As she repeats the phrase, the camera leaves her face and starts moving again.
Starting to retrace its long panning shot, it comes across a boy in a plaid shirt with a small
camera—who aims it directly at the film’s camera and snaps a photo. The film’s camera recognizes
him indirectly by suddenly altering its own direction, vertically panning up the hillside, taking its
cue from the boy’s gaze as he turns around and looks behind him. There is a priest with a flowing
cassock starting down the hillside in the distance. The film cuts to a close-up of his face, and the
viewer recognizes Kiril. Is he on his way to the funeral? No. In an extreme long shot, the camera
follows him as he runs down a steep hillside in another direction toward a beautiful ancient church
on a promontory at the lake’s edge. He reaches it and runs around to the door on the other side.
The film cuts to a close-up of Kiril coming into the church, out of breath. He’s late—the other
priests are already there, and their morning service has already begun.

The funeral scene is over, but where it has ended is even more problematic than where it began.
In a way, the viewer realizes it’s over only after the event, when the camera is already inside the
church and a new scene is already under way. Up to that point, there is an expectation that the
cinematography will return to the funeral scene, to finish its interrupted pan back to the burial,
because the camera’s movement has been deliberate, not impulsive, as the carefully drawn angles
convey. As the camera continues to reframe its subject, in effect altering the conceptual frame
of reference, the sense of a unified scene—the funeral—gives way to accommodate all that is
happening in the same geographical area. The camera shows what might be seen from physically
standing in different places in the same area as the funeral, but the geographical unity does not
generate a sense of a unified story or a unified perspective. If anything, it thoroughly disrupts a
unity of place by moving to characters whose relation to the funeral is problematic at best. Kiril is
the only person in the scene that the viewer can recognize as an individual from previous scenes,
but he seems wholly unconcerned with the funeral. The English woman is Anne, whom the viewer
will know much more about in the second story, but who remains an enigma here. The boy with the
ANTES DA CHUVA
Milcho Manchevski, 1994
camera remains anonymous, though his plaid shirt may identify him as one of the children who threw bullets into the fire at the beginning of the story. These three individuals have no relation to each other except the relation of geography, which has come to seem like an accident rather than a purposeful unity of place. Unlike the enclosed and unpopulated landscape near the start of this sequence, the successive shots at its ending open outward to a highly problematic, even contradictory, relation between the people and the land—a dynamic juxtaposition of people and land that undoes any simple equivalence between the unity of a people and the unity of place. Narratively, the funeral scene disrupts any developing sense of a linear narrative because its temporal place in the narrative is uncertain. The viewer sees a great deal, but the iconic dimension predominates over the meaning of the scene within a larger narrative structure. The narrative openness of possibilities is strongly conveyed in every moment of the two-minute moving camera sequence, and by the way the scene stops ambiguously rather than ends. Consequently it remains wide open to interpretation, without closure, yet paradoxically suggesting an emphatic closure in its subject matter—the deaths of two men. As the narrative develops through the film, this scene remains available to the viewer’s interpretation of events because it is not directly juxtaposed in a narrative way with the scenes that immediately precede and follow it. What happens to this scene in the minds of viewers is suggestive of how freely the viewer moves in the domain of the undepicted meaning of the film. Viewers reach for the funeral scene at the end of the film, when the temporal frame of reference is thrown wide open, inviting juxtapositions and sequences over large reaches of reel time. They think back to the funeral and reframe/reconceive the scene as the burial of a main character, Aleksandar. For those who remember there are two graves, his cousin who was killed with a pitchfork is mentally laid to rest beside him. Which is to say, Aleksandar cinematically dies before he lives in this tale of three parts. It is not that the viewer remembers what the bodies look like in the coffins, nor does the cinematography return to the funeral site. Viewers who think it’s Aleksandar’s funeral make that conclusion on their own, achieving closure by recollecting the scene and retrospectively making it the end point of a linear narrative about Aleksandar. The visual sign that confirms this reading—for viewers who take it—is the presence of Anne and her emotional response to the scene, that social place where the camera comes to rest after moving for two minutes. It is Anne’s relation to this scene, not Aleksandar’s,
that clinches the interpretation that it’s Aleksandar who is being buried. However, there is much more to it, as I will discuss later in the essay, for what is also being buried here—as the cinematography has disclosed—is linear narrative.

While every shot in this film is composed differently and functions differently within the story, the example of the funeral scene does typify how the cinematography opens up the meanings of what is being photographed. Juxtapositions occur in many directions, often surprisingly, drawing out the significance of each image in multiple ways across all three of the stories.
Because the frame of reference is continually shifting, the viewer experiences multiple points of
orientation while watching the film. Each act of perception reframes other elements of the story
and gives them a different meaning. Typically, a major plot development takes the viewer through
a sequence of conceptual as well as literal reframings. Every time the viewer does not anticipate
what will happen next, the viewer reacts by reconceptualizing the story being told to include new
meanings, new ideas about what is happening—just to keep up with the story. To an extent, this
happens in any good film, but it usually happens through only one or two characters’ perspectives.
In this film, many more perspectives are in play, and moreover, they stay that way. There is no
definitive conclusion to this film, no single character who finally figures it out. The viewer’s
perception of the film’s images becomes a complex experience in its own right, a contiguous
plot about how to perceive the film. Because the film engages the issues, of juxtaposition at a
reflexive as well as a representational level, the viewer shares the general problems of continuous
misperception and re-perception with the characters in the story. At every point, the film is about
its relationship with the viewer as much as it is about the relationship among characters in the
stories. Not everything is in play at once—this is a carefully modulated experiment—but more is
in play than the viewer is generally aware of at any given moment.

Manchevski’s montage implies that there is no such thing as a pure indexical image in film, even
when images appear to be simple and obvious shots. He creates a montage that questions the
representational film image at the basic level of depiction, casting doubt on a viewer’s ability to
see any pure, objective depiction anywhere in the film, to say definitively what is on the screen
at any given moment. He emphasizes that the film image is an iconic sign whose meaning is
problematic. The shifting frame of reference affects entire scenes as well as individual images or
characters. The same scene can take on different meanings, a change that can occur within a scene
as well as retrospectively. Those meanings do not succeed each other in a series of negations—first
this, no, then that. Rather, the viewer holds these varying meanings simultaneously. The idea that
the funeral is Aleksandar’s does not negate the initial perceptions of the community or the other
individual characters in the sequence. Rather, it juxtaposes yet another dimension of the scene in
the viewer’s mind.

Women, Time, Photos

The reviews and articles about Before the Rain treat it basically as the story of Aleksandar. While
he is a main character in the film, there are also primary women characters who are crucial to the
film, even crucial to the intelligibility of Aleksandar’s story—as Anne is in contemplating whose
funeral it might be. The young Albanian Muslim woman, Zamira, is a pivotal figure in the first story
and the third. A photograph of her also plays a crucial role in the second story. She has few lines
of dialogue in the film, but this is hardly noticed in the first story because Kiril’s vow of silence—
until he breaks it—gives him even fewer lines. Zamira is herself a juxtaposition of modern and
traditional ideas about women, a woman whose gender identity is problematic to the viewer and
to her family, though not to herself. The viewer first sees her as a fugitive in the monastery when
Kiril discovers her at night in his room. Many viewers aren’t sure at first whether this slender
teenager is a girl or a boy. With crew cut and blue synthetic sports shirt, and with most of her body in shadows, she can easily be mistaken for a boy—especially when juxtaposed with Kiril, a boyish-looking young man. When he turns on the light bulb dangling on a cord from the ceiling, she crouches, covering her head in panic and urging, “Don’t hit me, please!” He steps back and she turns the light off, urging him, “Don’t give me away.” When he makes no verbal reply, she thinks he’s mute, then supposes that he simply doesn’t speak Albanian. She herself does not speak Macedonian. The cultural gulf between them seems doubly ironic in retrospect, when the viewer later realizes that she has only traveled on foot to get here hardly the usual idea of an international journey. She moves away from him to a corner of the room—not a long journey either—and pulls a blanket over herself. At first it seems that he will give her away, but he then changes his mind and her actions start to determine his. He goes to the garden (where the viewer first saw him) and brings back some tomatoes for her. She eats them ravenously and says softly to him, in a distinctly female voice, “My name is Zamira” and “You are good.” In these initial scenes with Kiril, Zamira’s appearance, assertiveness, and risk-taking as a fugitive all suggest a strong and rebellious person, despite her fear of being hit. A viewer could easily infer that she has a crew cut because she cut her hair herself in a rebellious act against traditionalism.

She seems resourceful, too. When the Macedonian men leave the funeral, they go to the monastery and insist on searching it. Ransacking every room, they fail to find Zamira, yet she reappears in Kiril’s room that night. Now more confident of him, she takes his hand, then relaxes on the floor across the room, propped up on one elbow looking at him lying in bed. The camera behind her emphasizes her shapely figure, and the viewer can see her red print pantaloons as well as her blue sports shirt—her clothes are a juxtaposition of traditional and modern dress. Their eyes meet, but they are still far across the room from each other, as they also are at dawn when suspicious monks break into Kiril’s room. Kiril is banished from the monastery for concealing her, and possibly because the monks also assume that Kiril has had sex with her. However, the viewer doesn’t see Kiril and Zamira even embrace, and the impression they give is quite different—that they’ve stayed on separate sides of the room. Once they have traveled on foot some distance from the monastery and are alone in the mountains, he kisses her very awkwardly on the cheek, and she throws her arms around him. Kiril promises that he will take her to the city of Skopje, that he will protect her and no one will find her. Although she doesn’t understand what he says, she is willing to go with him. Kiril has scarcely spoken the words when they are surrounded by armed Albanian men. Among them is Zamira’s grandfather, who, unlike most of the other men, is not armed. She is relieved and happy to see him, but her grandfather shows only anger and disgust toward her. He hits her hard on the face, knocking her down again and again. Although bloodied, she keeps getting up, arguing with her grandfather, protesting that Kiril loves her. Kiril tries to protect her from being hit, but he is easily overpowered by the other men, who pin him to the ground. The grandfather rages on at Zamira, calling her a “whore” and a “slut,” and yells, “I locked you up in the house. I cut your hair. Should I shave it off?” He cut her hair short to punish her, and specifically to punish behavior that he considered sexually immoral—her going out alone to the sheepfold. Finding her with Kiril seems to be only more evidence of the same immorality.
In her grandfather’s view, the haircut is a sexless and humiliating punishment, an indexical sign of her disobedience that should shame her into staying home. Ironically, the viewer cannot help but think that if she were in a place such as London or the U.S., it would be a very fashionable, contemporary cut. Social context matters!

In the way Zamira’s story is told, the film is sympathetic to her, expressing that sympathy by juxtaposing her as an individual with the assumptions made about her. For example, the film calls attention to her own reserve with Kiril in contrast to the accusations of promiscuity and violence made against her. In contrast to the certainties of prejudice, the film gives the viewer no answers as to what happened with Bojan at the sheepfold and who killed him with a pitchfork. Whether Bojan assaulted her, whether Zamira killed him in self-defense, remains hovering in the narrative, never resolved. There are hints that each of them was capable of the acts attributed to them, but no one seems to know for certain what happened, or even whether Zamira was involved in Bojan’s death at all. Among the men, the antidote for this not-knowingness is the enforcement of their prejudice against Zamira as a young woman who has generated uncertainty because she went out alone. She went out of the house, went out of the village, went out of the culture by herself. Both Macedonian and Albanian men call her a whore. No ethnic conflict there!

Indexical thinking is perceived as authoritarian and narrow-minded whenever it loses its certainty. The old priest at the beginning of the story does not seem authoritarian, but only authoritative, when, evoking traditional wisdom, he says the flies are biting, so it’s going to rain. Where social issues of human freedom are concerned, however, indexical truisms appear as authoritarian because they appear arbitrary—at least to people like Zamira. Indexical meaning emerges as the idiom of intolerance, recognizing only one meaning, denying interpretation as a function of naturalizing the sign. In contrast, Zamira herself has imagination. She thinks in iconic terms, she thinks about what may be possible rather than what is certain. When Zamira refuses the indexical meanings forced upon her, when she refuses to be an obedient object, she refuses certainty for herself and risks the unknown, in running away, in hiding in a Christian monastery, in leaving the community altogether with Kiril, a young man who has treated her with respect, but whom she hardly knows. This is the Zamira who turns her face eagerly into the driving rain at the end of the film, who finds relief and hope in its soaking, symbolic purgation of the culture that has intolerably bound her. This is how the film remembers and values her in its last portrayal of her, in her moment of hope and freedom—a moment that comes after the rain, not before.
Zamira is accused of a good deal more than the vague charge of uncertainty. Her grandfather shouts, “You’ll start a war!” but she doesn’t start a war. She’s the only one of them who dies. What has this latter-day Helen of Troy done? Her social crime is an epistemological one. She has refused to engage in the production of certainty. As an indexical sign, this is her special duty. In indexical semiotics, the object—not the subject—is the source of meaning, the source of certainty, the guarantor of veracity. This is why the obedience of the object is so important. Obedience is the only acceptable action because the indexical sign vacates the possibility of interpretation. But that obedience is more than an individual action. It serves a critical semiotic function as the culture’s mythic origin of certainty. The belief in the natural image, the belief that the truth emanates from the object, irrespective of the subject’s perceptions of it, comes into direct conflict with Zamira’s own imagination. What for her is freedom, a variable relation to society, is for men like her brother an immense epistemological threat. Her grandfather seems less threatened because he is more confident that he can command her obedience. When he fails, Ali shoots, suddenly claiming the Islamic prerogative to defend the honor of his family from sexual impurity. Before the Rain highlights the eagerness with which the men sexualize this semiotic problem. They understand the iconic imagination as promiscuity, and the epistemological purity of their indexical semiotics as the purity of blood lines.

As the narrative develops in the next two stories, the production of certainty turns out to include the production of temporal certainty as well—for the viewer who may feel very distant from this indexical prejudice but actually is not. This film is well known for the way it plays with time. The experience of watching the film involves many jolts, many reframings, but the reframing of temporality itself is one of the biggest jolts the film delivers. Many critics have pegged it as a “circular” narrative, but they neglect to say that the circularity they perceive is not apparent until late in the film. Viewers typically see the film as a linear narrative until about fifteen minutes before it ends. Then a sudden reframing of temporal perception occurs, and viewers decide that “before” is really “after,” that they have been traveling in a circle without knowing it. However, this circularity ignores many warnings—written in graffiti and also spoken by the old priest—that “the circle is not round.” Such interpretations also ignore the importance of women characters in the film even though it is Zamira who is essential to the perception of a circular temporality in Before the Rain. It is easy for a viewer to see how Zamira is exploited to serve the indexical beliefs of “them,” the violent men of the Balkans who hunt her down and believe they are preserving their culture in doing so. It is more difficult to perceive one’s own indexical meanings, especially where concepts of time are involved. Zamira is equally exploited by “us,” by viewers who try to make a circular narrative out of this film.

22 Many women have written against this practice (which occurs only in some Muslim communities). See, for example, Mackey’s description, Saudis, pp. 139-40. Mackey explains that killing is seen as the prerogative (or the duty) of the woman’s male blood relatives, such as brothers or fathers, rather than a husband
23 See for example, Zizek, “Multiculturalism.” Zizek is dismissive of the film.
Zamira serves as the pivotal point for reframing part of the narrative as circular when the viewer gets a glimpse of her in the third story. She peeks around a doorway to see the guest sitting in the front room—Aleksandar who has come to visit her grandfather. This brief glimpse emphasizes her haircut because the viewer sees only her head and face. Her brother Ali quickly shoves her back out of sight, but most viewers recognize whom they’ve seen. Since the first story ends with Zamira’s death, when she appears in the third story very much alive, the viewer suddenly reconceives this third story as a flashback. Her death is yet to come.

Zamira reappears again for a much longer time when Aleksandar rescues her. Finding her in the cabin at the sheepfold, he brings her out alongside him. The viewer sees not only the distinctive haircut, but also the blue sports shirt and red pantaloons she wears in the first story. Many other characters from the first story have reappeared in the third, but none of the other characters has the same effect on the viewer—because none of them died in the first story. At the end of the third story when Aleks is shot, he tells Zamira to run, and she does. It is Zamira who leads the viewer—or perhaps I should say, runs the viewer—in a circular way back to the beginning of the first story. The film appears to end where it began: Kiril is picking tomatoes, the old priest warns him of rain, they leave the hilltop garden, and the monastery with its church by the lake can be seen in the distance. However, viewers now see someone else as well: Zamira is running up to the hilltop from one direction as Kiril and the old priest are leaving it in another.

In the viewer’s perception of the film, Zamira’s appearance, especially her haircut, can function both as an iconic sign, with great variability of meaning, and as an indexical sign, a distinctive means of recognizing her wherever she appears in the film. The haircut as iconic sign varies with the cultural frame of reference—punishment in the eyes of some, stylish for others. However, the haircut as indexical sign, as the viewer’s means of recognizing Zamira as the same individual, remains invariable throughout the film. Read as an iconic sign, it varies with juxtaposition, with social context, but read as an indexical sign, it does not. The iconic sign tells something about her as a person. The indexical sign is far more limited and reductive, having only to do with what she looks like physically. One might use indexical signs to identify a dead body. Insofar as Zamira is used as the reckoning point for establishing the temporal direction of the narrative, the sense of her as a person becomes secondary, even expendable. This is why the character of Zamira is often omitted from critical descriptions of the film.

If constructing a temporal direction for the narrative is the viewer’s priority, then Zamira functions only as an index that enables the viewer to construct a circular narrative. Zamira, as second- or third-world woman, goes spinning into orbit as the vehicle of idealized circularity, certainty, and nature.

Yet this circular narrative can be only partial. Zamira’s death at the end of the first story ends the so-called circle. This is where the circle is broken, where it fails to be round. The circular interpretation simply feeds on its own illusions, leaving out the second story and its primary character, Anne, the British woman. Like Ali, the Anglo-American viewer who believes the film is circular cognitively shoots his (or her) own cultural sister—not to ensure sexual purity, but to ensure temporal purity. Like ethnicity, circular temporality may seem to carry explanatory
power, to make sense of things in the most fundamental way. In this film, however, temporal purity proves to be just as hollow as ethnic purity.

It is worth asking why viewers thought the story was a linear narrative in the first place. The first story is constructed only loosely with regard to temporality. For example, neither the camera nor the cuts exactly follow the movements of the characters, Kiril and the old priest, as they walk down to the church at the monastery. There is a sense of openings between the shots, creating a sense that other things may be happening elsewhere at the same time—as the cuts in the funeral scene affirm. Events at the monastery are a ritual of daily routines, so one day is much like another. Temporal reckonings have more to do with night and day, and with seasons, dry and rainy. The viewer has a rough sense of one day following another, but the sense of linear time is rough, approximate, often hazy. This doesn’t seem to matter very much because there is also a sense that the possibilities are comfortably limited: Everyone travels on foot in the first story. The range of possibilities seems conceptually and imaginatively limited, and therefore contained, by the pace of walking. Linear time is most prominent for events that circulate around Zamira, often geared to who knows what about Zamira and when they know it. For example, to comprehend Kiril’s gestures such as the nod that constitutes a lie to his fellow priests, one must have a sense that the scene occurs after he has found her in his room, not before. However, since Zamira’s relation to the other characters in the first story is problematic, to say the least, the elements of linear narrative that begin to accrue around her as a fugitive do not cohere to interpret the story as a whole.

The end of the first story is emphatically disruptive of the sense that one scene follows directly from the preceding scene. The image of Kiril sitting on a suitcase, looking at the dead Zamira lying on the ground, seems to be the last shot as it fades to black, but there is one more. The black screen gives way to a shot of a woman in a glass-walled shower. The image is filled with a medium shot of her through the marbled glass. As she takes a shower, she cries, but she doesn’t speak. The woman is Anne, and the film hasn’t shown her since the funeral. The hiatus of the black screen allows for the viewer’s cognitive jump cut back to the funeral as the preceding scene that matters for understanding this one. The shower scene is also followed by a black screen, so it is enclosed in a black screen—a kind of cinematic glass-walled shower stall in itself. This shower scene projects a linear temporality only with regard to the history of American cinema, as an ironic commentary on Hitchcock’s *Psycho* and the slasher genre. Unlike Marion Crane and numerous slasher victims, Anne is safe from attack behind that hard glass door, as the purling drain of transparent water on the whitest of shower floors makes very clear. She is not, and will not become, a victim of violence. However, in her protected glass-walled space she also seems trapped, isolated and alone, excluded from the world. The shot does not even offer a spatial orientation beyond the glass walls. This shower could be anywhere—Skopje, London, some other city—anywhere in the world where there’s electricity and indoor plumbing. Daytime, nighttime—it could be either. It’s wet, but not because it’s the rainy season. Anne is portrayed within her own emotional world. She seems even more excluded from society than she was in the long panning shot at the funeral because this scene breaks the temporal and spatial reckonings of the first story altogether. When the film cuts to the second black screen and announces the beginning of the second story with an inter-title, the viewer becomes aware of having no sense of how the first and
second stories may be temporally related. For viewers who expect a linear narrative, this nagging question intensifies as the second story progresses through a rapid collage of images and sounds of Anne’s life in London.

The second story opens with Anne walking through the modern offices of the photo agency where she works. Everyone speaks English, and people walk busily through the space in all directions, as if the space impeded their purpose. There is no indication of where the office is, what kind of building it’s in, where the building is, or whether it’s day or night. For a Western, urban viewer, the first story generates a de-familiarization so strong that this sudden return to office life is a jolt, and its routine practices seem both familiar and bizarre to a Western viewer because the sense of spatio-temporal disorientation continues—though the space is now larger than the shower was. In Anne’s editorial room there are long tables illuminated by fluorescent lights. The sense of time is of multiple, simultaneous orientations projected from bits of information as she works. She’s on the phone with one photographer while looking at photos, listening to radio news, while the rap music of the Beastie Boys comes and goes, as does an office assistant who rudely throws a package in front of her. These numerous juxtapositions within Anne’s daily life have no linear organization. They occur randomly, haphazardly—whoever calls, whatever is on the radio while she’s at work, whatever photographs are pulled out of the next envelope, and so on. The camera follows her, shows us what she’s doing, what she’s looking at. Anne is in almost every scene in the second story, and in this regard it is her story, but her life is an intersection of many incomplete voices, sounds, and images in an apparently arbitrary collage with no meaningful progression.

Anne conceptualizes her life temporally, but her purpose in doing so is to prevent surprising juxtapositions in her life, so the people she knows will not collide with each other. She is thinking in a kind of linear time, but it’s the time of a day, “her” day—her mother for lunch, her estranged husband Nick for dinner, her working hours in between—this is how she has arranged “her time.” It is a largely subjective and proprietary time that makes use of clock time as a method of organization. Aleksandar’s first appearance in the film comes in this milieu. He’s “supposed to be in Bosnia,” as Anne says with obvious irritation when Aleksandar surprises her on the street while she’s with her mother. So much for Anne’s organization of “her” time. The second story represents to the viewer the way Anne moves through “her” day, or days, in a montage/collage of juxtapositions that typify her perceptions and the illogic of her life. She has a husband, a lover, and a mother who all reject Anne’s own priorities for herself and try to force her into a wifely role they each want her to play—though not with the same man. Nick sounds conservative when he suggests that they move back to Oxford and adds with a touch of contempt, “You could give up that job of yours.” Aleksandar may seem more tolerant in his style, but he implies the same thing when he asks Anne to come to Macedonia with him, handing her a plane ticket he has already bought for her. Both men seem absurd, not logical, in their demands on her. Within this framework constructed by others, Anne sounds contradictory when she tries to reject their attempts to control her, to define who she is. For example, when she has dinner with Nick, she tells him that she’s pregnant, he’s the father, she really cares about him, and she wants a divorce. This makes sense to her, but he is astonished and feels betrayed.
The juxtapositions of the second story do not convey a logic of cause and effect, and neither does Anne as a character. “Her time” is much more a question of who “spends” time with whom, rather than what comes before or after what. For example, the viewer has the impression that it doesn’t matter whether she sees her mother before or after seeing Aleksandar, as long as she doesn’t see them both at the same time. This is why the viewer easily loses the sense of before and after in this section. The viewer watches Anne’s apparently habitual actions, but no particular linear order suggests itself, much less a sense of cause and effect. Working in a room at the photographic agency, crossing the street, walking down the sidewalk, meeting her mother, spending time with Aleksandar, spending time with her husband, talking on the phone—these actions form a collage, but not a linear narrative. How is all this temporally related to the first story? The viewer has an increasingly unsettling feeling of not knowing.

Connections to the first story develop when the viewer starts to see documentary photographs of violence in the Balkans. The viewer sees Anne in the agency office viewing black-and-white documentary photographs early in the second story. Documentary photos emphatically assert their indexical meaning, their truth values as indexical images, an imageness that originates with the object photographed. Anne first picks up the (now) famous photograph of the emaciated man in a Serbian prison camp. Here it is one of a group of black-and-white photographs that also show little children maimed and crying, some lying dead in a corner. There are photographs of men with machine guns, among them a smiling man with a swastika on his arm, and pictures of mourners at gravesites. As Anne makes her way through these images, each photograph in turn fills the screen. For more than a minute, the film screen is saturated with their indexicality. For most of the shots, the film’s camera moves across the photos, making its way to different details, sometimes quite noticeably, as in a vertical pan of the man with the swastika.

The camera then focuses on Anne viewing the photographs. The film viewer, having seen documentary photos fill the screen, notices how Anne is now interposed between the photograph and its direct perception by the film viewer. Her body partly covers the photographic images as she leans over them. In a close-up shot, where Anne holds a photo up to study it, the film viewer sees only her eyes and the white backside of the photo. In the belief system of the indexical photograph, both the viewer and the photographer are not important for its meaning because

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24 Cukovic, “Emaciated Man.” This photograph was widely distributed in English and American television and print news that condemned the Serbian aggression in the Bosnian war for reviving the use of concentration camps like those in World War II. The documentary photographs shown in this sequence are by Cukovic, Hutchings, Amenta, Chanel, Bisson, Jones, and Betsch.

25 These are actual documentary photographs made in the early 1990s. The photographs of Zamira and Kiril, and the photographs of the prisoner that Aleksandar looks at in his home in Macedonia, were made for the film.
ΠΡΙΝ ΑΠΟ ΤΗ ΒΡΟΧΗ

Σκηνοθεσία: Μίκλος Μαντσάνη. Παισιού Χατζή Κάλακα, Ράνος Σερμπήτσια.

«Βροχή» από βραβεία για τα Σκόπια

Αυτή η ταινία των Σκόπιων από τον Καλό Καλλονέρο, δημιουργήθηκε από την Μίκλος Μαντσάνη. Στη συνομιλία της ταινίας, ο Καλός Καλλονέρος θα μιλήσει στην ανάκληση της ταινίας της Παναγιώτας Καλλονέρου της Παναγιώτας Καλλονέρου. Ο Καλός Καλλονέρος οικείωσε στην Μίκλος Μαντσάνη της ταινίας της Παναγιώτας Καλλονέρου.

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neither engages in interpretations of the supposedly self-evident meaning emanating from the photographed object. The film’s repeated inclusion of Anne in the same frame with a photograph insistently portrays her subjectivity as a viewer—she looks grim, troubled by what she sees in the photos—but this attention to her by the film’s camera conflicts with the absolute indexicality associated with black-and-white documentary photographs. The sense that her subjectivity interferes with the presumed objectivity of the photograph is symbolized in the way her body often interferes with the film viewer’s perception of the full content of a photo. In these moments, she seems expendable, especially to the viewer who is deeply committed to indexical meaning.

This conflict becomes acute when Anne is later portrayed viewing another set of photos. Here the film viewer in search of a linear narrative has a vested interest in what the photos portray. Unlike the first sequence of photos, which related only in a general way to violent conflicts in southeastern Europe, this second sequence of photos makes a far more direct connection with the rural area of Macedonia portrayed in the film. Anne is in her office again, and again the viewer also sees the documentary photographs she is looking at. As the camera pans four photographs spread out on a surface, the viewer recognizes the individuals in them: Kiril and Zamira. The viewer sees Kiril, sitting on his suitcase, then Zamira lying on the ground, dead, as uniformed investigators stand near them, one of them taking photographs. Film viewers suddenly believe they know where they are in the film’s temporality. Photographs of Zamira’s dead body place their origin firmly after the material fact of her killing, establishing an irreversible linear sequence: first the death, then the photograph of the dead victim. The film’s linear narrative snaps into place: The second story follows the first in linear time. For those who think indexically, linear time seems to be outside the narrative, enclosing it, but actually it is the documentary photographs of Zamira’s death that generate this concept of linear succession in the viewer’s mind. The viewer extends the past/present implicit in the photograph conceptually over the whole film, assuming the third story will follow the second in linear time. Zamira’s indexical features identify her dead body here as they identify her live body earlier and later. Her production of certainty includes the production of temporal certainty, the certainty of linear narrative, for any viewer disposed to see it.

While Anne is looking at the pictures of Kiril and Zamira, she gets a phone call from someone in Macedonia asking for Aleksandar. The voice sounds like Kiril’s—he had told Zamira that he had an uncle in London who was a famous photographer. Anne does not realize—but the film viewer does—that she may be looking at a photograph of the man she is speaking to on the phone. The viewer, now armed with this superior knowledge, gains an epistemological and apparently privileged viewpoint, a dominance over Anne, as all the characteristics of linear narrative seem to fall into place, excluding Anne’s subjectivity. The film viewer knows how Zamira’s death occurred, what led up to it—but Anne is lacking that knowledge. Ironically, at the same time the photographs are appropriated by the viewer to orient the linear narrative, the film viewer is also reminded by the sound of Kiril’s voice that the complex story behind this picture cannot be gleaned from the documentary photographs. Ironically, as indexical certainty is posited by the
viewer who wishes to see it, the social incompleteness of what is depicted in the documentary photograph is emphasized.

The second story strongly emphasizes the contrast between the apparent simplicity of documentary photos and the confusion amid the colliding images of Anne’s life in London. The photographs seem firmly united to what they depict, a clear and stable point of objective reference, not subject to interpretation or the multiplicity of meaning that the film’s montage creates, and therefore not subject to misinterpretation either. Which is to say, the second story emphasizes how the documentary photograph retains a privileged place in a socially enlightened Western European contemporary culture—as the indexical meaning that is still believed without question. It occupies a privileged place as an indexical meaning that is believed to stand apart from the prejudices evinced by men embroiled in ethnic conflict, such as Zamira’s grandfather. Anne’s mother is not about to cut her daughter’s hair because she finds out about her affair with Aleks, much less lock her up in the house. Neither is her husband, Nick, who volunteers to his wife, “I forgive you the photographer.” Liberal tolerance, it seems, is everywhere, and Anne expresses her frustration at its slick surface when she angrily replies to Nick, “I don’t want you to forgive me the photographer!” What Anne senses in Nick’s social tolerance is the categorical rejection of her subjectivity. There is a categorical rejection of her subjectivity as well by the viewer who reduces her to a device that involuntarily supplies the incontrovertible evidence of documentary photographs that generate a linear narrative.

As this story shows, linear narrative involves a categorical rejection of subjectivity, and so does the documentary photograph. Like Zamira, Anne becomes insignificant as a character when the viewer uses her as a device to determine the linearity of the narrative. Her temporal task is to supply the indexical photographs that supposedly disclose and guarantee the linear narrative. Having done this, Anne seems even more expendable after her conversation with Kiril underscores her limited knowledge of what is depicted in the key photographs. Like Zamira, her life is effaced by her role in establishing the certainty of linear narrative. For Anne as for Zamira, her iconic way of thinking, her subjectivity and complexity are diminished to the extent that she becomes another pivot point in the construction of linear narrative. A darkly humorous riff on the theme of the female breast emphasizes what part of Anne’s anatomy is the essential pivot point and how her breasts indexically substitute for her person in the minds of many. The theme is stated in the shot of her in the shower at the end of the first story. Unlike Marion Crane’s anatomy in the Psycho shower scene, Anne’s breasts are in full view. When Aleksandar and Anne take the long taxi ride, Aleksandar rummages under her clothes to kiss one of her breasts. In the restaurant, when Anne tries to console Nick as she stands next to him—he’s still seated at the table—she pulls him closer until his head is leaning on her clothed—and more inaccessible—breast. Finally, after the terrorist has left the restaurant, Anne is slumped on the floor next to a dead waiter whose hand lies aimlessly on her still-clothed breast. The corpse’s hand falls away when she moves—an appropriate metaphor for the futility of using the woman-as-natural-image as a point of orientation in the composition of the second story.
The indexical function of the photographic image in the second story conflicts with the significance and interest in Anne as a character, as her own subjective viewing of the photographs visually interferes with the film viewer’s unimpeded view of the photos. In its portrayal of Anne, the film asserts her subjectivity, and in its cinematography, it shows how this conflicts with indexical meaning. For the film viewer who wishes to see a linear narrative, one way to resolve the conflict is to eliminate Anne as a significant character, as many critics in effect have done when they discuss the film. For both Zamira and Anne, the imposition of linear narrative works in the same way as Barthes’ second order of meaning because it is a second order of meaning, in effect renaming the significance of who is shown and immobilizing the icon that becomes incorporated into the index.

“Have a Nice War. Take Pictures.”

As a photographer himself, Aleksandar has a relation to the photograph that differs from that of the women characters in the film, but his relation is also substantially changed by an iconic way of thinking.26 Recall that the theory of the indexical image presumed a subject that was not conceptually visible, unlike the “objects” of nature giving off their indexical images. The subject was merely the passive recipient of images forcibly intruding upon the mind—the equivalent of a camera recording an image. The subject was invisible as the work of the camera was invisible in recording the object’s image. This is why the image of white men in cinema has not been perceived as visible, in contrast to images of women, and also why cinematography as a subject of inquiry has been so difficult to conceptualize. To make the art of cinematography visible, as iconic thinking does, violates the invisibility that the theory of the indexical image requires. Simply to recognize the body as a fetish, however, does little to disrupt the system conceptually. In this film, the disillusionment of photography’s true image occurs through a recognition of the social character of the documentary photographer as well as the photograph. In the third story Aleksandar explains what happened when he was in Bosnia, why he resigned his job as a war photographer:

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I \text{ got friendly with this militia man, and I complained to him I wasn’t getting anything exciting. He said, “No problem,” pulled a prisoner out of the line and shot him on the spot. “Did you get that?” he asked. I did. I took sides. My camera killed a man.”}
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Facts are made, not photographed already in existence. As Aleksandar shuffles through the sequence of his photos showing the prisoner being shot, but not yet dead, falling but not yet fallen—he finally gets it. Aleksandar’s supposedly neutral act of recording an image gives way to his recognition that a deathly indifference that craves “anything exciting” has produced these photographs. The outside, politically neutral observer he thought he was, exterior to the making

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26 See Eisler, “Going Straight.” The gendering of still photography as male occurred at about the same time as the gendering of film-directing as male, after World War I.
of the indexical photograph, emerges as the co-creator of the scene “objectively” depicted in the photographs.27 The passivity and indifference, the cynicism hidden under the guise of objectivity, is not difficult to see in Macedonia. When Aleksandar asks the local doctor what the United Nations is doing to stop the violence, the doctor explains that they merely come by once a week to bury the dead, that their attitude is, “Have a nice war. Take pictures.”

When Aleksandar tells Anne he’s quitting photography, she replies, “You were born to be a photographer. You can’t be anything else.” In returning to Macedonia, he tries to be something else, but there is more involved than giving up a camera and a job. Aleksandar finds himself beset with a photographic mind of a particular sort, an indexical way of thinking that is much harder to relinquish than the material camera itself. When he goes to Bojan’s house to find out why a small crowd has gathered there, he walks in and sees his dead cousin lying on the bed. The film’s camera cuts back to Aleksandar. As if by compulsion, Aleksandar holds up his hand near his face, as if he were about to cover his eyes in grief, but the gesture turns out a bit differently. His hand pauses—as if he were holding a camera—and the audience hears the click of an imaginary camera shutter. The idea of a photographic image intercedes between Aleksandar and the social, material reality of his cousin’s violent death, as if it were a method of protection.

Aleksandar seems unable to think differently, unable to be anything else, and when he seeks out his own death, he pursues the only alternative he can think of within his indexical way of thinking. He walks over to the Other side of his binary opposition and becomes the visible object, taking sides again even as he mouths the platitudes of neutrality—let the courts decide if Zamira is guilty. When Aleksandar says, “Shoot, cousin, shoot,” his appeal to Zdrave is couched in the iconoclastic double-talk of violence and photography. Aleksandar flaunts his physical visibility as a target, and that visibility is affirmed when a bullet enters his back. As Aleksandar lies on the ground, face up, he notices that the rain begins to fall as the biting flies foretold—a seeming validation of his indexical way of thinking. Aleksandar is happy and satisfied to be at peace with this naturalization, his contact with the real of the Object, unmoved by Zdrave’s grief and horror at what has happened.

Aleksandar’s death gives him a striking visibility for the linear-narrative viewer because Aleksandar-the-photographer has been until this point the invisible, metonymic embodiment for the truth of linear narrative. The illusion of linear time generated by the photo of Zamira in the second story has been allowed to hover over Aleksandar’s return to Macedonia in the third story. When the artificial support system that is linear narrative collapses with his death, the viewer reaches for Zamira as a substitute who will provide the consolation prize of circular narrative to give a pseudo-completeness and unity to this tale in three parts. The circle is broken in the second story by Aleksandar and Zamira together, that is, in juxtaposition. In

27 Aleksandar looks through the pictures, so the viewer has an opportunity to see there is no way Aleksandar’s account could be inferred from the pictures. In a nice casting touch, Manchevski plays the prisoner pulled out of the line and shot. In Cohen, “Balkan Gyre,” Manchevski commented that, in quitting his life as a war photographer, Aleksandar leaves “a morbid voyeurism and a life of moral emptiness.”
the circular version of the narrative, Aleksandar’s death occurs before Zamira’s. So, if she’s dead, his death has already occurred. However, in the second story, the photographs of the dead Zamira appear in between scenes in which Aleksandar is very much alive. In the scene before the photographs of the dead Zamira, Aleksandar is shown with Anne conversing in the cemetery. The film cuts to Anne at her office, where she sees the photos of Zamira dead. The film then cuts to Aleksandar getting in a taxi with a duffel bag, leaving London.* The juxtapositions of this montage make no sense as a circular narrative because the live Aleksandar both precedes and follows the photographs taken after his death. This juxtaposition of scenes is impossible regardless of where the “circular” narrative is believed to “begin.” The same is true for the equally impossible linear narrative. There is no unifying narrative, no unifying perspective.*

Ironically, the point where the viewer thinks the narrative falls into place is the point where it collapses. “Cubist,” as Manchevski has called it, is indeed a more suitable description of the film.*

**Linear Narrative, Cubist Narrative**

Thomas Woodard, a believer in linear narrative, has written of his sense of fascination and disillusionment in viewing this film. He describes Before the Rain as “a violation of the law of unidirectional temporality.” Equating belief in linear narrative with the law, he also equates linear narrative with a logic of cause and effect. He explains that Before the Rain “goes beyond the level of individuals and nations to undermine our faith in universal temporality and hence in the logic of cause and effect.” Well, his faith, at any rate. The so-called universal law of unidirectional temporality that articulates the logic of cause and effect is governed by the semiotics of the indexical image. Linear narrative claims to be indexical, and in the making of that claim, what is at stake is the interpretation of juxtaposition itself. What linear narrative requires is an indexical succession of images, a belief that images are and must remain distinct, that each image points to the next one in line with irrevocable certainty. The “law” of the relation of successive images is that one image must follow from the preceding image, as cause and effect, as object to subject.

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* The graffito on the wall behind him says, “The circle is not round.”
* Manchevski, “Rainmaking,” p. 129, comments, “This story is of a cyclical nature with—and this was very important—a carefully designed quirk in the chronology.”
* In Abadzieva, Interview, Manchevski discusses the “cubist” elements of his work, chiefly with regard to Dust. My discussion of “cubist narrative” as such is indebted to this discussion, but the ways I describe it emphasize different features. Manchevski insightfully critiques the oppressiveness of Hollywood film: “Art is never what, but always how. . . . When a film is being made in Hollywood, it is what that is always being discussed, although the essence is how. The oppression of art in that system is carried out through the oppression of the how.”
* Thomas Woodard, “Living/Reliving.”
A chronicle is not necessarily a linear narrative. As the comments of the viewers of The Suitors demonstrate, if the viewer doesn’t know what will happen next, then the relation of images becomes problematic. The viewers’ “not-knowingness” incites many questions about the characters, excites the imagination to consider many possibilities and alternative meanings for what is on screen at any given moment. An iconic montage of the kind advocated by Eisenstein provokes iconic readings of the film from the viewer. That problematic quality is not erased by a concept of one event following another. It is erased by a concept that one event, and only one event, must follow from another.

Woodard’s faith, or perhaps his ex-faith, reflects both the unique meaning that an index claims to express, the essence of a particular object, and the requirement that an indexical sign be specifically located in a material place—in this case, between one particular image and another. Linear narrative is a particular kind of chronicle, one that is narrowly based on an indexical concept of film montage. Linear narrative posits—rather literally—a train of events where one event leads to another in a chain of causation with a feeling of inevitability. A concept of linear time is one effect of this kind of montage, but the underlying principle of linear narrative is the indexical logic of its juxtapositions, the belief that one event follows another because it is dictated—and I do mean dictated with all its political connotations—by the previous event. That is, the linearity that is most valued is less a concept of time than what might be called a linear logic. The line may be either a vector or a circle. For example, the circle of shot/reverse shot is also indexical, especially as it was described by the post-structuralist Daniel Dayan, as a binary opposition with a shell game of displaced identity.\[^{32}\]

The logic is grounded in the indexical image, an image that has only one meaning, that points indexically to the next image. The “invisible” editing associated with Hollywood studio cinema must be invisible as the subject of Peirce’s indexical theory was invisible. Viewers can see the cuts in any film if they look for them, but the cuts of “invisible” editing are rendered irrelevant because the juxtapositions do not allow an iconic relation among images.\[^{33}\]

There is nothing to think about. The indexical narrative is a linking of events in a rigid and totalizing succession. Whether that succession is understood as linear or circular does not matter because the crux of the linear narrative is the contiguity of images, one next to another.

Peirce’s racist story about indexical meaning makes evident that one person’s indexical meaning is another person’s arbitrary signifier. The supposed chain of causation that constitutes a genre convention—or any other social convention—may seem secure, but its logic is always vulnerable,

\[^{32}\] See Dayan, “Tutor-Code.” The shot/reverse shot is a kind of circular narrative—there is an ideological presumption of a 360-degree circle (even though no camera shot can actually shoot 180 degrees). The circle is divided into two halves, each pointing indexically to the other to tell the story.

\[^{33}\] Parallel action might seem to be an exception. However, the simultaneity of parallel action paradoxically secures the linearity of linear narrative because the suspense cannot be grasped except by understanding that the same temporal reference applies to and encloses both sides of the parallel. See Kibbey, “C. S. Peirce and D. W. Griffith.”
always in danger of being exposed as pseudo-logic, as a chain of arbitrary associations that have no inherent logic and no certainty. After all, what is logical about the summary execution of Zamira? What is logical about the arrogance of Nick and Aleksandar in their treatment of Anne? What is the logic of Macedonians and Albanians buying machine guns? When Anne and Zamira refuse the production of certainty that guarantees the truth of linear narrative, when their social resistance exposes how epistemological certainty is merely a euphemism for social control, they are indirectly perceived as precipitating chaos when they are omitted from easy explanations of Before the Rain as a circular or linear narrative. It is not only the characters of Anne and Zamira within the story who refuse the production of certainty. Such refusals would have little impact unless the montage and cinematography refuse it as well, as they do in this film. This film makes clear how the role of Justitia as the arbiter of signs, including signs of temporality, is another prejudicial stereotype based on indexical logic, as racism and xenophobia are based on indexical logic. For viewers who are accustomed—and few viewers are not—to using the convention of the natural image/woman to order the meaning of images, the film seems to offer the semiotics of Justitia in the indexical qualities of Zamira's appearance as a way of measuring time, in Anne's speech about taking sides against war, and especially in Anne's unwitting disclosure of documentary photographs that seem to give indexical order to the narrative as a whole. However, these latter-day Justitia figures do not perform the task laid out for them in Saussure's paradigm a century earlier—and reaffirmed many times since in film and other kinds of media. Because they do not ground the meaning of images in particular and signs in general, they appear to be a threat to social order, agents of chaos. But this idea of chaos is itself a conformity to the dictates of linear logic.

As to how this is so, Peirce's writings are again instructive. In the context of Peirce's essay in which his racist story of the theft appears, his racist arrogance is framed by a pathetic desperation. Peirce was frightened by the overwhelming odds against ever being right about anything in a universe governed by chance. The indexical certainty of his natural image was a little oasis of “truth” in a terrifying world of chaos. For him, the only alternative to indexical meaning was randomness. In his Calvinist worldview, the natural sign, the index, stood as a defense against the arbitrariness of the world, not just the arbitrariness of linguistic signifiers. In this late essay by Peirce, the iconic properties of mathematics are not intriguing or promising in their imaginative possibilities. Instead, the mathematics of probability has become a weapon against his own iconic subjectivity, a formidable threat that drives him to seek the safety of indexical meaning.

Deprived of indexical certainty, Woodard sees the same thing Peirce saw: chaos. Either there is certainty or there is mayhem. Using an iconoclastic metaphor of violence, Woodard characterizes Before the Rain in terms of “its explosion of narrative time logic.” He expresses nostalgia for “our usual conception of history: both as the avenue leading toward the

34 On the Justitia figure, see Kibbey, “Gender Politics of Justice.”
fulfillment of human hopes, and as cozy prison, a confining, secure framework, within which we must work out our personal and collective destinies.” Part Two suggests the limitations of a linear-narrative framework when it segues from the documentary photographs at the agency office to the mass shooting and destruction at the restaurant. The virtuoso display of shot/reverse shot technique in the restaurant sequence shifts from Anne and Nick to the gunman and the viewer. Anne and Nick, sitting at their table-for-two, are in the cozy prison of their deteriorated marriage, in the confining secure frame of shot/reverse shot, trying to work out their personal and collective destinies. Since their marriage is in bad shape, the security of the framework is fragile. As Anne and Nick each cast nervous glances outside the perimeters of their cozy prison table, the camera disrupts the shot/reverse shot to follow their glances—to a girl at another table, to a waiter, to the stranger who walks in and goes to the bar. These glances of the camera are brief, representing the brief glances of Nick and Anne as they look out from their cozy prison.

When the stranger returns and starts shooting, the camera cuts away from Nick and Anne altogether to cover the disruption of the gun shots—like a war photographer who suddenly hears gunfire while filming someone speaking. The shot/reverse shot is then reorganized between the gunman and the viewer. There is a point-of-view shot over the gunman’s shoulder (video-game style) as he shoots, and an image of the gunman shooting directly at the camera/viewer (Porter/Scorsese style). In its carefully organized rotation of the shot/reverse shot from the table-for two to the chaotic outbreak of apparently random violence, the film suggests how they are made from the same cloth. Chaos is merely the inverse, the flip side, of indexical certainty. The binary opposition of certainty versus chaos is itself a reductive choice, one that suppresses the iconic dimension of the sign. It excludes the iconic as a possibility—precisely because the iconic is itself about possibility.

How might temporality be understood in an iconic way of thinking? What would be different from the order of linear narrative and the order of chaos? Teshome H. Gabriel has suggestively raised the issue of qualitatively different temporalities in his contrast between the cognitive characteristics of third-world cinema and folklore on the one hand, and the art forms of literate Euro-American culture on the other. According to Gabriel, in third-world cinema and folklore, “time [is] assumed to be a subjective phenomenon, i.e., it is the outcome of conceptualising and experiencing movement.” Time is composed in an ongoing manner, as a way of conceptualizing and experiencing movement. The subject’s ongoing engagement with the material and social world is

35 The last scene in Porter’s The Great Train Robbery (1903), and in imitation of Porter, the last scene in Scorsese’s Goodfellas (1990).
36 See, for example, Marks, “Signs of the Time,” a Deleuzian analysis of documentary films about Beirut. Marks implicitly relies on the binary of order and chaos, with Beirut exemplifying chaos. Chaos is recast and recuperated as a “hole in the image”—reflective of this article’s reliance on Deleuze’s theory of the photographic image as a recorded image. See the important critique of Deleuze in Schwab, “Escape from the Image,” which also describes Deleuze’s concept of time as all-encompassing—in Gabriel’s terms, a Western and first-world concept of time. For a quite different view of Beirut politics and culture in its complex historical context, see Mackey, Lebanon.
the focus here, and variable concepts of time are the “outcome” of conceptualizing movement, both physical and conceptual movement. The subject creates a sense of time, or rather, senses of times, through interaction with the world.

Gabriel contrasts this subjective temporality of third-world cinema with the temporality of Western European and American art forms, especially Hollywood studio cinema, where “time [is] assumed to be an ‘objective’ phenomenon, dominant and ubiquitous” and “each scene must follow another scene in linear progression.”38 Time is believed to be outside the subject altogether, not something the subject composes but something the subject is in or under the control of. Time is dominant and ubiquitous—it controls, orders, and determines. It is everywhere, always already there irrespective of what the subject’s engagement with the world is. There is no such thing as being outside time because there is no outside to time. Because time exists entirely apart from the subject, there is no concept of time as something composed. Time is outside the reach of culture as well as out of the reach of the individual subject. Time is in the realm of pure objectivity, pure certainty—pure index. And time moves. It moves in a linear progression, it is a vector, headed in one direction only, pointing (indexically) to something better later. Whether that is the Christian millennium or the proletarian revolution, classical Marxism and Christianity accept this concept of temporality just as fully as Hollywood cinema does. The subject’s preoccupation in this system of time is to keep track of where one is on the vector, whether that is individual age, “late capitalism,” or some other cultural scheme. In the Y2K crisis of the millennium, the deep fear was not that linear time would cease to exist, but that computers would lose track of it.

Although Gabriel makes some important and valuable observations about concepts of time, he also maps them across relatively simple binary categories: subjective/objective time, and third-world/first-world art forms. Before the Rain presents the viewer with more complexity. For instance, first-world linear time is most tenuous in Manchevski’s story set in London, where according to Gabriel’s model, one would most expect to see it firmly in place. Anne’s story is instead much closer to the cultural ideas that Gabriel attributes to third-world cinema, a subjective time, “her time,” that is the outcome of conceptualizing and experiencing movement. Yet Manchevski’s film also makes clear how great the distance is between Anne and the culture of second- or third-world rural Macedonia—in her isolation at the edge of the funeral scene, and in a phone call in the last story where she tries to call Aleksandar but fails to reach him because she doesn’t know either Macedonian or German—the two languages the telephone operator speaks. There is a somewhat clearer sense of linear time, if not linear progression, in both of the stories that take place in rural Macedonia. However, the concept of linear time is intermittent, the juxtaposition of images as likely to be nonlinear as linear.

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Before the Rain has greater temporal complexity than Gabriel’s model allows for because Manchevski follows through on the implication of Gabriel’s model, the implication that linear time is itself subjective, that linear narrative is only one way of conceptualizing time, as culturally bound as any other mode of temporality. To make this important leap requires an idea of subjectivity that Gabriel also uses in analyzing third-world cinema, that ‘subjective’ can be understood as culturally shared rather than simply the experience of an individual subject.

Anne’s time as “her time” can be read indexically, as emanating from her body, and therefore only as specific to her in a personal sense, as an individual subject, but such a view makes ‘subjective’ seem less cultural than it is. Believers of linear narrative resist conceptualizing it as subjective because linear narrative seeks to posit a universal time. To consider it as subjective is tantamount to repudiation. It destroys the privileged place of linear narrative, and along with that, the socially privileged place of those whose belief in it affirms their hegemonic identity. The idea of qualitatively different, incomparable times across cultures is similarly a threat to the coherence of linear narrative, but it’s not very much of a threat when it is left at the level of analytical abstraction, as Gabriel’s comparative table leaves it.

Manchevski goes the whole subjective way to dramatize what belief in linear narrative is like as a subjective experience, as the outcome of conceptualizing and experiencing movement. Put another way, instead of incorporating icons into indexes, he incorporates indexes into icons. The impressive result is a film in which “before” and “after” are situation specific, functioning differently within each story. That is, they are subject to the social conditions of their deployment. Consequently, the more the linear viewer presses the narrative to make sense as a unified narrative with a cause-and-effect succession of images, the more slippery, abstract, and even ridiculous the effort to do so becomes. The film shows how easy it is to invert “before” and “after,” how the story as one story simply doesn’t add up. This happens because the film develops an iconic way of thinking to reconceive what these concepts of temporality are about. Lines, circles, spirals—all these concepts of time are diagrammatic, which is to say, iconic. Even in Peircean semiotics, these are not indexes. They are icons, subjective, speculative, hypotheses with no inherent relation to whatever may be true.

Far from being an abstract, avant-garde, or purely aesthetic experiment, Before the Rain’s dramatization of relative temporality had a very direct social relevance for the former Yugoslavia. Ethnic conflicts were killing thousands of people, and it seemed to many that Macedonia would be next to experience the renewed cycles of violence that had characterized the Balkans for at least a century. Before the Rain is a profoundly anti-war film because it rejects both the linear, Western
La vida cotidiana invadida por la violencia de las guerras


Cornélio Queiroz
de la redacción de El Comercio

Aunque las películas de guerra forman un género en la historia del cine, no se puede decir que aporten una idea profunda sobre el tema. Antes de la lluvia puede ser considerada como una película en blanco y negro, donde el odio se convierte en el desencadenante de la violencia en sus grados más extremos.

En el primer episodio del film, titulado Palabras, un joven conocido como Tomislav Karel, es recordado en un monumento del parque de la ciudad de Yugoslavia. Su muerte es atribuida a un problema de salud mental. La sensación de haber ayudado a un moralmente desestabilizado joven es muy dolorosa para todos.

No hay dudas de que es un algo trágico, pero el sentimiento de culpa es compartido por todos. Los muertos del conflicto pueden ver a través de los ojos de un extraño un poco más allá de la realidad. El conflictivo mundo que el hermano de uno de los hombres del monumento, un peligroso soldado de guerra, se convierte en una realidad para todos.

Antes de la lluvia es una obra de arte de escrito belga pícaro. El estilo de Míloš Mašenkovski es sorprendentemente sencillo. La película es una representación del drama de vida. El conflicto más profundo de Alex es que su fotografía, algo valioso en la guerra, no puede impedir que el crimen sea cometido.

Bij vlagen oogstrelend portret van Macedonië

Miroslav Karel

ENNAN REGNET FALLER
Regi: Míloš Mašenkovski
I rollerne: Rade Serbedzija, Katerina Cordilij, Gregoire Colin, Latinka Mitrovska, Silvie Stojevska, Jay Villiers, Josif Jostovski m fl.

Vi kommer inte att förstå mer om krigets mekanism: rätter eller erskader efter den här filmen hellre. Vi kommer inte att förstå mer om borriken. Och det är inte för att ingen regn faller, det är att besvära om Bosniens

Marko kommer förstå, de blickar bort mot en by på en höjd och konstaterar att det röda köttet regnar där. Det kommer inte att förstå hur om borriken. Och det är inte för att ingen regn faller, det är att besvära om Bosniens

Tiden värme inte, med men är inte rund, att mennas dungena, i nattet på oss. Och de get om
version of the inevitability of violence and the circular, cyclical (spiral) version of inevitable violence attributed to Balkan culture. That is, it rejects the prophecy of inevitable violence: History does not have to repeat itself. This film also recognizes that, in the subjective concept of time, temporality is only one aspect of a person’s or a culture’s engagement with the material and social world. Individuals and cultures are not governed by time. They compose time. Linear narrative is only one dimension of indexical meaning, and the larger issue is indexical meaning itself.

Manchevski’s film provides an iconic reconsideration of a great variety of indexical meanings, incorporating many kinds of indexes into the iconic images of his film. Before the Rain dramatizes that the pseudo-truths of indexical facts are actually dependent on social conditions for their credibility. The film continually asks, what is believed to be intrinsic or inherent or true? By whom, under what conditions—or in what collisions? It shows as well that when indexical meaning is privileged, the act of belief may produce the apparently neutral fact of the moment, such as the documentary photograph, but it simultaneously privileges the systems of prejudice and intolerance that also depend on privileging indexical semiotics. Indexical meaning closes down the possibilities for multiple interpretations by asserting an intrinsic relation between the sign and its object. Interpretive consciousness is lost because the apparent need for interpretive consciousness is lost, creating a snowball effect in which one index seems automatically to lead to another. There can be no recognition of the subjective nature of indexical meaning for a fact to be a fact, any more than there can be a recognition of the subjective nature of linear narrative if it is to serve as an objective, definitive frame of reference. The absence of interpretive consciousness is crucial to the credibility of indexes.

Before the Rain restores interpretative consciousness, creating a need for interpretive consciousness, by engaging the iconic significance of the image throughout the film. Manchevski subverts the privilege of linear/circular narrative and creates multiple interpretations of every character, every event, every image, every temporality. There is no place, no time in this film where any viewer can say with certainty what is portrayed on the screen at any given moment. While its colliding juxtapositions are similar to Eisenstein’s iconic theory, Manchevski enters into new cinematic territory with his concept of cinematography as cubist narrative, a “new imaginative register,” as the director of the Slovene Cinemathique put it. Like Eisenstein, Manchevski sees the audience as crucial to the completion of the film, to the existence of the film’s most important dimension, its undepicted meaning. To that end, Eisenstein’s own theory of iconic juxtapositions emphasized the relations among images and the dynamic of the geometric and other formal properties of what was depicted on screen. In Manchevski’s film, this montage is important, but the cinematography of scenes such as the funeral scene adds a further dimension of juxtaposition. In Before the Rain, the juxtaposition of the camera and its subject becomes a primary point of attention, not just in the technical sense but in a conceptual, interpretive, artistic sense. What it represents is not the point of view of single consciousness, but multiple and colliding points of view that are qualitatively different. This is what makes the viewer realize the iconic possibilities of each scene. There is no moment of total certainty, but at the same time—importantly—there is no moment of total chaos either. This is an iconic theory of the director/cinematographer, what this film offers instead of the concept of photography as the recorded image. The camerawork is iconic, the artist’s engagement with his subject, and it makes that engagement problematic and
variable, open to the conscious interpretation of the viewer, even emphasizing the viewer’s need to interpret what is shown to follow the story. Before the Rain bears consideration as one of the most important films of the 1990s. Manchevski’s creation of cubist narrative in film has offered something new and significant—and to viewers internationally, not just for those who saw and valued it in the former Yugoslavia. Why might contemporary audiences prefer cubist narrative to linear narrative? Cubist narrative is socially tolerant, it’s more imaginative—and it’s also more realistic.

(From: Theory of the Image, Capitalism, Contemporary Film and Women by Anne Kibbey, Indiana University Press, 2005. Reprinted here with permission of the author.)
The ‘Rain’ maker

NAME: Milcho Manchevski

DESCRIPTION: Balkan beatnik whose first film is the talk of Venice.

WHAT THEY’RE SAYING: He lives in New York, works in London, shoots in Macedonia; next stop, Hollywood?

By MAX ALEXANDER

Quentin Tarantino wants to see it. U.S. distributors want to buy it. Venice loved it, and Toronto awaits it. “Before
the Rain” is not your average Macedonian-English-French co-production. But then, Milcho Manchevski is not your average
Macedonian director.

On the celebrity scale here at the Venice Film Festival, Manchevski falls rather far below Jack Nicholson and Harrison Ford.
But last week, when the paparazzi dragged him down to the sweltering beach and asked him to take his shirt off for some photos, the
handsome 34-year-old helmer knew he wasn’t in Macedonia anymore.

“Before the Rain” is about an Eastern European civil war that barely rates page one of the New York Times: The cruel fight between
Christian and Muslim neighbors in the rugged countryside of Macedonia, the region of northern Greece that borders on Albania and the former
Yugoslavia (see review, page 43). Although the film isn’t exactly a whodunnit, what has people talking is how it manages to tie together the senseless slaughter of yuppies in London and the equally incomprehensible peasant feuds of Macedonia. To say more
would reveal too much — some critics here were angry that they were told of the ending — but the film’s circular narrative reminded
many of Tarantino’s movies.

More surprising than the movie’s ending is Manchevski himself, who also wrote the film. The first stunner is that this Macedonian native
has lived in New York’s East Village for almost 10 years. The second is that he is already a well-known director of slick musicvideo
and TV commercials — that is, when he’s not writing films and novels. His published book is “The Ghost of My Mother”; his musicvid

“Before the Rain,” which was produced by Polygram France for under $3 million, is a high-calorie visual feast, but otherwise bears
no resemblance to the empty theatrics of musicvids. That’s because Manchevski never regarded his commercial career as an end in
itself.

“Musicvideos teach you the discipline of production — how to get a lot done in a short time,” he says. “It’s an exercise, like pumping
iron.” When it came time to create real characters for a feature film, Manchevski says “that was the easy part. I consider myself first a
writer, and it’s what I’ve been waiting to do for 10 years.”

Manchevski grew up in a middle-class family in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, but he was not destined for a normal Macedonian life. “I’m a
city rat,” he says. “I was reading American comic books at age 3½.” Both his mother, a doctor, and his father, an engineer, died of
illnesses by the time he was 14. He finished high school under the care of an aunt and won a scholarship to study film at Southern
Illinois University.

Returning to Skopje after graduation in 1988, Manchevski entered the Macedonian equivalent of development hell. His initial
project — “The Wild One” meets Macedonia, as he describes it — was put into turnaround by the government. “My ‘colleagues’” — the
established filmmakers — “convinced the politicians not to fund my film,” he says. “I was viewed as an upstart.”

In 1995 Manchevski moved to New York, where he labored as a court interpreter while banging out treatments. His break came when
he shot a seven-minute promo for a film he was pitching to now-defunct Vestron. The film was never made, but the promo, which included
a fake TV commercial, caught the eye of a commercial production company; Manchevski’s commercial career was off and running.

The director says the story in “Before the Rain” came to him on a visit three years ago to Skopje, which is being drawn into the ethnic
wars to the north in Serbo-Croatia. “I’ve spent most of my life not taking sides,” he says. But Westerners — and he includes himself in that
group — are just starting to realize that the troubles in Eastern Europe are not so removed from their own (presumably) safe
sphere. It’s appropriate that the film premiered in Venice, which is only a few hundred miles across the Adriatic from the turbulent
Balkans.

Manchevski, who has a girlfriend in New York, has not been home in a year and a half because the film was based in London.

Now Manchevski seems ready for Hollywood, which has embraced European commercial directors such as Ridley and Tony
Scott. “There are aspects of Hollywood filmmaking that I love,” he says. “But I don’t know if Hollywood will like me.”
MANCHEVSKI ‘DUST’ FLIES
Pic inaugurates Miramax-Redford co. alliance

By GREG EVANS

NEW YORK — Milcho Manchevski will direct the first film produced under the alliance between Miramax Films and Robert Redford’s South Fork Pictures. “Dust” will be produced by Redford and South Fork president Michael Nozik.

Manchevski is best known for his Oscar-nominated film “Before the Rain,” but his profile has climbed even higher since the director has been linked with two high-gloss projects: Warner Bros.’ James Dean biopic and Columbia Pictures’ Brad Pitt project called “The Devil’s Own.”

Manchevski said Monday, “At this point I’m working on all three (projects) at the same time,” and “the one that’s ready first will be first up. Industry buzz has the director still talking money with Warner Bros. and Columbia.

Sources said Tommy Lee Jones and Ralph Fiennes are at the top of the “Dust” producers’ wish list. No casting has been announced.

Nozik said the budget for “Dust” will be “in the neighborhood” of $20 million. Manchevski’s estimate was higher: “Thirty million dollars, at least,” the director said.

Described by Miramax as a “hallucinogenic epic Western,” “Dust” launches Redford’s new South Fork banner. The project is an offshoot of the two-year first-look deal, announced last winter, between Redford’s Wildwood Enterprises and Miramax owner the Walt Disney Co. South Fork is a subsidiary of Wildwood.

South Fork is expected to focus on films in the $8 million to $15 million budget level, but “Dust” carries a higher price tag, at least in part because much of the film will be shot on location in Turkey.

Manchevski, who said Monday he had finished penning the script just that day, described the film as “two different halves of a story.” One plotline, set in turn-of-the-century Turkey, involves two Texas brothers on opposite sides of the law, bounty hunting, gold and blood loyalty. Other plot, set in contemporary New York, has a 90-year-old woman turning the tables on a burglar. Film jumps between the interrelated storylines.

Miramax co-chairman Harvey Weinstein and exec VP of acquisitions Tony Safford negotiated the “Dust” deal with Manchevski’s agent, Robert Newman of ICM; attorney Barry Tyerman reped South Fork.

Weinstein said in a statement that “Dust” is “exactly the type of project and Milcho exactly the kind of director we hoped would be involved with South Fork.”

Redford called Manchevski “an extraordinarily talented filmmaker with a unique vision.”

Nozik said South Fork hopes to begin production in the fall, although Manchevski said fall preproduction is likely. “I like doing a lot of homework,” the director said, “so I don’t want to rush things.”

Manchevski’s “Before the Rain” was nominated for a best foreign-language film Oscar, and won, among other fest prizes, the Venice Film Festival’s Golden Lion Award for best film.

SCREEN DAILY

Manchevski plans fake documentary

14 February, 2011 | By Martin Blaney

Milcho Manchevski, whose Mothers (Materi) is in Berlin’s Panorama, is planning a fake documentary Sunshine as his next project.

“It looks like a doc, smells and moves like one, but is a piece of fiction,” Manchevski told Screen. “It is about a charismatic guy for whom reality is an undefined concept.”

He added that he would like this character study to be shot in a city in Western Europe rather than in the US or Macedonia, although he has not decided whether to shoot in English or another European language.
FOR MILCHO! Heat’s building on a Warner Bros. remake of “Dial M for Murder,” the 1954 Alfred Hitchcock suspense. Dish hears WB and producer Arnold Kopelson are sweet on Nicole Kidman to play the role originated by Grace Kelly, and also on director Milcho Manchevski, who directed the Oscar-nominated Macedonia pic “Before the Rain.” Manchevski, who wrote and will direct “Dust” for Miramax, is also being courted for WB’s James Dean biopic and “U.S. Marshals,” the “Fugitive” spinoff to star Tommy Lee Jones, also produced by Kopelson. Neither Kopelson nor Manchevski’s ICM rep Robert Newman would comment.

LEONARDO DICAPRIO MEETS with director Milcho Manchevski (Oscar-nominated for “Before the Rain”) to talk the James Dean biopic … Woody Harrelson and Milos Forman dined at Drai’s Wednesday talking the Larry Flynt biopic … What’s Mel Gibson doing in Branson next Tuesday? He’s guesting with Regis and Kathie Lee, who are doing three “live” shows from Branson’s Grand Palace theater … Carol Channing receives the “Top Hat” award from Steve Silver at San Fran’s Beach Blanket Babylon Sunday. The not-to-be-missed revue in its 21st year … The Young Musicians Foundation’s 35th annual luncheon benefiting violinist Yo-Yo Ma at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, hosted by Eva Gabor … Richard Gere’s collection at the Beverly Hilton … The Dogs of War is on show Saturday at the Universal City Hilton. Carter Sett holds its all-comedy fundraiser for the AIDS Research Foundation Sunday night.
SMITHEE' GETS HELMER

By MICHAEL FLEMING

In the latest twist to "An Alan Smithee Film," screenwriter Joe Eszterhas and producer Ben Myron have found a director to capture their comedic insider's look at Hollywood filmmaking: Milcho Manchevski, a Macedonian living in New York whose debut independent feature was as serious as it was acclaimed.
MEMORANDUM

TO: Milcho Manchevski
    Robert Newman
    Michael Nozik

FROM: Bart Walker

RE: DUST

DATE: May 30, 1995

I spoke with Willi Baer Wednesday night. He is considering a $17-
$18 million offer for international rights excluding North America.
We should know today. I will call him.

I spoke to Jane Bascle whose offer is this: $14.2 million total: it
an acceptable Eloah cost is $14.6 million, plus the excess over $2.5
million if any Japanese sale, up to a total of $15 million.

I'm in Washington, D.C. today at a family event but I will be checking
in. I suggest that Michael and Robert get together the comprehensively
list for domestic submission this weekend so that the script is in
everybody's hands by Friday afternoon.

I'll check in from the road. If you need to reach me, leave a message
with my assistant Christina.

Dictated but not read

July 24, 1995

Mr. Milcho Manchevski
VIA FAX - 011-389-91-211-811

Dear Milcho,

Thank you for the absolutely fabulous flowers. Are you having a
religious experience? I like the effects.

Scott Rudin would like to see you in New York regarding THE
ALIENIST, as soon as possible. He's meeting with several directors.
When do you think you'll be back in New York? How's the script
coming along?

Let me know, and thanks again.
Best wishes,

Patty Detroit

PD/it
concl.
cc: Doug Mac Lauren
    Robert Newman

RAVENOUS

FROM: Milcho Manchevski

TO: Laura Ziskin

We need these solid, great actors to BRING OUT THE HUMOR
and the humanity in this scary and disturbing story.

We have a terrifying, way-out film. It’s exotic,
strange, a whole different wild world. It’s not
predictable. As Bob Harper said - if it works, it will work
on its own merit, not because it is like any other film.

New faces - if they are strong and cool - become hip
on their own merit: like Trainspotting, Reservoir Dogs,
Pulp Fiction, Soul Food...

Following a trend isn’t hip; creating a trend is hip.
Mr. Milcho Manchevski
Vadci Films
91000 Skopje
MACEDONIA

December 1, 1995

Dear Mr. Manchevski:

We are sending you a project called BRUNO MANSER written by David Franzoni. We would love for you to become involved in the development of the script.

Briefly, let us tell you what attracts us to this story. Bruno was a man who left his life in the western world — he wanted to find a place where he could rediscover the essential truths in life. In Borneo he found the Penan, a little known nomadic tribe whose philosophy towards life was antithetical to ours. Most interestingly, they no longer had a concept for war or killing other human beings. What Bruno found in them was a people devoid of evil.

While Bruno was living with the Penan, the Minister of the Interior (who had given logging concessions to his relatives) set about destroying the forest where the Penan lived. Bruno galvanized the tribe to thwart the loggers. Ultimately Bruno had to teach these people to take on the very qualities that he loved them for not having — namely, to protect themselves, if need be, by killing. The result of his efforts was that he became a hunted man with a price on his head — the government wanted him dead at all costs.

We think this is an extraordinary heroic story. We would love to work with you on this project.

All the best,

Courtenay Valente
Channing Dungey

December 11, 1996

Dear Casey and Marc:

Just a note to state the obvious: if we want to try to have POTTER’S FIELD finished for an October/November 97 release, we should be in pre-production already.

As things stand now, and according to a production (and cash flow) schedule prepared by Bob Colesbury weeks ago, we are three to four weeks behind for a March 10th start date.

It is hard to aim for delivery four to five weeks earlier than initially scheduled, while at the same time we keep moving at a pace slower than the one initially scheduled.

Hope this note finds you well.

Warmest regards,

Milcho Manchevski
Manchevski and Oscar nominee colleagues Nikita Mikhalkov, Ang Lee, Gérard Corbiau, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío with Michelangelo Antonioni

With Kurosawa’s Golden Lion
October 2, 1994

FAX TRANSMISSION TO:
PATTY DETROIT & ROBERT NEWMAN
IOM
Los Angeles

From:
MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

Total number of pages (including this one): 1.

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Dear Patty & Robert:

Just finished reading Gangland by Joe Kasterba. It's fucking brilliant. Brutal and brilliant; or brutal, but brilliant. Love it! What is the situation with it? Can we get it? Let's get it. Please advise.

Warm regards,

Milcho Manchevski

P.S. Got a new phone and fixed the line - it will sound much better next time.

---

December 12, 1995

Mr. Milcho Manchevski

Vedur Film

P.O. Box 36

9000 Skopje

Macedonia

Dear Milcho,

Enclosed please find the following screenplays for your consideration:

ALICE IN WONDERLAND written by Andrew Birkin based on the Lewis Carroll classic. ALICE IN WONDERLAND is an open directing assignment at Warner Brothers.

J. EDGAR HOOVER: An open directing assignment at Warner Brothers is about the life of the FBI Bureau Chief.

Both are pretty inactive projects and would need an enthusiastic director to interest Warners. It looks like they are going to make a deal with Taylor Hackford on DEVIL'S ADVOCATE.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Best wishes,

Robert Newman

INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE MANAGEMENT

c/o Richard Feldman

Sue Rodgers
Just When You Thought It Was Safe to Scream in Space Again

ALIEN RESURRECTION
Some More Script Notes (Pt. 2)
After the Meeting with Sigourney Weaver
February 22, 1996

1. The film needs to be FUN.

And, in this case, scary is fun. Scary visceral and scary primal. Fun, but not dumb. The Alien series has always been adult and intelligent fun, which definitely includes shiitloads of the visceral and primal.

Some of this fun fear - obviously - comes from the fight with the Aliens, but the more gripping and deeper fright comes from the identity crisis. Ripley as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. As the human becoming a vampire. We all feel it or felt it as our very first fear. Basic, powerful identity crisis terror.

2. This doesn’t mean that we should eliminate the shoot-’em-up fun that the series offered in Pt

2. This stuff needs to be tough, clean and realistic, without insulting our intelligence.

3. Back to fear:

Ripley has ambivalent feelings toward herself. And, thus - toward humans and toward the Aliens. She is not sure of her identity and this provides for the real horror.

Thus, we are not sure which side she will take. This fact is in the script, but make it more obvious, especially after the Aliens escape and even at the beginning of the battle.

Make us feel schizophrenic about liking Ripley. (Should we like her? She prefers the Aliens? She is an Alien? She is not one of us. But, we’ve always rooted for HER, how can she do this?). Only later does she come around.

4. Ripley is not sure who she is. Fear, not Sartre.

Back to the title.

Who’s an Alien now?

Am I a legal alien [low “a”] in this world? (Is Call alienated, an alien?)

All of this is in the script, and we shouldn’t dwell on it, but just be aware of its importance and flush it out a bit.

At the beginning, as Ripley is being taken to her cell, they pass by the glass cage with the Aliens. She hears the ultra-sound no human can hear. She is drawn to them, stops, comes to the glass. The soldiers try to yank her away, but she is stronger. They pull out the guns, but the doctor orders to wait and see. Ripley looks at her reflection in the glass. There is an Alien behind the glass, so for a moment it feels as if the Alien her/himself is Ripley’s reflection. Since Ripley doesn’t know what she really looks like,

Dear Milcho,

I am about to start shooting a new film so before things become too hectic I wanted to let you know how glad I am what we had a chance to work.

I thought your take on Aliens was very compelling. In the end for will follow its own instincts about all of this.

In any case, my admiration for your work grows as your splendid film continues to resonate in my head and heart.

I wish you all the best and look forward to working with you some day soon.

Very sincerely,

[Signature]

[Category]

1. THEME: I’m more interested in Tesla the genius and Tesla the man, than in Tesla the Martian. Cut out the generous torso. Utilize the floating lightening only when necessary. Introduce instead his earthquake-causing vibrators et al.

Tesla the person is lost in the Martian/invention story, neither of which gets enough attention nor explanation.

2. CHARACTER: The citizen Kane character arc doesn’t work on Tesla. He is strange enough when successful that we don’t need to see him devoured by ambition, and - on top of that - acting like Kane. More powerful if he is stoic, yet very pained.

2-1/2. As a matter of fact, he seems to have been a highly functional autistic person.

3. MOTIF/STRUCTURE: The conflict Edison-Tesla is perfectly mirrored in the Salieri-Mozart relationship.

3-1/2. MOTIF/STRUCTURE: Let’s think about #4, as an addition to the love quadrangle:

a. Tesla b. his mom c. Anne Morgan d. Tesla’s best friends (a married couple).
does the Alien. As if a reflection in the mirror. The Alien moves away, and Ripley is now faced with her real reflection in the glass. We don’t know whether she is relieved or disappointed. As she stares at her reflection, the Alien leaps back against the glass and scares the guards. Ripley doesn’t flinch. The Alien sticks its orifice to the glass, gives Ripley a vulva-like kiss. Ripley approaches and licks the glass, as if kissing the Alien through the glass.

(As the guard tries to yank her away, she turns to him dryly: “Have you heard ‘Sympathy for the Devil’?”)

B. Later on, she stops an Alien from killing a guard solely with her calm gesture and gentle sounds. Is it easier for her to communicate with Aliens than with humans? Is she closer to bugs or to humans?

C. Ripley is in the Alien liar. There is a long moment of silence and expectation after the Newborn comes to this world. Ripley and the Newborn look at each other. The Newborn releases her. She extends her hand to the Newborn, as if to touch it. She reaches back. Silent sympathy. At that moment, a human hanging from the wall makes a sound, and the Newborn swings around, jumps on top of him, kills him. Ripley snaps out of it, repulsed, fights the Newborn, runs.

5. Like an Alien,
   A. Ripley often squats.
   B. She often sticks her tongue out. (There is a number 8 tattooed on it.)

6. More fear:
   Ripley is unpredictable. Not your regular hero whose actions you can anticipate, and who takes charge fighting for the good (human) cause. She is divided, ambivalent, ambiguous. Pardon me, but it is scary (when this comes from your hero). (Of course, she wins it for us by the end credits.)
   A. She refuses to take charge at the beginning; aloof.
   B. She is sexually provocative on a couple of occasions when no one expects it. Perhaps with tense, battle-charged moments.
   C. She shoots the bad scientist point blank.
   D. She asks Call. “Do you like sex?” Call is shocked (the too-ethical android).

7. A neat parallel to draw is the parallel between the Alien coming from inside Ripley and exorcism. The Alien is her devils materialized. Perhaps adequate subliminal music, way, way, in the background. The music is repeated while she is recovering from the experience, still subliminally. The third time we hear it, it’s a bit louder: this time we are in the chapel. Gregorian Chants??

8. The Newborn carries Ripley’s DNA. It can change (perhaps even morph?) and take Ripley’s shape. Only the Newborn can do that (new DNA).

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1. Later of a miniature palm-slip.

This is how - after they land on Earth - the Newborn manages to take on Ripley’s shape. It’s clinging to the outside of the Betty, badly burnt, almost dead. Eyes sad, pleading. “Help me. Please,” whispers the new Ripley. “Kill it! Kill the bitch!” shouts our Ripley. Call & Co. feel sorry for Ripley’s twin, overpower Ripley and take the Newborn to the hospital. “Do you hate yourself that much?”, they ask Ripley. Once in the hospital, the Newborn Ripley recovers, her big eyes filling with tears. “Thank you.”

At that moment a baby’s cry pierces the air. Turns around, spots a maternity ward, dozens of babies. We’ve visited the Aliens’ nest a couple of times, now they are visiting ours. The Newborn changes, takes its old, monster shape.

Ripley fights the Newborn, and a battle ensues. The mothers dueling it out. The battle takes them onto the hospital roof. Carried away, they wrestle and they both fall down several floors. Call runs over and finds Ripley on the ground, her legs broken. Next to her, pierced on the flagpole (a 15-inch-wide hole through the chest) is - another Ripley. The surviving Ripley just says “Killed the bitch.”

9. Cloning is playing God.

10. Tommy Lee Jones for the male lead.
### November 15, 1995

**Arnold Kopelson Productions**

**MEMO**

**To:** File

**From:** Creative

**Subject:** A PERFECT MURDER - DAVID - Casting for March/April '96

**Date:** 11/15/95

#### TOP CHOICES

| Antonio Banderas | ASSASSINS DESPERADO INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE | N/A until Fall '96. THE ALBUM until November, EVITA until May, and then ZORRO (TriStar).
| Woody Harrelson | THE SUNCHASER (WB) MONEY TRAIN NATURAL BORN KILLERS | N/A until May '96. KINGPIN (Rysher), then PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT (Col).
| Matthew McConaughey | BOYS ON THE SIDE | Available in January '96 after A TIME TO KILL (WB).

#### AVAILABLE

| Kevin Bacon | APOOL LO 13 MURDER IN THE FIRST THE RIVER WILD | Available
| Billy Baldwin | CURLED FAIR GAME A PYROMANIAC’S LOVE STORY | Available
| Stephen Baldwin | FLED (MGM) USUAL SUSPECTS MRS. PARKER AND THE VICIOUS CIRCLE | Tech. Available

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December 3, 1995

**FAX TRANSMISSION TO:**

ROBERT NEWMAN + PATTY DETROIT IOM

**From:** MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

**Total number of pages:** 10.

**CC:** Bart Walker, Sue Rodgers (please copy locally)

---

**Dear Robert and Patty:**

Enclosed are the results of my work on DIAL M FOR MURDER so far. Please forward these script notes to Lorenzo De Bonaventura, Arnold Kopelson, Pat Kelly and Nicole Kidman when you think the time is right.

**IF** everything goes well, this is my ideal production schedule:
- Pat Kelly et al get my notes in the next few days; around Christmas I meet with Kelly in New York to discuss the work that needs to be done;
- I join him on January 31 in New York; we work on the script for a week; I spend the rest of February and a week in March on my storyboards (a total of four weeks);
- the rest of March, all of April and May we spend on prep; June is rehearsals; July 1 we start shooting.

(By the way, when does Miramax's obligation with my office expire? WB should take over it as soon as Miramax leaves off; and take it through delivery of the

---

Milcho Manchevski
These notes should be implemented as surgical work, rather than major overhaul.

1. The character of Emily should be further developed and made more engaging.

   She is our central character; Tony and David are beautifully shaped, but SHE needs something to distinguish her (more personality would be nice). Why should we care for her? (We care for Tony because his viciousness and his smarts are contagious; David is a cuddly looser.)

   a. Utilize the turmoil she is going through: she is cheating on her husband and - even worse - falling in love with another man; yet she's not ready to leave Tony.

      Does she feel guilty? Has she felt guilty for no good reason most of her life? Is she a good Catholic? A lapsed Catholic? Does she admit it to herself?

      We DO NOT NEED TO JUSTIFY her actions; all we need is to sympathize with the secondary feelings stemming from the mess she's put herself in: guilt, confusion, attempts to be true to her own feelings, LUST, love... SHE'S ONLY HUMAN, after all, and that's why we love her.

   b. What makes her start the affair in the first place?

      Tony is older. He has been a father figure all along (out in Long Island, we should meet only Emily's mother - no real father in the picture, Emily grew up without a strong man around), but now that she met David her hormones have gone bananas.

      TONY IS A CONTROL-FREAK. Let's see a bit more of that, but let's keep it subtle. Let's see Emily laboring under his influence. He DOES LOVE HER, but his love is better described as attentive ownership: Emily is his most valuable possession. He would be the most charming fellow around - attractive, strong, smart, powerful, self-confident, good sense of humor - if it weren't for his need to control things. And people. Indeed - he WAS that most charming fellow around when she first met him. But, things have changed. His need to control has grown over time, feeding on his financial troubles and on Emily's infidelity. He tries to win Emily back all along. It's not working. That is precisely what drives her away from him. The more she wants to get away, the more he wants to control her. It becomes a vicious circle for Tony. (David, as a contrast, is the opposite - loose and relaxed.)

      Indeed, Tony's reason for wanting to kill Emily is jealousy - the money thing is only 15% of the cause.

      And, he wants to humiliate her: he wants her loverboy to kill her HIMSELF. By forcing David to do this, Tony humilates David as well. This is Tony's real revenge: perverse and vicious. Beautifully done in the script as is.)

   c. How strong is her lust? How good is the sex with David? It's worth her risking eternity in hell for this fantastic moment of prayer.

   d. When - after the opening at the Met - Tony wants to have sex with Emily, she should definitely concede. She is too smart not to think that her refusal would give her away. Turning him down would make her predicament way too obvious.

      However, while having sex with Tony, WE SEE ON HER FACE what's going on in her head. She is trapped. Her feelings are truly mixed - and confused. THIS IS WHEN WE REALLY START TO CARE FOR EMILY.

   e. What gives her the strength to come back after the attempt?

      Why does she deserve to win? Does the visit to her parents' give her new insight into who she is and what she really wants to do? A soundtrack montage sequence on Long Island doesn't quite cut the mustard. Emily should realize at her parents' that - karmically speaking - the "accident" was her God-sent punishment for her "sins," and that she deserves better ONLY IF she comes clean
and if she is true to her feelings. And, she does it! (All of this is very delictely implied: no swelling music nor shrinks-via-Hitchcock speeches.)

In a brief scene at her parents’, she talks to her mom and (more importantly) discovers things from her past which help her wake up. A revelation after the terrible near-death experience. In a very quiet, subdued manner, she decides that she is not guilty for following her feelings. This makes her decide to confess to Tony. Redemption through repentance, but no trumpets.

She confesses towards the very end of the film. She and Tony make up. She wants to come clean in front of her husband and - more importantly - in front of herself. By admitting it all, she also wants to win over Tony. Inadvertedly, she is invalidating his reason to kill her. However, he’s gone too far and can not accept her extended hand anymore.

When Tony pretends that he didn’t know about David, Emily starts suspecting him. (She knows for a fact that he did know.)

This is the cathartic moment as far as their relationship is concerned.

Trust and betrayal.

2. The second half is shaky, sometimes convoluted and thin on character.

It never lives up to the first half, which is breath-takingly exciting, witty in the plot and elegantly streamlined.

The film peaks with the discovery of the substitute murderer, and never regains its momentum.

The second half – as it stands - is about:

(1) the dynamics between Tony and David; and

(2) how Emily tracks down Tony.

While the Tony-David relationship is excellent, Emily seems to be left out.

She should unmask Tony as the brain behind the plot based on:

a. evidence:
   
   . she has the key which belongs to the murdererto-be
   . ON HER OWN KEY CHAIN (make a bigger deal out of it);
   . Tony is going bankrupt;
   . Mohammed tracks down Tony’s phone call (even though Tony goes through major pains to conceal the source);
   . at the very end she observes Tony reaching for the hidden key; and

b. her psychological assessment and female intuition based on how

Tony’s behaving and how he's reacting to her provocations:

. he says, “What if there were not tomorrow?”

. she asks him about his financial situation, and he lies that he’s fine;

. she admits she was having an affair, but Tony pretends he didn’t know about it, even though Emily knows that he knew;

. he DOESN'T WANT HER BACK anymore (new dynamics between them).

Dramatic irony: we watch her as she tries to believe and to understand her husband. WE know that he is wicked, but she wants to trust him and confides in him, while he is plotting against her again.

3. The end should be more cathartic.

A cleaner psychological build-up (as seen through Emily’s eyes) leading to the final show-down is needed.

Perhaps – for the first time - Emily gathers the courage to stand up to Tony. She is finally ready to say no: that’s what their battle was all about.

She couldn’t refuse him when he wanted to have sex with her; she couldn’t go to see David when Tony surprised her and took her to lunch.

Now, after a close brush with death, she starts gathering courage; she has nothing to loose. An indication of her new strength should be seen at her parents’ place - after she has faced death - and later when she packs her things and leaves the penthouse. It is the completion of her growth that squashes Tony; his unmasking is only the manifestation of Emily's victory over her husband/tormentor. She will leave, even if it means killing the charming bastard.
(What is this film really about?? Jealousy?, Trust?, Sex?, Greed?, Fear?, Victimization?, Marriage?, Extra-marital affairs?, All of the above?, Guilt?, How money can't buy you love? Is it about control?)

(The ending itself is a bit too abrupt. The end just sort of happens upon Emily: we see very little in terms of her investigation, and even less in terms of her development. The rise in intensity we see in the second half has more to do with Tony's attempts at avoiding justice, than with Emily's struggle to get the real killer.)

4. The danger in the second half should be clearer. Does Tony still want to kill Emily after the failed attempt? Wouldn't it be too obvious?
   Once the murder plan is in action, we should not stop fearing for Emily's safety until Tony is dead. He could show some genuine sympathy and remorse - but only temporarily - as a red-herring.
   Or -- is he ready for peace? Is it that her slow but steady investigation and David's tape FORCE Tony to try killing her? Is it only the fact that he's been exposed (at the very end) that makes him go after her himself? (I doubt it.)

5. Look into eliminating Raquel altogether. Emily is alone. The script will work just fine without Raquel. As a matter of fact, there will be more suspense if we do not have every step of the way spelled out for us. In any case, Raquel is a bit too obvious as the medium for Emily to deliver her this-is-how-I-feel monologues and investigation plans.

6. Once the murder scheme goes awry, Tony and David are not pals anymore (never were). Kill the ferry scene. The film is not about them - it's about Emily.
   Also: once David double-crossed Tony, they are enemies.
   The first time after the attempt Tony hears from David is on the phone, as David plays the tape - while Mohammed is in Tony's office! Milk this.

7. David should try to the very last moment to convince Emily to leave Tony. He is giving her a chance to choose him over her husband. If she only chose David, it would abort the murder plan.

8. Kill the fake blackmail (letter-fingerprints, etc.) sub-subplot. Too confusing, and not needed. The script is too long as it is. Concentrate on Emily's process of discovering Tony's true colors. (This would also help #2 and #3 above.)

9. The conflict - the love triangle - is BEAUTIFULLY set, and right away. Keep it fast, clear and explosive. Move swiftly through the UN, no dialogue, and dump the Raquel/bus scene.

10. The Tony-David and Tony-Mohammed dialogue is just great. More such dialogue: avoid flat and expository dialogue.

11. It's dumb and naive for Tony to talk aloud about murdering his wife after Watergate, after John Gotti and after Stone's Wall Street. "Wanna frisk me?... You sure?" David cockily offers - and Tony REFUSES. Tony is too self-assured for his own good, as we'll learn later.

12. The new achievements of technology should be incorporated: new ways to trace a call, to wire a guy; new telephones, cell phones, etc.

13. Do emphasize specifically why Tony wants to use Emily's key. David should protest a bit, asking for a duplicate to be made, and Tony should cut him down.

14. Develop her thought process once she discovers where the key really came from. "But, I had a key to his place on my chain, damn it!"

15. The skylight motif is excellent. Develop it further.
Belinda should focus in on the skylight during the second time she makes love in the loft.
During the sex scene with Tony (when a cloud runs across the full moon),
in a flash during the attempted murder.
During her brief visit to her parents' attic (where she rediscovers things from her childhood and old photos of her father with Tony), and
(as a painted window) when she drives by her parents' neighborhood church on her way back to NYC.
Lastly, the skylight should appear at the very end when Tony is finally unmasked, and she is not free.

16. When Tony takes Belinda to lunch, he is doing the last bid to win her over.
He is also saying goodbye in a very direct, sadistic kind of way.

17. Tony takes a painting from David's loft. We see it at the penthouse at the very end. (We should use Jean-Michel Basquiat's paintings as David's.)

18. Emily picks up the cassette from the desk, plays it, puts it back on the desk.

19. The murdered murderer (in the penthouse) shouldn't be black.

20. The first time we see Emily at the UN, she is translating (doing something very concrete) simultaneously (doing something very difficult) and drawing the skylight in the yellow pad (being carried away by lust).
(Can she sit just behind the Ambassador and translate for her, or would she have to be up in a booth?)

21. Tony says at the Met, "I turn my back on her, she elopes with a younger man," a solemn, stern, scary face... then he breaks into charming laughter, David and Belinda join in, relieved.

22. David enhances himself the new Jean-Michel Basquiat. Rough, grungy, self-destructive (needs a mothering hand), ultra-talented...

Bussing fans in David's loft. Sex and sweat. The messenger with the cassette drenching in sweat, something oppressive in the air.
However, after the fire Tony finds her self, a cool breeze wafts through the penthouse. A few raindrops.
She breaks down.

24. She breaks down after killing him. It's not easy. Cleansing and terrifying at the same time.

25. Rough rock music [Ministry, Helmet, Soundgarden, Pearl Jam] during the sex scenes. A head-banging/grunge version of The Stones' 'Ruby Tuesday,' White Horses or You Can't Always Get What You Want. This is what David plays on his sheep, big ghetto blaster. He's a grunge kid-painter.

The same scene during the murder scene: the beginning (as she comes out of the bathroom) and quiet, small, only a flute carrying our tune (the grunge/Stones song). As she is attacked, the heavy symphonic version kicks in.
A few moments later, while she is fighting for air during the scuffle, she inadvertently flips on the radio switch and the grunge song comes on again. When Tony returns to the penthouse a few hours later, just distant mashes of the song linger on in the air.
Later, while recovering at her parents', she remembers a symphonic version of the music (as if remembering the sex and the attack in the kitchen).
This tune is our sex/murder theme.

26. Change the title. Perfect Murder is both bland and erroneous (it's not about planning a PERFECT murder, it's about a murder of passion, jealousy, perversion, guilt and love). Perhaps include three or triangle and PASSION.
February 22, 1996

Dear Janet:

It was a great meeting you. I wanted to put some of my ideas on paper while they’re still fresh after our conversation. You heard most of them last Friday.

As you know, I love the script and the set-up of the project (with Stone’s In the Flesh, et al). I mentioned that I’ve received a lot of scripts in the last six months, and that this is one of only two projects that I would be glad to spend two years of my life with. That’s just for the record.

THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT should be Forrest Gump with balls, or JFK with laughs. It has the epic quality of a story about America.

The screenplay creates a great contrast — on the surface it’s about a pornographer. But underneath — it talks about the basic philosophy of this country. Freedom cannot be parcelled out to the ones we like. By creating this contrast very gracefully, the script doesn’t ram the “message” down our throats. The screenplay achieves this with great elegance, originality, and most importantly — through engaging characters. (Not to mention the laughs.) Because of all this, I would be sad to see it needlessly dragged through development. The writers should be left in peace.

The only work that I would suggest on it — had I been asked to suggest anything at all — would be to:

a. condense it a bit (without ruining its balance);

b. emphasize the relationship between Flynt and his girlfriend/wife (since this is the subtext which makes us understand and like him; it is also the female side of the story);

c. play up the “American” aspect of it (the so-called “message”) JUST A TINY BIT;

Flynt should be played like an open, honest character who is not afraid to say that he loves a pair of great tits... like an overgrown child alone against the world. He is the flip side of Mozart, who says: “I am a vulgar man, but my music is not.” It is as if Flynt tells us: “What I do is vulgar, but I am not.”

A number of quirky cameos could help make the film memorable:

a. Shirley Maclaine as Jimmy Carter’s sister;

b. James Earl Jones as God;

c. Dustin Hoffman as Lenny Bruce; and finally:


Robert Duvall would be great as the lawyer; his appearance would also make him stand out from the HUSTLER bunch, and help emphasize the different kind of relationship that Flynt has with him. (What the hell: he could even say — dressed in his three-piece suit: “I love the smell of weed in the morning.”)

I find this a project with many dimensions — the fact that the story and the theme are timely again (even with the Moral Majority officially gone) is only an added attraction that goes in its favor. But, it should all be done with a light touch.

Anyway, that was my two cents worth.

Talk to you soon.

Sincerely,

Milcho Marchevski
November 3, 1994

FAX TRANSMISSION TO:

PATTY DETROIT + ROBERT NEWMAN
SCI
Los Angeles

FROM:

MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

Total number of pages (including this one): 2.

Dear Patty + Robert:

Now! Yes! Primal, yes! What a blast! Most excellent!

It has it all - Halloween' via Kramer Vs. Kramer. Gi' me a blow 'em up with a character study! Push all the buttons, make the right turns in suspense, make the right turns in character. Character! Not a slash-er, but a character-er. "I am not going to be loppedored" as an Ahab [happens to be played by a Ms. Close] would say in Fatal Attraction. Character. Stripped down to its barest, but still believable. Actresses should kill for the part of Alison, it is the world's best director. Speaking of which - do they have one? Never mind if they do = could I meet Kassoff? Can I meet the executive in charge? What are they like? Gi' me the details.

Also starring:

Iron Man would be fun to do, but doesn't it seem unlikely? Did you say Arnold Schwarzenegger?

The Englander has an interesting premise, but doesn't move far enough - it's clichéd, the characters seem to be a bit cardboardish and the killer's motivation does not exist. There are also some interesting characters (when did they have the time to create the London hideout?)? Perhaps mixing the genres could work if - in addition to the Western - we see some of the Gothic horror and a more serious whodunit. Study Primal.

The Day After Tomorrow is not for me. Really, really not for me.

1. I wrote a 70-page study of Halloween once.
2. This one is the flip side of Fatal Attraction: not motherless, loveless and unsavory, but a mother. Good reason to kill. Low budget non-sci Aliens.

The late Ed Wood did this script justice directing it.

I am not sure about Rendezvous. Not my bowl of cherries, but it's well written and it's Miramax. It could be a possibility. Let me see the next draft.

The Shooter could make an interesting movie. It moves well, the combination of the shooter and the little girl can work, the other characters are well distributed around the pair and are engaging (James Woods for Collins, Bob Hoskins for Windsor). If timed well (like Day of the Jackal) it could really work. What's the situation with it? Is Michael Keaton very attached to it?

I think this exhausts all of our scripts.

Yours sincerely,

Milcho Manchevski

(always note the new phone number above)

CC: Sue Rodgers

I was questioning the very fabric of the film industry - its reliance on manufacturing obedience to clichés, myths and pre-fabricated patterns of behavior and thinking.

I was also questioning the wisdom of the existing political world order: NATO's and the Western infallibility when dealing with the (Balkan) savages.

Lastly, I ran afoul of the film industry hierarchy and rejected the authority of the pyramid, fighting many authorities directly.
In August 2001 crowds in Lido were eagerly awaiting the film that was to open the 58th Venice Film Festival. Seven years after Milcho Manchevski’s renowned debut film Before the Rain (1994), his long expected second feature, Dust (2001), was to have its world premier. Before the Rain had stunned audiences in Venice, partly because of its topic, partly because of its innovative narrative format. That film, about the break up of a Macedonian village, was seen to illustrate the then ongoing dissolution of Yugoslavia. But more than its theme, it was its intriguing three-part composition that shook audiences. The film’s narrative followed a spiralling trajectory that defied established film conventions. Yet again, it was so smoothly edited that one could see it without having to consciously reflect on the fact that its narrative undermined the conventional notion of the cohesion of time and space.

Before the Rain presented a narrative film format that appeared new and refreshing while showing a side of Europe that was deeply shocking and distressing. It won the Golden Lion at the festival in 1994. After that, Before the Rain went on a celebrated world tour, in the end reaching the status of a contemporary film classic. Would Manchevski’s second feature repeat the success of his first? As it turned out: No, not really. While Before the Rain had had audiences astonished and impressed, Dust made them confused and hesitant. Many viewers were simply put off. Almost a year later, when Dust opened in Britain, Peter Bradshow a reviewer from The Guardian, wrote: ‘This very tiresome, overblown piece of machismo from director Milcho Manchevski made a terrible beginning to last year’s Venice film festival, and looks no better now’ (Bradshow 2002).1

1 Other British reviewers were not as brutally dismissive as Bradshow, but for example Tom Dawson, who reviewed the film for BBC Movies (17-04-2002), was not too impressed either: ‘The Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski’s long-awaited follow-up to “Before the Rain”, “Dust” replaces the earlier film’s powerful solemnity with overblown excess. A variation on the Cain and Abel story which borrows heavily from the action scenes in Peckinpah’s “The Wild Bunch”, “Dust” is explicitly concerned with the process of storytelling’ http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2002/04/17/dust_2002_review.shtml [07-09-2008].
Since its first release in 2001, reviewers and critics have had a hard time making sense of Dust’s narrative. No matter whether they have liked or disliked the film, the common opinion has been that Dust is an ambitious film project that fails to succeed. For example, one online reviewer, the pseudonymous Dr Kuma, seems to have been in pains when trying to tell why he/she didn’t like the film:

_The main problem is that although the film has many great ideas it really doesn’t hold together. It’s like a jigsaw with the corners missing. Although you can see exactly what it’s supposed to be, it never looks complete. […] Although I didn’t particularly like the film, some of it’s [sic] images really do stick to mind, especially the way that the director links the story to the modern day robbers pilgrimage to the place he has heard so much about at the end of the film. It really is very clever and visually striking. This really should merit a good review but all I’ll say is that it tries too hard to please. […] A good idea, but dust crumbles (Dr Kuma 2002)._  

In 2003, Dust had a limited US release, opening at the same time in New York and Los Angeles. The reviewer in _New York Times_, Elvis Mitchell, seems to have struggled to find a positive angle:

_Mr. Manchevski demonstrates his gifts as a visual stylist and a filmmaker in command of the technical aspect of the medium. […] [He] employed a similar splintered-storytelling approach to insinuate the plot of his ingeniously realized “Before the Rain”, in which the slivers of apparently haphazardly scattered plot all came together. (In that film the Godardian cubist style was buttressed by titles that acted as chapter headings.) ‘Dust’ takes this ghost story approach while simultaneously trying to limn a film rife with dovetailing displays of devices like parallels and metaphor, trying to use all these elements to explicate character. […] It is overly convenient, and such an underexplained mystery that it never makes any sense. There’s enough culture clash that ‘Dust’ doesn’t need the equivalent of a Zen koan (Mitchell 2003)._  

On the same day, Kevin Thomas (2003) wrote a review for the _Los Angeles Times_:

_‘Dust’ is a bust, a big bad movie of the scope, ambition and bravura that could be made only by a talented filmmaker run amok. Macedonian-born, New York-based Milcho Manchevski, whose first film was the elegiac 1994 ‘Before the Rain,’ attempts a Middle Eastern western, a fusion suggesting the timeless universality of chronic bloodlust. It’s a potent visual idea, full of darkly amusing irony but undercut by wretched excess, underdeveloped characters and a queasy mix of sentimentality and violence. […] ‘Dust’ is a great-looking film of vast scope, and cinematographer Barry Ackroyd brings it a rich texture and bold panache, which could also be said of David Munns’ imaginative and detailed production design and Kiril Dzajkovski’s score. The passion, free-spiritedness and vision that Manchevski brings to ‘Dust’ makes his self-indulgence all the more depressing._
Commentators who explicitly liked the film claimed, too, that they could not make sense out of its narrative. On the film blog *Film as Art: Daniel Griffin’s Guide to Cinema*, for example, one can read:

_Milcho Manchevski’s Dust is a gloriously uneven, deliriously delightful film about the emergence of the Old West mentality into contemporary times. At least, I think that’s what it’s about: It is so convoluted and choppy that it doesn’t even pretend to make a lick of sense [...] Yet these frustrations with the story make the film fascinating rather than distracting. I think this is because Manchevski seems so confident in his storytelling abilities that we trust him even when we don’t understand him. There is never a dull or belabored moment here (Griffin 2003, emphasis in original).²_

Even film scholars analyzing _Dust_ claim that its narrative structure is a failure. For example, in her article ‘Historical Narrative and The East-West Leitmotif in Milcho Manchevski’s _Before the Rain_ and _Dust_’, Vojislava Filipčević (2004: 4) writes:

_I argue that Manchevski constructs a novel East-West ‘encounter’ and uncovers new meanings of ‘in-betweenness’ in the Balkan cinema through advanced visual grammar and powerful iconography of interlinked reverse exiles and crossings (in both Dust and Before the Rain), and though a hybrid genre, cinematic critique of Balkan historical narratives (albeit with several plot shortcomings, especially in Dust)._

These examples should illustrate a broad consensus on the narrative structure of _Dust_. Even though the film is recognised to be technically well made and to contain many interesting passages, in the end practically every commentator claim that it does not make sense.

Here, however, it seems important to question this consensus. The claim this essay is making is that _Dust_ intentionally challenges established film conventions and narrative theories. It should come as no surprise that when analysing the film by using the very same conventions and theories that it is designed to challenge, the outcome will appear flawed. This film is ambitious in so far as it does not invite conventional understandings of how to see and understand feature film. Instead, it actively tries to provoke spectators to develop a new film perception, and thus a new film theory. More relevant than seeing _Dust_ as a conventionally told film narrative that does not work is critically analysing whether Manchevski’s approach to film narrative—an approach that he calls ‘Cubist storytelling’—can generate a new understanding of film narrative at large. Could a film like _Dust_ provoke the formation of new film conventions and new narrative theories? Could it make us see and understand feature film in a new way?

As will be demonstrated here, _Dust_ can be viewed and understood as one whole, functioning narrative that makes sense—but only when using a different theoretical approach than that usually applied when seeing and understanding feature film, and only when critically revising established film conventions.

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² Griffin presents himself as a university staff member with a personal interest in film analyses, not as a professional film critic. Griffin gave _Dust_ 3 ¾ stars of 4 possible.
Synopsis of Dust

To create a point of reference for the following discussion, a synopsis of *Dust* needs to be laid out first. At the close of the twentieth century in New York, a small-time thief, Edge, has to repay a debt to some gang members, but lacks the means to do so. To get money, he breaks into a flat, only to be caught by the tenant, an elderly woman. The woman, Angela, does not call the police. Instead, she keeps Edge at gunpoint and promises him a gold treasure if he hears her story to end, so that, she says, he will know where she was born and where to bury her. Then she starts telling him a story about two Oklahoma brothers at the turn of the twentieth century, Luke and Elijah. In her convoluted story these two brothers go from West to East, and end up fighting each other in war-torn Macedonia, where they try to track down a local rebel leader called ‘The Teacher’. In talking about them, she does not say anything about where she was born or where she wants to be buried, nor does she say anything about her gold treasure. When Angela collapses in the midst of her story, Edge represses an impulse to run away and instead takes her to the hospital. Edge is in desperate need of money, and since he has reason to believe that Angela is in possession of gold, he returns to her apartment to search for it. When he does not find it he returns to the hospital to make Angela tell him where it is. She doesn’t. Instead, she continues her story: Elijah almost kills Luke, who is saved by a pregnant peasant woman, Neda, who then takes Luke to her village. There, Luke witnesses atrocities taking place during the ongoing uprising against the Ottomans. He sees, for example, how an Ottoman officer shows the villagers the decapitated head of ‘The Teacher’. When asked to save Neda and the village, Luke abandons both her and the village, although he keeps the gold coins he has been offered. As Angela’s story is interrupted again, Edge goes back to her apartment once more, and he eventually finds her gold. He then returns to the hospital, only to find Angela dying. Angela dies without having told him where she was born or where she wants to be buried. Edge nevertheless concludes that she was born in Macedonia and that she wanted to be buried there. He takes care of her remains, personally making sure they are buried, presumably in Macedonia. In an airplane, with the urn in his lap, he retells Angela’s story to a fellow passenger. But he does not stop at the point where the story was interrupted by Angela’s death. Instead he concludes it in his own way with his own words, saying that Luke eventually did go back to the village to save Neda. According to Edge, Luke dies in a shootout and Angela was the orphaned baby of ‘The Teacher’ and Neda, whom Elijah adopted and brought with him back to the United States. The film ends with a scene in which Elijah, with a baby in his arms, watches the sky and sees an airplane. Possibly, it is the same airplane in which Edge sits with Angela’s ashes when adding his own ending to her story. If so, the film ends when the narrative of the film and the narrative of the story told within the film merge.
Challenging Established Narrative Conventions

This synopsis, naturally, is a simplified version of the actual film, which should hint at the film's complex narrative. At first it could appear as a conventional movie. But only a second look is required to notice that this film departs from established narrative norms. In a mainstream film, for example, the story told by Angela would perhaps be framed within the film narrative as a whole, so that one would have a story within a story. In Dust, however, the concluding sequence shows the story told by Angela and the story told by the film as a whole as appearing on the same narrative plane. Suddenly the story within a story has been transformed into two distinct stories laid beside one another and placed on the same narrative plane. When Elijah looks to the sky and sees the airplane, not only is our notion of a time and space cohesion short-circuited, but conventional narrative logics also rupture.

In this film, there are frequent examples of such rupturing of established narrative conventions. That becomes especially notable in the way photos are treated in the film. Usually one thinks that feature films show reality in the same way that photographs depict their motifs. The motif of a photo is generally thought to be independent of the photo itself, leaving photographs to be more or less consciously stylised images of independently existing reality. In the same way, a film is understood ‘to be about’ something: it is supposed to be depicting some kind of reality (whether realistic or fantastic) beyond the actual film. After having seen a film, conventionally, we are expected to be able to tell ‘what it was about’, not ‘what it looked like’ or ‘how it was made’. As film viewers, we also expect a film to visually tell a narrative. Because we are tacitly trained to think that a film is a visual narrative, we expect it to be telling us a story through visual means, not using random story fragments as prerequisites for displaying visual effects as such. In short, we expect the film imagery to be a means to help us reach the goal of getting and understanding the story, not the other way around. Precisely in this way, Dust challenges our expectations.

Photographs play a crucial role in the narrative of Dust. The story told by Angela is at times illustrated by old photographs, and also presented through a voice-over placed over film imagery. This would lead the uncritical viewer to believe that the photographs and the film imagery illustrate her story. But it is not as simple as that. Often photographs change during the run of the film. More than that, the photographic imagery has a tendency to diverge from the story she tells, rather than to support it. The most obvious example of this unconventional use of photographs appears at the end of the film. Although Edge is shown not to have any pre-knowledge of Luke and Elijah – the film clearly shows how Angela has to point out to him who is Luke and who is Elijah when they watch her old photographs together – Edge, nevertheless, at the end of the film shows an old photograph with himself standing in between these long since dead brothers. By this means Edge is shown to exist within Angela's story, rather than being positioned exclusively as its external audience. When actively short-circuiting different narrative levels, Dust goes against basic conventions and, thereby, our expectations. It then should come as no surprise that bewildered viewers, who depend on these conventions when interpreting film, find difficulty in understanding Dust.
The gold treasure at the centre of the film is key when understanding how its narrative works. Angela hints that she is in possession of a gold treasure. Because Edge believes that she indeed has such a treasure hidden somewhere in her apartment, he sticks with her even after she has stopped holding him at gunpoint. Angela talks about a gold treasure in the telling of her story, as well. So, in the film, a gold treasure is shown both in her story and in her apartment. Following established film narrative principles, the treasure she is talking about should be identical to the one she keeps hidden. Since the same set of coins were used in the film when shooting the scenes where the gold treasure appears in her story and those where the gold treasure appears in her apartment, the spectator actually sees the same coins—the same filmic devices—twice. But following the film narrative, there is no affinity between the treasure in her story and the treasure in her home. Angela tells how dying Luke, alone on a Macedonian hilltop at the early twentieth century, spatters the gold coins into the wilderness around him. How could those very same gold coins almost a century later appear in a refrigerator door (where Angela has hidden them) in Brooklyn? The only reasonable answer is that they could not: there is no affinity between one gold treasure and the other. The narrative of Dust never even indicates that there should be such an affinity, even though the film imagery of Dust suggests otherwise. Through the usage of this narrative device—the notion of the gold treasure—Dust explicitly shows the problem of the affinity of identity. At the same time, the film also openly challenges the fundamental film norm that if a thing is shown twice in the same film, the viewer should be able to conclude that it is exactly the same thing.

Dust explicitly puts forward the point that images can ‘lie’ in the same way that a verbal voice can. In that sense, this film challenges the basic notion of ‘seeing is believing’, a convention that states that a viewer should be granted the privilege of taking film imagery at face value. In Dust, the viewer should never uncritically take the imagery, or for that matter the narrative as such, at face value. That point is made explicit in a sequence in which Edge objects to the number of soldiers in Angela’s story, an objection that leads to a negotiation about story content. The narrative is not an object that the active narrator hands over to passive audiences. The narrative, instead, is made up in the encounter when active audiences make sense out of what the narrator tells. This point is explicitly brought forward in Dust. It is, therefore, somewhat ironic to see how reviewers and commentators, when trying to make sense out of Dust, take their point of departure in the idea that films contain fixed story contents that are transmitted to passive audiences. This film is actively and explicitly taking that idea to task.

The story is never to be found in a film itself. It is, instead, to be found in the active encounter between the film and the interpreting audience; through the audio-visual information provided by the film, the audience conceives the story. If one uncritically takes the film imagery of Dust at face value, then the film will hardly make sense. But if, instead, one critically revises the complex and contradictory relationship of film imagery and film narrative, then its logic suddenly appears. In short, Dust is a film that challenges well-established film conventions to such an extent that it is almost condemned to be misunderstood by audiences bound by traditional narrative standards. If the basic film convention rules that ‘what you see is what you get’, Manchevski has made a film in which ‘what you see is NOT what you get’. There is no self-evident identification between what is shown and what is told. There is not even any self-evident identification between different segments of imagery within the film, as seen in the example of the gold treasure.
Мамичке!
Cubist Storytelling

When working on Before the Rain Manchevski started to develop a new approach to narration. His experiments with circular and slightly fractured narrations when making that film required that he develop his own approach. Later, he began to call it ‘Cubist storytelling’. However, he never has turned this approach into any explicit theory or working method. Instead, it has remained a catchword he uses when talking about his films. In an interview from 2003, for example, he both propagated his notion of Cubist storytelling and contrasted it with mainstream feature film:

*I am interested in Cubist storytelling – when the artist fractures the story and puts it back together in a more complex (and, thus, more interesting) way. More importantly, when the artist keeps shifting the emotional tone of the film, bringing a narrative film closer to the experiences of modern art. […] Mainstream narrative cinema is all about expectations, and really low expectations, to that. We have become used to expecting very little from the films we see, not only in terms of stories, but more importantly and less obviously in terms of the mood, the feeling we get from a film. I think we know what kind of a mood and what kind of a feeling we’re going to get from a film before we go see [sic] the film. It’s from the poster, form the title, the stars, and it’s become essential in our decision-making and judging processes. I believe it’s really selling*
ourselves way too short. I like films that surprise me. I like films that surprise me especially after they’ve started. I like a film that goes one place and then takes you for a loop, then takes you somewhere else, and keeps taking you to other places both emotionally and story-wise… [emphasis in original] (quoted in Raskin 2003).

This quotation sums up two recurring themes in Manchevski’s presentation of his work. He wants to connect to modern art, and he criticises mainstream feature film for its lack of artistic ambition, or even, at times, explicitly anti-artistic tendencies. The term Cubist storytelling can therefore be seen as a marker that he uses when distancing his own work from other films—both mainstream movies and art film—as well as when connecting it to modern art. Over the years, Manchevski has often presented himself as writer, storyteller, or photographer with a deep interest in art, both classical and contemporary. In a 2002 interview made for the Macedonian journal Golemoto Staklo (‘The Large Glass’), Manchevski gave journalist Sonja Abadzieva detailed answers on his notion of Cubist storytelling and how that notion has influenced his film Dust. Some excerpts will be given to clarify the intentions behind its narrative structure. After having told Abadzieva that he liked art exhibitions better than film screenings, Manchevski stated that feature film could be something other than what it now is:
The text has not been imposed by the nature of the medium, nor by the conventions of the particular medium. You see, film doesn’t have to be the way we see it today: to last two hours, to have a beginning, middle and end, leading and supporting roles, three acts, a closed, defined ending, with catharsis and happy ending. But the convention is so strong and we have so clung to it - like little children - that we expect to see all of this. If the film lasts one hour, we feel as if something is missing. [...] For me “Dust” is close to cubism mostly in how it deconstructs the material when re-presenting it. But, whereas in painting cubism refers to visual material, in film, or in “Dust” at least, we have narrative material, decomposed and recomposed in time whereas [sic] time is a category used in the artistic expression. This was not planned. I did not set off with idea of making a cubist film. But, I did intend to play with time and structure, and after having walked three quarters of the road, I realized that “Dust” is maybe transposition of a cubist view to film-making. [...] [Narrative film is] supposed to be entertaining, but that does not mean it should be stupid. I tried to make “Dust” entertaining, rather than “art film” torture; yet I didn’t want to give up on the artistic ambition. A film should and can be both entertaining and artistic.

The point exemplified here is that Manchevski actively and consciously tries to break lose from established narrative film conventions by challenging those conventions from within. When doing that he wants to produce work that can be regarded as entertaining contemporary art, rather than contributions to an existing tradition of experimental film art. When making sense out of a film like Dust, one has to accept its challenge to produce new narrative theory with which film is to be seen and understood. A spectator who tries to apply those existing film theories and conventions that Dust is designed to challenge will only be confused – and eventually will dismiss the film as a narrative failure. Yet, when managing to break away from established narrative film conventions, it appears as anything but a failure.

The Alter Ego

The lack of affinity between the gold in Angela’s apartment and the gold in Angela’s story is only one of the film’s numerous examples of applied Cubist storytelling. For example, the film indicates that Angela should be the biological daughter of ‘The Teacher’ and Neda, and the adopted daughter of Elijah. Still, Angela does not concentrate her story on any of the people whom the film depicts as her parents. Instead, it clearly shows that Angela keeps talking about Luke. This instance is even more noteworthy since, according to Angela’s story, Luke died before she was born, so there cannot have been any personal relationship between the two. Furthermore, Angela adds information about Luke’s life that she cannot possess, such as Luke’s thoughts and dreams.

It appears as if Angela is telling Edge a complicated saga instead of handing him the factual information he needs in order to do that which she asks (or even demands) him to do. According to the way she tells her story, the manner in which Elijah comes across Luke in Macedonia is highly unlikely. It should be noticed that when Elijah leaves Luke dying on the
hilltop he cries out ‘You never were! You never were.’ Here a question becomes pertinent: What if indeed the character Luke never was? At the same time that Angela says that Luke dies, she has a heart failure and dies too. In this sense, *Dust* shows Angela as identifying completely with Luke, the character she is telling Edge about: when she tells about his death, she dies too. Luke appears to be Angela’s alter ego.

If indeed Luke is Angela’s fantasy character, then her story about him should be understood as a metaphoric self-depiction of her own life. If so, nothing that Angela tells Edge has happened in the way she is telling it. Nothing of that which we viewers see is to be taken at face value, while it—all of it!—has to be taken metaphorically. Here, Manchevski’s Cubist storytelling technique of ‘what you see is NOT what you get’ should be kept in mind. Contrary to conventions stating that feature film is a fiction that mimetically represents reality, *Dust* is a fiction that mimetically represents another fiction—but at the same time emphasising that fiction itself is one of reality’s basic elements: it is not possible to draw a clear line of demarcation between facts and fiction. Art is fiction, and as such not a statement presenting truth *per se*. Art is but a ‘lie’ that enables the critical spectator to encounter truth. Or, in Manchevski’s own words: ‘The narrative film is not CNN. By way of lying, the narrative film tells a truth, which is sometimes more relevant than facts, as opposed to CNN which tells lies through facts’ (quoted in Abadzieva 2002).

In *Dust*, Angela appears to have made up the story of Luke in an attempt both to conceal her own life story and, at the same time, to hint at basic traits of that life story. In that sense Angela’s whole approach is self-contradictory: at the same time, she hides and negates while she opens up and tells. As a compromise in between these two incompatible and contradictory acts, she tells the story of Luke. According to Angela’s story, Luke was a villain that betrayed everyone, including himself. Luke being Angela’s alter ego, she would regard herself as a villain who throughout her life has betrayed everyone, including herself. The film shows how she is deceiving Edge. By promising him something that she apparently is not going to give him, she deceives and betrays him. She has promised him her gold, but not even at her moment of death does she intend to hand it over to him. Instead, she is relieved when Edge tells her that he has discovered her secret. Only then she can die in peace. And he, interestingly enough, is shown never to recognise that she is using him when playing a game of double standards—the character Edge thereby hinders spectators from seeing and understanding that the story Angela tells hides the story she hints at: the story hides the story.

But if Luke is Angela’s alter ego, what has she done that is so awful that she cannot talk about it, even though she apparently wants to talk about it and constantly hints at it? *Dust* does not offer much of a clue. Bewildered spectators are left guessing. The only thing that seems clear is that Angela accuses herself of some kind of hideous crime. The gold treasure that she keeps hidden symbolises that terrible and covert criminal act. In this sense, the gold symbolises guilt, not wealth. Gold here is a metaphor for sorrow and restriction, not for happiness and freedom. Consequently, Angela is shown to be living in a state of guilt, not in one of wealth: she is poor, even though her gold should make her rich. Why is this? When the film ends, spectators are left uncertain. We will never know what kind of hideous crime she tries to repress, even in her moment of death. Actually, spectators will not even know whether there has even been a crime committed in the first place. The only thing that seems certain is that there is a guilt complex at play, even though it is impossible to trace the origins of that guilt complex.
The Difference Between History and the Past

At one level *Dust* can be said ‘to be about’ storytelling as such, especially feature film storytelling. Arguably, however, the film makes an even more complex claim. It questions the possibility of knowing past events that never became part of recorded history. In essence, Manchevski’s film is conceived at the rupture between the past and history. Since that past is that which has happened, and since history is latter-day notions of that which has happened, there is no affinity between the past and history: latter-day notions of the past are not and cannot be identical with the past as such. How are we to deal with this complicated relationship of past and history? This question is made explicit in *Dust* when Angela, alone at night, cries out: ‘Where does your voice go when you are no more?’

What happens with all those events, or actions, or human beings that once were, considering they never became recorded, and therefore forever elude every living memory? The test case of *Dust* is the atrocities that took place during the Ilinden Uprising, a Macedonian revolt against the Ottoman Empire. Behind the Ilinden Uprising stood Macedonian nationalists who wanted to break loose from the Ottoman Empire and to form a sovereign Macedonian nation state. The revolt occurred on the day of Saint Elijah (Ilinden) during the summer of 1903, though the Ottomans soon ruthlessly put it down. The atrocities carried out during the crushing of the uprising were notorious, even though they to a large extent only lived on in the minds and memories of survivors.

Many of the Turkish officers that led the campaign against the Macedonian rebels were themselves Turkish nationalists, who opposed the then-current state of the Ottoman Empire. Together with young intellectuals in the empire, these officers formed a reform movement, popularly called the Young Turks. In 1908 these Young Turks started a revolution to reform the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. Their revolution further weakened the empire and triggered the two Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, which in turn paved the way for the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. The brutal atrocities committed during the Balkan Wars can only be described in terms of ethnic cleansings and genocides (plural). And again, many of these atrocities never became part of recorded history. They passed without leaving traces of their occurrence (except for painful voids) or remained exclusively in the minds and memories of the perpetrators, since their victims had been wiped out. If these past atrocities were living and continually transmitted through tellings of history, it would be in the format of unresolved guilt complexes and questions of how later generations would deal with these guilt complexes.

When actively forming the present-day Turkish nation state during the break up of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the First World War, Turkish veterans from these Macedonian and Balkan wars involved in committing the genocide of the Armenian people. Genocides that have taken place later during the twentieth century can be more or less directly linked to the atrocities committed in Macedonia during the years before the outbreak of the First World War. Although the past has happened, it has only been represented in the format of history to a limited extent. And the question remains with regard to the extent to which it really could be represented in that format. This topic is explicitly brought forward by Manchevski’s *Dust*. When the film is seen as a way of working out the question of how to deal with the differences between the past and history in the wake of genocide, it starts to take on great significance.
Conclusion

At the very centre of the narrative of Dust one finds Angela’s cry in the middle of the night: ‘Where does your voice go when you are no more?’ That question crystallises the problem of how to deal with our own perishableness in the face of a present that is in constant flux, and a past that has never become part of recorded history. This problem becomes both urgent and delicate when dealing with past genocides. In order to understand this problem, one has to make a clear distinction between the past and history. However, the conventional notions that history equals the past, and that feature film mimaetically can show the past through its imagery, obscure this crucial distinction. To better understand our existential conditions, we have to critically revise established narrative theories and well-known film conventions. Through his film Dust, Manchevski has offered a weighty contribution to this important debate. When viewers find the film flawed, it is not necessarily because its narrative fails. It could just as well be that it is the applied theories and norms used when interpreting and making sense out of the film that are flawed and insufficient. If so, Dust is a film that provokes us to reconsider our understanding of feature film narratives, as well as the validity of commonly applied narrative theories.

References


Scene 82 in *Dust*, cut out of the finished film
Mexico research
**DUST** - NY  B-CAMERA - DOC SHOTS

*** APRIL 3, 2000 ***

*** B-CAMERA - JAMIE ***

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*** B-CAMERA - JAMIE ***

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--- END OF DAY 2 -- Thu, Apr 6, 2000 -- 6/8 pgs.

*** B-CAMERA - Chuck Levey ***

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<td>EXT Kent &amp; North 5, Brooklyn</td>
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<td>38F</td>
<td>EXT 42nd St. - looking West from 1st Avenue</td>
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--- END OF DAY 3 -- Fri, Apr 7, 2000 -- 7/8 pgs.
Scene 73, NYC 1945, in *Dust*, cut out from the finished film
Costume research

British 19th Century publications on the Balkans
ARCHETYPES

NEEDS: MOTHER + FATHER
LUST & LIFE: BROTHERS = CAIN + ABEL

ANGELA: HOMER = STORYTELLER = SPIRITUAL LEADER = PRIEST = WITCH DOCTOR
(SHE CAUSES ELIJAH'S GUILT, THAT'S WHY SHE KEPT THE MONEY).
THE GOAL OF HER SPEAKING IS HER CATHARSIS."
CONFESSION. HER CONFESSION IS THE BROTHER'S GUILT. HER (WOMEN'S) DUTY IS TO BURY THE GUILT BY CATHAROMATICALLY RELEASING IT, WHICH HAPPENS WHEN EDGE CHANGES THE STORY.

EDGE IS THE NEXT GENERATION (REPRESENTING THE SEXUALITY, SEX IS ABOUT REPRODUCTION). HE IS THE CHILD LISTENING TO THE STORY, CHANGING THE STORY. HE FIXES, RELEASES THE GUILT.
EDGE IS THE WIFE.
HE ACHIEVED WHAT L.L.A COULDN'T: STEELINESS (TAKES A'S ASHES, TAKES TO A.K., INHERITS A STEELINESS ENDING FOR L.L.A).
HE GAINS THE WISDOM, NOT HESITATING.

ADD NOTE: THIS GUILT IS WASHED IN L.L.A BLOOD.

INT ELIJAH'S & LILITH'S FRONTIER (LOG CABIN (B & W 1903)

- Wooden bed & bedclothes
- Old American stove
- Stools
- 2 x wooden chairs
- Wooden coat peg rack
- Old wooden shelves/ cornercupboard
- Huntinggun
- Baby coffin (dressed inside with cream fabric etc.)
- Storm lamp & oil lamp
- Dried flowers to hang
- Few old clothes
- Few utensils / kitchen items
- Wash jug & bowl
- Trinkets/ smalls for dressing shelves
- Door furniture x 1
SETS FOR MACEDONIA

INT BROTHEL - ARIZONA 1903 - BLACK & WHITE
- Large old freestanding American stove see refs
- Large Victorian / Edwardian sofa & various wooden chairs
- Paintings & pics
- Curtain fabrics
- Rugs & carpet
- Period lights fittings - mixture of gas & oil lamps
- Lots of mirrors
- Tables
- Makeshift bar & dressing
- Poss piano & other musical instruments
- Door furniture
- Few Old American newspapers etc
- Fabric throws etc

INT PICASSO STUDIO - PARIS 1909 B&W
- As per refs
- Key painting Les Demoiselles D'Avignon
- Lots of other background paintings & drawings to fill room & walls.
- Large stove as per ref.
- Various ethnic artefacts to hang on walls
- African masks & figures
- Large easels
- Drapes to hang over paintings - as still life backings
- Lots of old empty frames - some gilt
- Old sofa
- Work table full of painting equipment
- Still life table
- Postcards & pics & general inspiration for walls
- Old French newspapers
- Matisse
- Other impressionists paintings - friends of.
- Rug.
- Old rolled canvases

INT PARIS CAFE / CINEMA - 1909 B&W
Will be very dark so shapes / reflections / silhouettes / shadows are very impo
- Cine projector
- Hung cinema screen
- Lots of paintings with large frames
- Tables & chairs
- Bar & relevant dressing
- French graphics & newspapers
- Wall gas lamps
- Door furniture

Dear Chris:
I would like to see Rosemary Murphy's contract for the role of Angela. I have a reason to believe that she has not been contracted for the full duration of the rehearsal and shoot (including the Macedonian portion). This situation is not unlike the situation with Ann Brooke which got out of hand and has affected the film so far.

Sincerely yours,

Milcho Mancocvski

CC: Domenico Pescacci, Kevin Van Thompson, Sara Andric, Simon Perry, Ivana Paynovska, New Jones
(Please copy locally)
NOTES FROM HOSPITAL VISIT  MARCH 16, 2000

SCRIPT---PG. 87---"She's gone" changed to "I'm sorry. "And you are?" (to Edge)

SCRIPT---If patient has died—never would say it. They would look at clock and "call it" (The time.) Dr. would leave and find family. Bring them outside the room before telling them. "She went into arrest. Due to age, it was difficult to revive her. Unfortunately, she's gone."

SCRIPT---When Angela dies—Doctors would "call it"—saying the TIME OF DEATH. They would pull their gloves off and leave the room. A lingering nurse would look at EDGE and say "I'm sorry."

ALL---Orderly would transfer body from bed to a GURNEY. Body would be COVERED with white sheet and taken to morgue. Usually a MAN.(called a transportation person or mortuary person.) Would come and wheel her out. He would wear a WHITE T-SHIRT and WHITE PANTS.

ALL---(A special elevator is used to transfer patients/bodies covered in sheets.)

SCRIPT---SECURITY would be called, rather than a guard. A phone would be picked up by the patient’s bed or outside the room; "I have a problem here."

ALL---2ND HEART ATTACK-- a TEAM OF EIGHT. Immediate team of THREE. Another team of THREE-FIVE would rush in. They would each take a separate task: MASSAGE THE HEART, PUMPING AIR, CHECK IV'S, CHECK EQUIPMENT, SOMEONE CALL OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH MACHINERY, DEFIBRILLATOR WOULD BE USED—and in the BACK A MAIN PHYSICIAN would be CALLING OUT THE ORDERS.

SOUND TECHNICIAN-- Record week before shoot, sounds of ER. Doctors calling out orders, monitors running, beeps,machinings, pagers etc.

WARDROBE-- BLUE scrubs for nurses. Also floral and comic book character patterns. GREEN--resident. ATTENDING PHYSICIAN--plain clothes(white w/ tie) with WHITE LAB COAT.

DAVID & PROPS--Gloves on at all times. Gloves stored outside of rooms. Sometimes a box in the room as well.

JULIE--DELIVERY MAN W/ FLOWERS(EXTRA)

ALL--TELEMETRY AREA--step down from ICU--Angela is more recovered than ICU--stabilized-talking. ICU very unstable, very severe. Patient’s all monitored. Central Nurses station.

ART-- CRASH CART FOR SCENE—has defibrator--red chest of drawers like a tool chest. Two small, red tool chest-like boxes on top.

ART-- DOORS ARE ALWAYS OPEN, For easy access in emergencies. Fire hazard. Angela would be right off of NURSE'S STATION.

SCRIPT—Massive heart attack--kicking on floor--GASPING--can’t talk—shaking—like a seizure. Straight down to the floor--can't breath--fall to the floor--GASPING (not coughing) Holding heart.


Пашина

Skopje, May 15, 2000

FOR: CHRIS AUTY
DOMENICO PROCACCI
FROM: MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

Dear Chris and Domenico,

The German producers insisted that the camera package came from Germany.

The camera package was late.

The equipment in it was wrong.

The German Line producer Frank Dragun gave instructions to the rental house to send a completely different camera to production, but to keep that a secret from the DOP and from production (!), supposedly hoping nobody will notice (!)

With partners like this who needs problems?

Best regards,

Milcho Manchevski

cc: Huw Jones
From Milcho Manchevski

To Richard Gere

Dear Richard:

It’s been more than nine months since we started working on DUST. The last time we spoke, you called to say that we were making the film. You were very enthusiastic about it. You said that it’s difficult to bring you to the altar, but once you’re there, you said, you’re fully dedicated.

Since then you changed the start date of the film. We accepted that. Now, Ed is not closing the deal even for the July date. Are we making this film or not?

Please advise.

Yours,

Milcho
Zurich airport,  
October 31, 1999

Dear Joe:

It was really good talking to you the other day. Let’s do that more often.

Hope you managed to track down THE WEST—or perhaps Anna is helping you with that. The visual material there is just priceless.

Enclosed are some of the quotes used in the script. I believe there have been some changes since the draft relating to the list (1/19/97 draft), so ignore the page numbers:

Pg. 6: “No whoremonger hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ.”  
Ephesians (pg. 258), Chapt. 5, Line 5. New Testament

Pg. 8: “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”  
Galatians (pg. 253), Chapt. 6, Line 3. New Testament

Pg. 9: “…as that Matthew said: He saved others; himself he cannot save.”  
Matthew (pg. 44), Chapt. 27, Line 42. New Testament

Pg. 21: “There is no peace to (unto) the wicked.”  
Isaiah (pg. 865), Chapt. 48, Line 22. Old Testament

Pg. 33: “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?”  
Matthew (pg. 27), Chapt. 18, Line 21. New Testament

Pg. 35: “Am I my brother’s keeper.”  
Genesis (pg. 5), Chapt. 4, Line 9. Old Testament

Pg. 77: “Marriage is honorable in all, and bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”  

Pg. 77: “I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore.”  
Revelations (pg. 333), Chapt. 17, Line 1. New Testament

Pg. 77: “For truth is fallen in the street.”  
Isaiah (pg. 974), Chapt. 59, Line 14. Old Testament

covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.  
Hebrews 13:4

***************

in addition, here is part of the bibliography I was using while writing the script (and some titles I came across in the process, but which I have not checked out yet). My things are in a bit of a mess, having scattered them across three countries (US, UK and Macedonia), but I’ll try to get you more bibliographical info. Hope this is helpful in the meantime; also – try the bibliography in THE WEST.

1. Yuma Arizona Sentinel, 1900-1908
2. Prescott Arizona Miner, 1900-1908
3. Prescott Journal-Miner, 1900-1908
4. Flagstaff Sun, 1900-1908
37. The Times (London). London: 1893-1909 *All Macedonia articles
42. "Macedonian Revolt" Fortnightly Review 84 (September 1904): 426-444.
43. Tale of a Tour in Macedonia. London: Edward Arnold, 1905.
44. "Brigands of Macedonia" Current Literature 32 (February 1902): 144-145.
52. "Ray's a Laugh" by Richard Billingham (Photographs)
53. Dillon, E.J. "Reign of Terror in Macedonia". Contemporary Review 83 (March 1903): 305-319
60. "Eastern Question" by John Reed
61. Duncan M. Perry, "Politics of Terror"
64. "Volgodata Petre Jurchov i lokalno vostanie vo Tikveshko. 1903." Undated manuscript. Ms.91/67.
76. Tatarcheff, Bogirade. "Turkish Misrule in Macedonia." In Balkan Question, edited by Villari, pp. 167-183
78. Izveshtaj od 1903 godina na Srbskite konsuli, mitropoliti i uchilishni inspektori vo Makedoniia. Skopje: Institut za natsionalna istorija. 1954.
80. London Graphic: (Mr. Maude, a correspondent for the London Graphic was at the release of Miss Stone, 1902)
81. Sonnichsen, A. Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit: 1900
90. Patrick F. Garrett: The Authentic Life of Billy, the Kid

Please keep this info confidential.

And more bits of various research:

. At first only 170 volunteers from AZ, NM, OK + Indian Territory were going to be accepted to fight in the Spanish-American War. Then they raised it to 200. They were going to be a cavalry = the Rough Riders. Roosevelt was with them. May = October 1898.
. "Prostitutes generally acted as if they themselves felt society correctly assigned them to the fringe world where they lived."
. Butler: Daughters
. [in Macedonia] The ransom for Nazim Bey's son was 6,000 lira. The ransom for Miss Stone was 14,000 lira.
. Ship by hoof (not by train) - cattle
. Are they from Yuma? the hottest place in the nation? The place of the infamous prison?
. "... and Deputy Hunkydory Holmes..." Tales, p. 115
. The chetas were 30-50 people
. Major Hussein surrounded Deicev and got him killed. They were colleagues at the Military Academy.
. 1903: The Great Train Robbery; invention of the airplane
. 1906: the great San Francisco fire
. 1908: Siberian explosion,Messina earthquake, school fire in Ohio, Orwell Wright crashes (he lives, his passenger dies)
. Lumiere had 1424 "views," 247 foreign trips, 55 foreign military views, etc.
. Eyes painted open in death picture (book, p. 73); twins (p. 76),
casket on chairs (p. 67 + 82), Oklahoma 1930's (p 95), p. 101...

St. Luke was the first icon-painter, his subject the virgin and child.

A sign in Haskell, copied in Amarillo and other places: "Whiskey, the road to ruin. Come in."

In the Balkans the centuries do not follow one another: they co-exist.

H. N. Brailsford: Macedonia and Its Races.

TUCSON BOOK, p. 41, Chioan named Phocios R. Way

French sources: the village of Armenienk was destroyed, p. 148

Sloboda Koceva: 6-yr old baby tossed by the Turks into fire

Nikola Topalov, a guerrilla of the village German cheta was captured by the army in Elata area. They skinned him alive, gauged his eyes, and left him to die.

Angel Andreev: Spomeni, p. 330

Rebecca West: on a bloody, reeking rock in Macedonia, she saw a black lamb's throat being cut in a folk-Christian fertility rite.

Hope this is useful. It's still disorganized, but it might help.

Talk to you soon.

Yours,

Milcho
3 May, 2000

Ljuben Pavoreshki
Minister of Culture
Government of the Republic of Macedonia
91000 Skopje
Ilindenka bb
MACEDONIA

Dear Ljuben,

RE: "DUST"

I am delighted that our countries are working together again with the production of Milcho Manchevski’s "DUST".

Although the production of the film is a collaboration of four countries, namely the UK, Macedonia, Germany and Italy, from a legal point of view it was not possible to structure the film as a treaty co-production with Macedonia because none of the UK, Germany or Italy has a bilateral co-production treaty with Macedonia, nor has Macedonia ratified the Council of Europe's Co-production Convention. (Please note that this was not the case with "BEFORE THE RAIN", where we were able to utilise France's bilateral co-production treaty with the former Yugoslavia).

However, through a production services arrangement between the UK producer and Shadow Doel, Macedonia is completely involved in the production of the film. This will be reflected in the credits which will state that the co-producers are producing the film with Shadow Doel and that the film is an "Anglo-German-Italian Co-production with Macedonia".

Please note that if the film had not been structured in accordance with the Co-production Convention then neither ourselves nor the Arts Council of England would have been able to invest in the film.

Given that there are seven financiers involved in this ambitious and (by most standards) high-budget film, I am aware that the production structure is extremely complicated. However, I know you will shortly be receiving from Chris Averys copies of the main contractual paperwork between the financiers, including Shadow Doel which is representing the interests of the Macedonian Ministry of Culture. If you have any questions no doubt Chris will be able to answer them.

In the meantime, please call me if you have any comments on the above. I hope you have kept well since our meeting in Skopje in March.

July 10th 2000

To: Milcho
From: Chris

Dear M,

A few days ago you told me the idea of throwing a party on the boat set, which I thought (and think) is a great idea. I have spoken today with Kyrill and agreed things with him. We'll have him and his people, plus drinks and some food (otherwise people will drift away and the spirit of the occasion will be lost).

Unfortunately, the production will not authorise the cost (though I know you think I just have to tell them and they'll do it, which isn't the case!). So I'll be paying for the event myself – which is fine, as I think everyone has given such a commitment to the film. I hope it'll be great. Kyrill will be standing by with the sound system from 7.30 pm.

Best,

CHRIS

With kind regards,

SIMON PERRY
Re: My London schedule

1. Only 3½ hrs to meet actors!!!
2. Only four hours scheduled for breakdown and schedule work with Brana and Dario
3. How many tapes total coming? How much time to view on Monday night?
4. Need to schedule working meetings with make-up designer
5. Need to schedule interviews with more costume designers.
6. Still waiting for stunt coordinator and FX resumes and books/reels from Germany.

More notes on the shooting schedule to follow up.

Kerry Barden should tape potential actors for Angela well ahead of my arrival in NY.

CC: Chris Auty

May 13, 2000

Dear Anne:

Thank you for your fax. Your fax was the first time I was informed about your need to be in Paris this very week -- nothing like that came to me from my producer or from your agent. I should have been informed weeks ago so that I could plan the rehearsal for the entire film.

In spite of whatever the original contract said, we changed the schedule to fit your needs. This change would mean rehearsal work and shooting in May.

Regardless, there were days before and after your court appearance which could have been used to rehearse, especially since everyone else (including Joe from London and David from Australia) got here almost two weeks before the shoot for that very reason.

The four days after your arrival are not four days for rehearsal: these four days include time for fitting, make-up tests, travel and relocating the entire production and a rest day for the cast and crew on Sunday.

In addition, doing your rehearsal during the last four days before the very shoot means that the rehearsal is thrown out of chronology because we are twisting it around to fit the days you are going to be available. This is not fair to everyone else.

Best,

Milcho
Manchevski with the Turkish ambassador and the
Macedonian Public Prosecutor Stavre Dzikov on
the set of Dust

Dust - MK production office
Maison 20/8, 91000, Skopje, Macedonia
Tel: +389 91/122-608, 216-080, 123-240 Fax:+389 91/216-080

JUNE, 14, 2000

MEMO

TO:  CHRIS AUTY
     DOMENICO PROCACCI
     VESNA JOVANOSKA
     KEVIN VAN THOMPSON
     BRANA SREDIC
     MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

FROM: ROBERT JAZADZISKI, Location Manager

The crew was insulted and disturbed today due to Mrs. Cheryl Leigh's aggressive exercise of animal
rights activism.

In her intentions to defend the right of a village dog (which, by the way, was quite comfortable and
happy lying in the shadow) Mrs. Leigh shouted and swared at all of the crew members, including the
location manager, insulting everybody personally, as well as the people of Macedonia generally.

The location manager did not reply on her insults at all.

Also, Mrs. Leigh got so carried away in her activism, that she even complained that the village
donkey was standing (in the shadow) too long with the load on its back?

Please note that this aggressive exercise of animal rights activism is not welcomed on set. On the
contrary, it disturbs the crew and creates bad working atmosphere.

Please note that the crew is not going to deal with this kind of absurd behavior on set.

I expect you to find a way to stop it.

Thank you.

Robert Jazadziski
Location Manager

-------

Fax

Milcho Manchevski
Chris Auty, Vesna Jovanoska
One
February 1, 2000

Dear Chris and Vesna:

FYI:
scene 73 (New York 1945):
per our budget and schedule:
no ageing make-up has been budgeted;
neither Joe’s nor Samantha schedules were taken into consideration when
scheduling that scene;
please re-read the scene and advise how to shoot it in one day, as
scheduled: the scene is 2-3/4 pages long, requires serious make-up (Elijah is aged,
Luke is wounded, Lilith is pregnant). Angela is a new actress, requires visual
effects, is a period piece set in a busy city.

Please advise.

Sincerely,

Milcho Manchevski
MEMO

Attn: Ase Crabtree
From: Neil Tuohy
Date: 25.6.00

Dear Ase,

Milcho Manchevski has asked me to inform you of several points whilst in the production of making the film “Dust”.

1. One important issue is all the background extras, who at times have become more than that. The villagers need to have their clothing much more broken down, in keeping with the period and title of the film, which has perhaps been overlooked at times owing to the nature of our schedule. This must be addressed, for the remainder of the shoot as it has been felt that valuable time has been lost, on shoot days, for approval.

2. As per our conversation, the solid of the authenticity of the costume, i.e. blood, dust, urine, stains and so on, I would give a vision and scope to the job.

3. Both I and Milcho would like to use the stages which could be shown on screen arrangement 3 men to be with you from stage.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Neil Tuohy
2nd Assistant Director

---

Letter:

Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Minister for Tourism, Film and Broadcasting
Janet Anderson MP

2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH
www.culture.gov.uk
Tel: 020-7211 6304
Fax: 020-7211 6249
janet.anderson
@culture.gov.uk

Minister Ljuben Pawomski
Ministry of Culture
Skopje
Macedonia

BY FAX - 389 91 127 112

10 May 2000

Dear Minister,

I am writing to say how very pleased I am that there has been such a constructive collaboration between the United Kingdom and Macedonia on the film DUST. I understand that filming on DUST, directed by Milcho Manchevski and starring Joseph Fiennes and Adrian Lester, will begin later this month on location in Macedonia. The film is being produced by The Film Consortium, a London based company, and their chief executive, Chris Auty, has told me how immensely helpful you, your Ministry and Government have been.

I wanted to thank you for the very considerable help which you have been able to give.

If you are visiting Britain at any time I would be very happy to meet you to talk about issues of mutual interest.

Best wishes,

[Signature]

Janet Anderson MP
On Saturday, May 18, 2002 9:00 AM

Dear Mr. Manchevski,

I visited the Internet this morning and happened to find an article describing your motion picture "Dust" and was quite interested to see reference to the abduction of Miss Ellen Stone and Katerina Cilka/Tsika. According to the article I read on the Internet, "The "Dust" crew even discovered the original memoirs of Miss Stone and her companion..."

Mrs. Cilka was my maternal great grandfather's sister, both were born in the village of Bansko, now well-known as a ski resort in the Pirin mountains, and at one time in Macedonia.

Katerina and my great grandfather, Ivan, were children of Dimitar Popstefanov, a Bansko merchant. They were converted by the Protestants and attended the American school in Samokov. They had four other siblings, including Professor Constantine Stefanov who compiled and published the first Bulgarian-English Dictionary.

You might be interested to know that Teresa Carpenter, a Pulitzer-prize winning author is just completing a book on the Stone-Cilka affair. She has a contract with Simon and Shuster in New York (her husband is Newsweek's senior technology editor, Steven Levy).

Teresa visited us here in Michigan a little over a year ago. She left with some 6 pounds of photocopies of materials I have been collecting over the years on the Stefanov family and the Stone-Cilka abduction.

I have been developing a webpage with some information on this subject:

http://library.ferris.edu/~cochranci/stone/stone1.htm

Could you tell me more about the manuscript your crew discovered? I am aware of one translation that Katerina's son, Stefan Cilka, prepared. I wonder if your people found something entirely new?

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Richard
Unfortunately, Manchevski’s last film, which I literally lobbied to have
presented in theatres on DVD here (it is at Blockbusters) featured
gratuitous violence, an ill conceived plot, logical disconnects that made
it difficult to “get into” any of the characters, and poor musical
selection, the precise opposite of Before the Rain which was magnificent
in every respect. Hopefully, this film does NOT recreate Milcho’s
childhood cowboy fantasies!!!

April 7, 2002

Bev na premierata i taman sto se vrativ... eden od najdobre Western sto sum gi gledal, pa
nikogas ne sum znael deka na naseto podnebje mozelo da se napravi podobar western od
diviot zapad:). Po obicaj mnogu zdoesaduvaaat a vo ovoj slucaj ne bese nisto dosadno i
sekogas imase kuluminacija i na najzitnata rabota. Najistoriska bese angela..ke ja zapametat
site ... bese orginalna i imase lik koj dosega vo nieder film go nemam videno...premnogu
sigurna vo najnesigurniot grad...odlicna bese. Super bese fotografijata koga Luk odi vo
paris ..brodot...site luge...proekcijata ...koga ke se odbranii so posluzavnikot od kursomot:)).
potoa mi se dopadna kapetanot turcin...i scenata koga se izmeni prikaznata od 200 na 20
turci ..po zelbata na edge...mnogu bese smesno i edinstveno. fancuzinkata ..neznam kako
se vikase... go igrase likot na zenata,kako sto go igrase neda kaj nas ..i mnogu mi bea
slicni...skoro vo se... ...potoa mi se dopadna nacinot na koj sto site prikazni bea spoeni...i
na krajot pocustvuvav potreba da ja zapomnim prikaznata sto ja raskaza angela ..i mi se
cini deka gi natera site da ja zapomnat i da ja prenesuvaat.... imase ogromna
sebicnost...site bea sebicni..kako sto sme vo realniot zivot site luge,i vo taa sebicnost site si
gi baraat zadovolstvata... mnogu bea ubavi zlatnicite...)) mu davaa vrednost na filmot...so
nivnata boja i nacinot na prikazuvanje...izmesani so crvenite znaminka mi go napravija
kejrot...neznam posto. znaci filmov e western istoriski ljuboven akcija horor i plus
makedonsko new york ski... podobro amin edno prasanje posto gi prikazuvas malite raboti
vo momentot koga gi istaknuvas golemite? od sekogas me intersiralo:) pozdrav
Dear Milcho, I saw "Dust" and I haven't words to say nothing ..... sometimes it's better to say nothing and to respect the interior silent to think this movi the day after.

I'm sure that I'll write something in this day about words of the giornalist who had interwied you, I'm not agree with the interpretation of them about the movi, i'm not agree with interpretation ..... i think that this film is a fact and people have to take this like the greatest true.

sorry for my bad english and thanks for the emotion that you have produced again

best

Nicoletta

> Hey Milcho!

> I wanted to thank you so much for the screening of Dust at NYU. I really loved it. It is a wonderful film. I had seen "Before the Rain" in preparation for Dust, as I like to familiarize myself with a director's vocabulary before hand. I loved Before the Rain so much too, and the way that you expand on your concept of time manipulation within a film is extremely engaging. The time-continuum 'flaws' that you present in Before the Rain to pop out of the seemingly cyclical narrative, really grow so well in Dust. While BTR raises the question of how a narrative can be controlled fictionally, Dust takes the idea and runs with it. And Adrian (the guy from peter brook's hamlet, forget last name) and the older woman's creative control over the Macedonian Western is such a pleasure to watch, and something only too few films really even attempt to deal with- dealing with a film as a constuct of the filmmaker, and then characters therein. These characters are so human, and a story, filled with delicious nuance and details (my favorite, the urine after death, something i have witnessed that few ever remember) is so great. But I should stop, lest I begin to rave with remnants from my film critique classes from college....!

> Yours,

> Michael *****
Finding and trying out DUST from my local Blockbuster was like finding a piece of gold. If you like classic style spaghetti westerns in the same vein as Clint Eastwood and Sergio Leone - then this one's for you.

I don't know who this Polish-sounding-like named director is, but he and his film crew managed to make one hellava one-of-a-kind western.

And it shows from the get-go. Starting out in modern-day New York, DUST is a tale that unfolds with twists and turns that will keep you watching on, wondering where this is all leading, and how this strange old woman has possession of old artifacts, from an old pistol to gold coins.

And how does she know about the life and tale of who they belonged to? An American cowboy gunslinger who left America, traveling to foreign shores and making history out of his destiny.

The look and feel of the film is phenomenal, gritty and lovely in a myriad of ways. The overall details was not lost in the making, thus pointing out to me the director's awesome vision for this film.

Sure there were a few things that could have been better, but still in all, DUST was truly unique, and well worth a look at. Somewhat unforgettable in some ways.

Was this review helpful to you?

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful:

**Fantastic premise that bites the dust...**, January 14, 2005

Reviewer: Kristin Donnelly "www.ladyliterature.com" (Inverness, FL United States) - See all my reviews

From what I see so far, my thumbs down for this movie is definitely a minority opinion, so do scroll up and down to read those who gave it 5 stars.

I said fantastic premise, and it is true, DUST has a premise that is fantastic. This is a beautifully photographed movie, melting from black-and-white into color then back into black-and-white, jumping back and forth between fetchingly photographed contemporary New York and back in time, somewhere in the Ottoman Empire ca. early

Mileo je genije!!! Odusevljena sam, sto je cudno kad se zna kakav sam baksuz kom se nista ne svidja! Nisam videla bolji film jako, jako dugo. Genijalno je sve zamisljeno. Ta postmodernistička caka cija je prica. Genijalno. Usput, naplakala sam se k'o kisa sve krijaci da ne uprskam svoju kritiarsku reputaciju takvim privatno-emocionalnim izlivom!!! Milos misli da je malo prebudzeno, ali ja mislim da to i jeste zato sto se ostavlja donekle vidljivim da je to prica, a ne zivot. Mali cnac i baba su fantastceni. Kad se bas jako zamislim, ima i tu nesto kao i u "Pre kise" sto je muzno i nista ga ne moze razresiti, ali, jebi ga, da nije muzno, ne bi bilo odakle je, tj. iz Makedonije. Bravo, Milco - prosli put je imao odlican film istovremeno sa glupim "Pulp fictionom", a sa ima odlican film zajedno sa glupim "Lord of Rings".
Macedonia is collateral damage of the US policy in Kosovo. A report by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (which monitors the events in Macedonia), a statement by the State Department, and a UN officer this week all pointed at the Albanian separatists fighting in this Balkan country as perpetrators of ethnic cleansing directed at the Macedonian (often incorrectly called Macedonian Slav) population. The good guys of yesteryear became bad guys.

This comes as no surprise to those diehard Balkan-watchers who have been following the evolving tragedy in Macedonia.

During the ten years of brutal fighting in what once was Yugoslavia, Macedonia managed to stay unscathed. This she did without help from the international community. After tense negotiations, the Yugoslav army left peacefully, an admirable task credited mainly to the first Macedonian president Kiro Gligorov. There was tension (Gligorov himself survived an assassination attempt which left him with one eye and with shrapnel lodged in his brain), but no fighting. The government and the people were repeatedly applauded by the international community for their efforts in creating and maintaining a multiethnic society. (The international community didn’t help, though. The embargo on Yugoslavia crippled Macedonia’s feeble economy; Greece waged its own embargo on the young state.) Parties representing ethnic minorities sat in the parliament. Albanian parties were coalition partners in all governments since independence, and at present six of seventeen government ministers are ethnic Albanians, the parliament vice-president is Albanian, as well as several ambassadors. There are primary, secondary schools and colleges in Albanian; an Albanian university is about to open. There are tv stations, theaters, newspapers in the languages of the minorities. Why then the recent ethnic violence?

The Albanian militants claim they are fighting for human rights. This is a mantra which has proven to be a winning argument in the past. However, this time the human rights issues are a front for armed redrawing of borders. The occupation of territory, abduction and murder of civilians, the threats to bomb the parliament building (in downtown Skopje, the capital), cutting off water supplies to the third largest city and - finally - the ethnic cleansing perpetrated on the majority Macedonians (who are a minority in the area of the conflict) point to the obvious: does one fight for language recognition with mortar fire and snipers? (Can someone kill cops in LA or Miami demanding that Spanish be spoken in the Senate?)

The “ethnic cleansers” - NLA - are mainly old KLA soldiers who fought in Kosovo alongside NATO. (Even their initials are the same in Albanian: UCK.) Most of their arms and fighters come across the border from NATO-administered Kosovo.

American, EU and NATO diplomats try to broker a peace agreement which centers on better guarantee for the Albanians’ minority rights, as a pre-requisite for disarmament. This misses the point: the radical Albanians fight for territory.

They are doing precisely what many observers have been warning against for years - escalating the violence until the average citizen gets affected and radicalized.

Even though the diplomats insist they will not negotiate with NLA (whom NATO’s secretary general George Robertson called “thugs and murderers”), the west is - de facto - legitimizing killing in the name of a language dispute. What a paradox!

Meanwhile, the fragile and impoverished country which was praised for its multiethnic society and government,
the same country which was (and is) the primary base for NATO’s operation against Milosevic’s Yugoslavia and peacekeeping in Kosovo (much at its own peril), the country which took 350,000 refugees from Kosovo (an increase in population of whole 15%) is being ripped apart under the armed onslaught of gunmen armed and trained by NATO. Macedonia is collateral damage to NATO’s involvement in the Balkans. The US and its allies consider it too risky to try to disarm KLA (or NLA), even though this was an explicit responsibility of their Kosovo mandate. Last year’s disarmament of the KLA was largely a symbolic affair. Body bags are not sexy, so NATO chose to let the militants keep their western weapons. (Three weeks ago the US evacuated several busloads of militants from the surrounded village of Aracinovo - complete with their weapons. A rumor that seventeen American advisors were among the surrounded extremists triggered an angry reaction by the Macedonian crowds who tried to block the busses, and later stormed the parliament building.)

NATO’s Kosovo escapade did much more than arm and train the militants who now execute a classical blowback. It escalated the conflict in the Balkans to a higher level. The psychological effect of the entire world putting itself on the side of the Great Cause (as seen by the Albanian extremists) has given a boost to their armed secessionist struggle. Ethnic cleansing and occupying territories is an advanced step in redrawing borders. The last ten years in Yugoslavia taught us what this leads to.

The US has a chance to stop the bloodshed and further collapse of democratic values in Europe. This can not be achieved by hypocritical appeals to “both sides.” NATO, EU and the US applied immense pressure on democratic Macedonia not to defend itself. Now, the aggression and insurrection got out of hand. As a result of the “peace process,” Macedonia is on its way to federalization and disintegration.

Last month President Bush issued an order blocking the accounts of the leaders of NLA and barring them from entering the US; the European allies followed suit. This is obviously not enough.

If the US wants to demonstrate its stand against redrawing borders in the Balkans, if she wants to stick to her word (NATO promised to defend Macedonia, as General Wesley Clark points out in his book), if she doesn’t want to set an example where she discards her allies when tough action (even on a minor scale) is demanded, then the US should choke the arms supplies and send the warmongers where Milosevic went. The NLA must be forced to abandon its armed aggression and insurrection BEFORE there is more political talk. The US must do this even if it requires limited military involvement, such as arresting the NLA leaders (and expanding Bush’s “black list”) and seizing its arms depots. The US has a moral obligation to stop them from turning Macedonia into another Afghanistan or Cambodia, two sad examples of blowback and collateral damage from American involvement. As we learned in Bosnia, leaving the ethnic-cleansers unchecked causes much more trouble down the line.

Or, as that proverbial lawyer in a Hollywood joke said: “Good news. It’s only a MORAL obligation.” Except this time it is a practical obligation as well.

Milcho Manchevski wrote and directed the Academy award-nominated “Before the Rain,” which also won Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, Independent Spirit Award and 30 awards worldwide.
Es war einmal in Mazedonien

Das vergessene Epos vom wilden Osten: Milcho Manchevskis „Dust“ beim Filmfestival in Venedig

VENEDIG, 29. August


„Dust“ hat Manchevski in einem Geleitwort zu seinem Film erklärt, sei ein „ostasiatischer Western“, ein „Eastern“ und war ein einzigartiges Werk der Befreiungskämpfe. Wohl, ist „Dust“ eine Übertragung der mazedonischen Komödie in die Alt-Südosteuropa, während das Schicksal der Mazedonen mit diesem Film für die Zukunft erschaffen wird. Wird es einmal ein KAMPF um Neuland und individuelle Freiheit, sondern ein Krieg des Blutes, der Sprache, der Stätten, läßt die Dinge, die mit „Dust“ beginnen, noch den ersten Schritt auf diesem Festival.


Dies alles schöne nicht der Rede wert, wäre Manchevski Debut nicht ein so ein- drucksvoller Film gewesen. In „Before the Rain“ schienen sich westliche Erzählweise und östliche Geschichten zu vertragen. In „Dust“ ist dieser Prozeß noch weiter aufgeknüpft, man konnten einen Bilderschlag, der einen Einblick ins so visuelle der mazedonischen Kultur bietet, vorliegen. Ein Lido von Venedig ist einem dieser Ortlichkeit nicht fremd, aber ein Auftritt wie mit „Dust“ wirft doch einen ersten Schatten auf dieses Festival.

Eine Mondtiel trägt die Kostenerster, die das Freilichttheater in den Fortunat am Morgen umgeben ist. Deren Attribute verweisen auf den Sonnenaufgang, die Erzählung durch die Padella Christi und die Stellung Marias als Königin der Engel. Rechts und links jüngere die Apostel Andreas und Thomas, während sich im Vordergrund die Mitglieder der Familie von „Marta mit Kind, den Apostel Andreas und Thomas der Silberfamilie“ heißt das spätgotische Teilbild des um 1448 in Wesel im Neuenhardengebiet von der damaligen Kunsthistoriker der Messe. Es handelt sich um ein um 1448 in Wesel vom Wilden Stadtmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte in München mit Hilfe öffentlicher und privater Gelder für 4,5 Millionen Mark in New York erworben werden soll. Das ist das eindrückliche Zeugnis der Marins-Robert um 1500 bis 1505. September, die erste Restaurationarbeiten daran fortgesetzt werden. (ans.) Foto LWL

ANDREAS KILB
In January 2001, as Manchevski is editing Dust in London, Albanian guerillas take Macedonian journalists hostage in a Macedonian border village. Over the course of the next several months the KLA/NLA guerillas ambush and kill a number of police and army personnel. Macedonia is on the front pages, as the country inches towards a civil war, facing its biggest crisis in its short history as a modern independent nation. This is a spillover of the NATO war with Serbia over Kosovo.

Many Macedonians feel that the root of the conflict was never properly explained. They also feel their voice is not heard in the West, while the entire world is reporting from Macedonia.

Manchevski writes an opinion piece for The New York Times, but The Times decides not to run it. He offers it to National Public Radio, but they request more and more rewrites of the opinion piece, demanding changes which would make it – in Manchevski’s opinion, as someone who is familiar with the situation – inaccurate. For example, NPR requests that Manchevski removes the references to the fact that Albanians in Macedonia have high school education in their native language. Tens of thousands of Macedonian Albanians study in Albanian. The article is published in Süddeutsche Zeitung on August 25th, 2001 and in The Guardian on August 15th, 2001. Both newspapers change the title, and both newspapers edit the article without Manchevski’s approval, shifting the focus of his argument. The original title of the piece was Just a Moral Obligation. Süddeutsche Zeitung changes it to The Seed of Armed Violence. NATO Is to Blame for Macedonia’s Fate and The Guardian changes it to NATO Gave Us This Ethnic Cleansing. The references to the ‘Moral Obligation’ were edited out. Russian Pravda and Belgian Standaard also reprint the article. Standaard publishes an answer signed by “Agron Buxhaku, student”. Even though Manchevski’s opinion piece does not deal with issues of ethnicity, but rather with issues of legality and violence, the newspaper feels the need to contrast his article with Buxhaku’s (who is ethnic Albanian) response. The 44-year-old “student” resurfaces within a few months as a spokesman for the guerilla KLA/NLA, and eventually becomes a minister in the 2002 government which includes former guerillas from the KLA/NLA. He is currently Macedonia’s ambassador to France.

In the article, Manchevski argues that the KLA/NLA were trained and armed by the US and NATO, and that the KLA/NLA – contrary to the current master narrative in the press – weren’t fighting for their minority rights, but were instead fighting for real estate and political power. He calls for NATO intervention, stating that it is a moral obligation for NATO to take back the weapons they supplied to their KLA guerilla allies in the fight against Milosevic and who are now pouring into Macedonia from the outside.

1 Fifteen years later, the KLA/NLA winners hold top government positions: deputy prime minister, government ministers, ambassadors, mayors, etc. cf. critical comment on this: Norbert Mappes Niedeck, Balkan Mafia. Staaten in der Hand des Verbrechens – Eine Gefahr für Europa, Berlin 2003, p.13: After the smiles and the peace accord, after the odd arrangements made subsequently, a horrible suspicion began to dawn on the viewer up in the gallery: the conflict in Macedonia had not been about minority rights, but about protection money and spheres of influence – and the protagonist had not been a subjugated, or even a roused people, but a criminal underworld that had crawled up into the light of day.
More importantly, he sets out to debunk the theory that the war in Macedonia was an inter-ethnic war rooted in centuries-old animosity. He calls for return to the rule of law, asking for those who take to arms to be treated the way any attacker on the police or the army in a Western democracy would be treated.

Even before Dust is shown, the press start linking the fictional, historical content of the film to current politics. In June 2001 The Los Angeles Times suggests that Luke, the Oklahoma bounty hunter caught up in the Balkans chaos with no any idea as to what is happening symbolises NATO in the Balkans. The Times writer, David Holley had not seen the film, but does say: “Loosely based on history from the final years of the Ottomans, Dust can be seen as an artistic commentary on the wars that tore the Yugoslav federation as it broke up in the 1990s. [...] In some respects the film foreshadows the current fighting in Macedonia – which seceded peacefully from the Yugoslav federation – between ethnic Albanian guerrillas and government forces.”

In April 2001, a detailed report on the 2000 production written by the arts correspondent Fiachra Gibbons is published in The Guardian. It is accompanied by an interview with the director about the conflict between the Macedonian government forces and the ethnic Albanian guerrilla organization KLA/NLA.

Manchevski takes a stance against the dominant view in the Western media that this is yet another ethnic conflict in the Balkans. He notes the mafia-style activities of the armed groups concerned (drugs, human trafficking and land grab) and condemns their violent tactics: “Too much has been made of this stuff about centuries-old hatreds. At least part of the shooting is about local strongmen being able to keep their thiefdom so there are open roads for smuggling, the drug trade and running the brothels. It is that basic for a lot of these guys with the guns.”

The Western media “ethnic” explanation of the ex-Yugoslavia wars turns personal here: Gibbons comments on Manchevski’s remarks by noting that the director himself belongs to the Slav majority. This is a slightly derogatory term (the proper word would be Macedonian). It also suggests that Manchevski’s opinion is influenced by his ethnicity (additionally, the Macedonians (or “Slavs”) were seen as the oppressors in the KLA/NLA war “for human rights”.

Dust opens the 2001 Venice Film Festival on August 29, 2001 to great fanfare.

The British critic Alexander Walker sets the table for the political discussion at the very beginning of the Venice press conference. In a question, he accuses the director of portraying the Turkish soldiers in Dust in a racist way (even though they are Ottoman; note the black soldier among them). Walker links the film to Turkey’s quest for EU membership, even suggesting that Manchevski had a political agenda when making the film – trying to block Turkey from joining the EU.

Walker’s statement at the press conference was followed by his attempt to equate the cowboys with NATO in his review: “Milcho Manchevski’s Dust isn’t a disaster: far from it. But it is a film with very disturbing racist overtones. [...] It is promoted as a Spaghetti Western, Sergio Leone-style. But it appears to have a more insidious and contemporary political agenda: the cowboys can be seen as representing mercenary America getting involved in overseas civil wars in which it has no standing. The Turks are treated as gibbering hyenas in red fezzes, indiscriminately and repugnantly caricatured. The fact that Turkey is currently pushing its claim to become a European Union member – a move that

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2 Quoted from LA Times, David Holley: Film explores a timeless Dust swirling in the Balkans, June 6th, 2001.
4 “Manchevski, it has to be said, is a Slav”, Ibid
5 Walker was an outspoken opponent of the British Lottery film funding and the companies benefiting from it. The Film Consortium – the main producer of Dust – is one of them. Walker, Icons, p. 258ff.
The Woody and Nicole show

Milcho Manchevski’s Dust, also a part-British production, isn’t a disaster: far from it. But it’s a film with very disturbing racist overtones. My own question about this at the director’s press conference caused such a dust that Manchevski—a winner in Venice in 1994 with Before the Rain—refused to answer me. It stars Joseph Fiennes and the Australian actor David Wenham as a pair of late 19th century American cowboys mixed up in Macedonia’s independence revolt against the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

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wouldn’t be welcomed in Manchevski’s native Macedonia, or in Greece, either – makes Dust’s timing not just unfortunate, but downright suspicious.6”

Manchevski responds to Walker’s question at the press conference by saying: “Thank you for your statement.” He has said in later interviews that he did not want to dignify the ludicrous charges.

However, his high road approach does not get traction. The wire services report on the controversy and repeat the charges of racism. The label “racist” goes global. Even though other reviewers in Venice do not refer to Walker’s Turkey and the EU construction, he does manage to politicize. “The business with the Turks” takes central stage in many reviews: “The story, which links up America at the beginning of the twentieth century with modern-day Macedonia in the midst of the Balkan wars’, seems extremely contrived, while the ghastly endless shoot-outs in the style of a Balkan-Italo western became increasingly boring. Added to this is his political message, almost propaganda, which gives the Turks, in particular, a very raw deal,” writes Erwin Heberling in Schnitt.8

A number of Venice critics follow suit, focusing on the “issue” of the Turks and on the arbitrary association of the film with the armed conflict in Macedonia at the time of the premiere, thus conveniently politicizing Dust, without really dealing with the film itself. They ignore the complex structure of the film and the New York City plotline. Tobias Kniebe of Süddeutsche Zeitung says: “Dust is based on a personal discovery: in photos the last cowboys of the American West look just like the wild bands of men who rose up in rebellion against centuries of Turkish rule in 1912. So Manchevski sends two young men from Oklahoma to the Balkan war of the time: Luke (David Wenham) is a bounty hunter in search of riches; Elijah (Joseph Fiennes) is a cuckolded husband in search of revenge. They become involved in the fight for freedom, the ethnic butchery that exacts a bloody tribute from Turks and Macedonians alike. On one occasion, it is a herd of sheep that is caught in the crossfire; on another, the village harvest. Huge watermelons burst next to soldiers’ heads – and afterwards, myriads of flies descend on what is left. All this is difficult to bear and it serves only one purpose, if any: to point out, yet again, to the parties in the current Macedonian conflict how necessary it is to search for peaceful solutions.9”

Rüdiger Suchsland wrote in www.artechok.de about the press conference: “This film, financed not least with grant money from Germany and Great Britain, caused controversy less because of its sometimes exaggerated bloodbaths, than because of its wholly one-dimensional portrayal of the occupying Turks – it was difficult to contradict those who spoke of this as racism.”10 Suchsland also did a short interview with Manchevski for the Berlin daily Der Tagesspiegel11. Here he concentrated on the supposedly political tone of the film; an accusation of racism was not put to Manchevski.

Süddeutsche Zeitung on August 29, 2001 writes: “In strong contrast to Cannes, the opening film is not without controversy: Dust – by Milcho Manchevski, who won a Golden Lion in 1994 with his debut film,

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6 This is London online, September 4th, 2001. Walker stood by his view of the film when Dust was released in England, in only a few cinemas, in early May 2002. He vehemently attacked one of its backers, Civilian Content, for investing British Lottery money in the film. cf. Alexander Walker: Dusty and Dire, in: This is London (The Evening Standard Online), May 3rd, 2002: “My revulsion watching it was redoubled by my shame as a minor shareholder in the company, Civilian Content, that controls the National Lottery franchise which invested 1,699,000 (pounds) in it. I’m currently a loser on my shares. The public are even bigger losers – on the movie. With the aged squeezed for pensions, school desperate for teachers and hospitals bereft of almost everything, aren’t we generous financing obnoxious bits of Balkan history like Dust?” Walker here obviously confuses history and historical films. Also, his assumption that Macedonia or Greece wouldn’t welcome Turkey in the EU obviously projected back into the relationship between the future countries in 1900 century politics, which had nothing to do with the politics of 2001. Neither Greece nor Macedonia objects to Turkey becoming an EU-Member.
7 Dust never addresses Macedonia today – or the Balkan Wars 1912-1913 (or of 1991-95) – IK
9 Süddeutsche Zeitung, August 31th, 2001, Tobias Kniebe.
27
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Before the Rain. Dust is a hard Balkan-Western, a Cain and Abel story in the guise of two cowboys from Arizona [Oklahoma – IK] – Joseph Fiennes and David Wenham – who in 1912 [the film is set in 1903-1908 – IK] get caught up in the turmoil of the first great Balkan war [the film is actually set during and immediately after the Ilinden uprising, not during the Balkan Wars. This is a big difference, as Ilinden was a local uprising against the Ottoman rulers, and the Balkan Wars were fought by the Balkan nations for territory – IK] at the time of Ataturk [Ataturk was still to step on the historical stage – IK]. It is a film that is uncompromising in its opinions (see Manchevski’s article on the Macedonian conflict in the SZ of 25/8) [emphasis IK].” Here it is implied that Manchevski is uncompromising as a political commentator and that this attitude is reflected directly in his work as a filmmaker.

There are some critics who have specific ideas about the political position on the current events that Manchevski, as a director, should take in his work. In The Guardian, for example, Peter Bradshaw writes how Manchevski connects the modern New York story with the Macedonian story: “Putting a modern perspective on the abyss of central European warfare and bloodshed is a shrewd idea; the shootout sequences between noble peasants and fez-wearing Turks are unusual to the point of delirium, and Manchevski finds pleasingly cruel twists in juxtaposing the crime and corruption of modern Manhattan with the distant war of Macedonia. But there is something obtuse and disingenuous in finding this modernity not in the obvious fact of NATO intervention, but in a hip-hop New York crime scene, where no one knows that this history has real, contemporary meanings and repercussions quite distinct from Manchevski’s sentimental fantasy. He gives Macedonian identity an apolitical sheen of stylistic cool, just as Luke and Elijah get to do a sort of glamorous Butch – and Sundance – in Bolivia ruff.”

Here, Manchevski is actually expected to connect his work to current affairs: “There’s also a mean-spirited feel to the film, which, seen in the context of contemporary conflicts in the Balkans, hardly provides a positive message about this war-torn part of the world.” His artistic expression is limited to the role assigned to him by the critic – that of a director who uses his film to comment on the current political situation in the “crisis region” and send “positive message”. As a director who is interested in anything but a quasi-realistic filmic portrayal of current events such as “the obvious fact of NATO intervention”, he is dismissed by Bradshaw of The Guardian. The obvious message of humanism that lies behind the brutality of Dust is completely ignored.

A similar argument was put forward by James Christopher in The Times of September 2, 2001: “Like Titanic, the whole thing takes on a misty rose-tinted view of the past. And by uncomfortable proxy, the present Balkan crisis […] yet the film blindly makes assumptions about ancient Balkan grudges which wouldn’t look amiss in a Mel Brooks film […] Manchevski hits important nerves but his politics, like his twin stories are all over the place. True, Dust is not a piece of ‘realist’ cinema, but having placed his film in the teeth of a deadly serious conflict, can he really shrug off the responsibility?”

The idea of taking the history of the Balkans as a subject for a work of popular culture – as in a film about Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, for example – does not conform to the expectations of the critics. It is as if a director who comes from a “crisis region” is expected to create only the type of work that reinforces the existing image of the region, as created by the media. More importantly, why would anybody – especially a film critic familiar with the process of making a film – think that anyone (Manchevski in this case) has placed his film “in the teeth of a deadly serious conflict”? Christopher tops it with scolding Manchevski for “[trying to] shrug off the responsibility”.

In the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Andreas Kilb tries to explain why “old” South-Eastern Europe is not suitable as a canvas upon which the Western genre would be projected: “It is true that Dust attempts to transfer American cinema formulas to old South-Eastern Europe. That this proves unsuccessful has nothing to do with Manchevski’s quality as a director, or with the abilities of his
actors; rather, it has to do with the historical subject. The revolt of the Balkan peoples against the Turks was, after all, not a struggle for new land and personal freedom, but a war of blood ties, language, customs and religion. They too had wide-brimmed hats, rifles and horses, but beyond the mountains lay not the prairie, rather the village of the other ethnic group – and the cowboys were goatherds, who fought over the land of their forefathers.”

Leaving aside the fact that artistic freedom should allow the director to decide which stories (s)he tells and what genre (s)he decides to employ, one may ask whether the extermination of the Native Americans in the West by the US Army, railway companies, settlers, gold-diggers, adventurers and bandits was the legitimate prerequisite for the rise of the popular Western genre. The brutal and racist history of the Wild West (and was that really anything other than a war of blood ties, language, customs and religion?) did not prevent directors from making superb Western films. Kilb’s perception for South-Eastern Europe – which he publishes in the leading German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung – reads like a contemporary illustration of Maria Todorova’s thesis about the construction of the Balkans as an especially violent, bloodthirsty counterpart to the supposedly civilised countries of Europe.

Kilb’s assertions about the Wild West might also be grounded in the clichés of Karl May’s 19th century adventure books about cowboys and Indians and the Balkans.

A photo of “Luke” (David Wenham) alone on the hillside, shooting at the sky, illustrates the article in FAZ. The caption reads: “Wild West in the Southeast: The opening film of the Biennale does it the way the Karl May films do it.” May’s fantasy adventure books about the American West and about the Balkans and the Arab world are still international bestsellers. Manchevski’s combination of the two in Dust (Cowboys go to the Balkans) obviously made Kilb double-blind when watching Dust. What he saw was his own limited imaginative experience regarding the Wild West. Kilb doesn’t even notice he was talking about the Wild West as seen in fiction books or films. He treats his own fantasy as historical truth, while denying Manchevski the right to open up his own imaginative space in the “Wild East” and to incorporate it in a tableaux of ambitious cinematic storytelling and in “mapping Macedonia” for the world.

16 The copyright is wrongly ascribed to the Berlinale.
In his article the critic Zarko Radakovic argues that Kilb normatises and does not allow mixing of the West and East narratives: “The narrative of the West must be valid for the Western genre, while the stories from the East must be told with the eastern integral consideration of the history, says Kilb. [...] I would strongly oppose this normative, moralising and really conservative critique that we have been reading for years in some of the German newspapers.”

Jan Schulz-Ojala, writing in Berlin’s Tagesspiegel, insists on a direct relationship between the portrayal of the Ottoman soldiers and what he perceives to be Manchevski’s political views. The article also contains a scandalous personal defamation. With questionable logic that seems to be there only to serve his final denunciation, the critic abridges and falsifies the form and content of Dust, getting (on purpose or accidentally) many plot points outright wrong. Schulz-Ojala identifies three levels of the film: one relates to the encounter between Edge and Angela in New York. The second level relates to the Macedonian part of the story, as told by Angela. “The third shows several extensive, rural battle scenes, in which the Turks come on as stupid, loud, cackling villains (against noble Macedonians whose honour and sovereignty have been injured) so that after committing a number of provocatively gruesome crimes, they can be justly mown down by the surviving Macedonians. [...] Dust is loud in its concept, confused in its structure and wholly lacking in humour – in the shape of an Eastern-Western, it seems like a propaganda film for Manchevski’s thesis, disguised by a historicising veil: instead of the Albanian Muslims, it is the Ottomans here who behave like the epitome of savages, while the Macedonians are innocent as lambs and go to the slaughter in droves. And seen like this, the young black man, who the old lady explains the Balkans to, is nothing other than the West itself, which in the fight against eternal Ottoman Islam needs, to an extent, to be woken up with trumpet blasts. The caricature-killer aesthetic with which the Turks are stereotypically depicted – and that is the scandal – has something undeniably (neo)-Fascist. What on earth were the festival organisers thinking of when they chose this film to open the programme? Surely it cannot have been the sarcastic pleasure of making at least Berlusconi’s friends on the far-Right happy.”

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17 Zarko Radakovic was the critic at the Deutsche Welle radio Serbian section. His article “Wiping Milcho Manchevski’s Dust” was broadcast on September 1st, 2001 and later also published in the Bulgarian magazine Kultura. See Radakovic, Zarko: Da izbrisem praha ot Milco Mancevski, Kultura No 3 (2192), (September 14, 2001) http://www.kultura.bg/bg/article/view/5831 (February 4th, 2015).
Schulz-Ojala was not only irresponsible with his accusation of neo-Fascism. His article also thoughtlessly glosses over real acts of unbelievable violence that took place in Macedonia during the historical period the films deals with (and even at the very same time the film opened). At the same time, he denounced Manchevski’s political activities in support of peace there as mere ethnic self-interest. The critic also introduced another contemporary conflict into the story of Dust: the West’s struggle with Islam.

Schulz-Ojala ignores the fact the violence in Dust is an equal-opportunity business – in the film everybody has the chance to suffer, no matter their ethnicity. He also seems incapable of dealing with the structure of the film. He erroneously identifies three levels in Dust. Setting aside the fact that neither Dust nor Manchevski have ever stated anything that could remotely be interpreted as anti-Islamic, one is tempted to use the twisted logic Schulz-Ojala employs and turn the argument against him. Given the fact that the German racist war against the people of South East Europe in both world wars was conducted with the help of Islamic troops, one would have to ask Schulz-Ojala whether this has anything to do with his support for Islam. Schulz-Ojala’s approach could also be interpreted as paradigmatic for the position of some German intellectuals who have often denounced criticism of Islam as “Islamophobic” and continue to play down antidemocratic, anti-Semitic and misogynistic traits of Islam for the sake of political correctness.

The challenging aesthetics debate that Dust calls for is avoided by the critics in Venice: politics seems an easy excuse not to have to deal with the challenging film. In this worldview, even cinematic virtuosity is dismissible: Referring to the article, Urs Jenny wrote in Der Spiegel: “Measured against this, his film – imagining a past in which good and evil still seemed clearly distinguishable from one another – is overwhelmingly naive. It is pure – and even in the wildest slaughter, highly virtuoso – cinematic spectacle. [...] Manchevski has great – and also very literary – ambitions, but he is most convincing in his successful resurrection of the Spaghetti Western in Macedonian costume.”

Indeed, Walker’s assertion and the controversy are central in most Venice reports in the global media, from Spain to Brazil, from the UK to the Balkans.

The reports and reviews aggressively relate Dust to the current political situation. This is only possible by limiting the scrutiny of the film to its Macedonian elements. The New York story – half of the film – is ignored in many reports; this in turn means that the concept of the two interlocking stories and reflection on the two-way effect the story and the listener have on one another is missing from the reporters’ consideration. The director’s political views are used to (miss)interpret the film, even though they are nowhere to be found in Dust. The critics are not inclined to accept a film that refuses to make a political statement on contemporary events in a non-Western region. The creation of narrative space in the Wild East, which turns not only a piece of Macedonian, but also of European history into an epic film, is seen by the critics as politically suspect, culturally unacceptable and artistically misguided. By observing the film through such a lens, the critics miss the opportunity to seriously consider Dust as an ambitious and challenging contribution to a new European Cinema.

Variety prints “Dust Busts” on the front page. Commentators like Alessandro Baricco, the best-selling Italian author, who launches a spirited defence of the film, stressing its innovative nature, remain exceptions in Venice. “I like Dust. It is an open work with everything and its opposite; it combines

19 roulette der gewalt, Augenausstechen als Leitmotiv, Spiegel online September 5th, 2001.
linguistic fragments and archetypes to create a product so unpolished that the Americans would have shot it down in flames. [...] The critics are not prepared for films and books like these. It would be like going to the mountains in a bathing suit and being surprised by the cold, like seeing a locomotive for the first time and saying 'Where are the horses?' It's lucky that the public is more intuitive about works like this than the critics”, says Baricco.20

Domenico Procacci21, the Italian producer of Dust, is not alone in saying that the hostile attitude of the press towards the film had already been adopted before the film was shown at the afternoon press previews on the 28th and 29th of August.

Years later, the Bulgarian-English scholar Dina Iordanova writes a longer piece about Dust, postulating that the poor Venice reception was a result of Manchevski’s opinion piece in Süddeutsche Zeitung and The Guardian. She argues that the opinion piece had invited critics to interpret the film along political lines. She even hints that Manchevski planned to publish the text at the time of the festival to secure publicity for the film. Given the fact that Dust was the opening film of the festival, it doesn’t seem the film needed additional publicity.

More importantly, Iordanova’s piece contains serious inaccuracies: she claims that even though the Macedonian financial contribution was small, it brought the film industry in the country to a complete standstill for two years. This is the opposite of what actually happened (the official report of the Macedonian Ministry of Culture for 1999-2000 lists eleven features and fourteen documentaries financed during the period – this significant rise in addition to the positive effects that big co-productions had on the small Macedonian film industry). Even though a reporter in Macedonia pointed out the inaccuracies to Iordanova before she submitted the piece, she still tried to publish the text with erroneous information. This makes one wonder whether this is more than just a case of innocent factual errors.

In 2007, Iordanova continues with the troubling and inaccurate accusations of racial politics in Dust, while placing it in the broader context of “Balkan Cinema”, a term she has been employing for years in her academic writings – yet a term that does not serve any analytic purposes here, while feeding the prejudices about “the region” and ignoring the individual narratives of each individual film and ignoring the fact that they come from different cultures and have been made under different political and historical circumstances: „Turks were assigned the role of the archetypal bad guys in the region’s literature and cinema […] Thus, scenes of cruel Turks impaling fair-haired Slavic rebels have been a frequent feature in Balkan cinema. A few examples of such fare are the Yugoslav Banovic Strahinja (1983), the Greek 1922 (1986), the Bulgarian Time of Violence (1988) and the Macedonian Dust (2001).”

Like with Before the Rain, Iordanova misreads Dust, tearing out of context what suits her thesis, while ignoring the rich tissue of the film’s narrative – for example, the fact that in Dust the violence is perpetrated by anyone who carries a gun: American, Macedonian, Albanian, Greek, Turkish, and that the depiction of the „Turks” (actually Ottomans) in the film is far more nuanced then Iordanova wants us to believe it is22.

On the other hand, Svetlana Slapsak suggests that the creation of its own stereotypes, countless ironic quotes from other Westerns in Dust and the creation of its own narrative space for the „Wild East” are the main reasons the film has been rejected by critics in the West. “The West does not like to see its culture turned upside-down, so that all the stitches can be seen, all the strategies of colonial manipulation. That is exactly what Manchevski did in his movie. […] The main aim of the colonizing

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20 Quoted from Vizzavi.it, Speciale Venezia 2001
Die Stimmung ist nicht besser als die Lage: Das 58. Filmfestival von Venedig wird von Italiens Regierung gemieden und präsentiert zur Eröffnung mit Milcho Manchewskis „Dust“ einen veritablen Propagandafilm

**Krieg an allen Fronten**

**Von Jan Schulz-Ojala**


In der Zukunft, die uns erwartet, kämpfen gegen jede Ideologie, die mit der Würde der Kultur konträr ist. Und wenn es nicht anders geht,古い dice Fahne von Venedig mit dem „Dust“ von Milcho Manchewski.

In den ersten Jahren seiner Regierung, die die Regierung durchsetzt, war es nicht anders. Die Stimmung unter den Männern zu Beginn des 58. Filmfestivals am Lido, seltsam wissend und unruhig, lässt allerdings Schlimmes befürchten.

Die Zukunft, die uns erwartet, kämpfen gegen jede Ideologie, die nicht mit der Würde der Kultur konträr ist. Und wenn es nicht anders geht, wird die Fahne von Venedig mit dem „Dust“ von Milcho Manchewski.

Der Artikel beschreibt die Atmosphäre vor dem Filmfestival von Venedig und die Besorgnis um die Zukunft der Kultur in Italien. Es wird auch die Eröffnung mit Milcho Manchewskis „Dust“ erwähnt, der als Propagandafilm beschrieben wird.

**Kuriosität:

Man, zwei Millionen! Manchewski formuliert den Film „Dust“, im obigen Zitat als „Propaganda“ erwähnt, da er eine politische Botschaft verbirgt, die nicht nur mit der Kultur, sondern auch mit der Geschichte und der Gegenwart der Kultur in Italien verbunden ist.**
culture is to make an object of perception and research out of the colonized culture, and certainly not to question the place, the subject, or the authority in explaining.”

Much of the Western perception of the creative position of a director from the „Balkans war region” is revealed in what an art historian said to the author about Dust: aesthetically an extremely successful piece – if only the director had not related his story to Macedonian history. Manchevski’s „mapping of Macedonia” in the real and imaginative sense of the word, was virtually censored by the critics in Venice, pointing to the European problem with „the region”.

At Venice and in later interviews Manchevski emphasizes that the idea and script for Dust were developed over several years – and that he is not interested in making blunt political statements with his films. Still, the timing of the film’s opening leaves him caught in an historical trap. Even at the red carpet Venice gala opening, broadcast live on Italian TV, Manchevski is asked what he thinks of the current NATO peacekeeping mission in Macedonia. Manchevski answers that he is glad that those who armed the guerrillas will now collect their weapons. A number of Italian critics write about the opening film in the current context of the Italian soldiers in Macedonia. In his festival review, the critic Tullio Kezich says: “Today, Macedonia, with the conflict that tears it apart on the border of Albania, is a true European tragedy, one that involves – among others – 738 Italian soldiers, for whose fate we shiver.”

The Turkish ambassador to Macedonia – who visited the set of Dust in the summer of 2000 to communicate his concern with the portrayal of Turkey in a film that has not been made yet (and which did not deal with the state of Turkey) – must have been pleased with the results of Walker’s accusations, with the tone of the “racism” discussion and with the ultimate fate of Dust. He complains to the Macedonian government about Dust while the film is in pre-production. One can only guess how he had learned about the content of the film. Is he complaining on the basis of the word of mouth in Macedonia about the big European production? Did he have access to the script and if yes, who had given it to him?

These questions remain unanswered until today, and it will take more than a decade for Dust to be shown in Turkey, at the Izmir International Film Festival in 2012, in spite of the fact that Manchevski’s follow-up to Before the Rain which was film of the year in Turkey was highly anticipated there. When it screened in Turkey again two years later, it was announced thus: “Rare and perhaps the only example of a work that combines Ottomans and Cowboys. With a highly original narrative – a film not to be missed.”

As for the audience – Dust never made it to the cinemas in most countries. Based on a small sample one could assume the film would have been appreciated by audiences worldwide. The journalist Maria Pia Fusco, in a public discussion on Dust with Alessandro Baricco and the Italian co-producer, Domenico Procacci: “It is a film that in its almost total negative criticism can be credited with uniting the right, the left and the centre. But it has to be said that though the press screening ended with applause

24 cf. e.g. Rüdiger Suchsdal’s interview with the director in Tagesspiegel online of September 4th, 2001.
25 Operation Essential Harvest (or Task Force Harvest) was a deployment mission in the Republic of Macedonia by NATO, officially launched on August 22th, 2001 and effectively started on August 27th. Because national contributions were larger than expected, the force ultimately grew to approximately 4800 troops. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Essential_Harvest
27 Turkish Government interference in film projects goes back to at least the 1930s when the Turkish government successfully fought for decades the MGM attempts to film Franz Werfel’s masterpiece The Forty Days of Musa Dagh in Hollywood. Werfel’s book deals with the Armenian genocide during World War I. See: Welky, David: Global Hollywood versus National Pride. The Battle to Film The Forty days of Musa Dagh, in: Film Quarterly, 2006, Vol. 59, p.35-43. Welky also refers to recent attempts by the Turkish Government and paramilitary groups to block the international distribution of Atom Egoyan’s Ararat (2002), a film that also deals with the Armenian Genocide, p. 35f. A more recent example is the reaction to Fatih Akin’s Cut (2014). The introduction to his interview for France 24 states: “Even though [Akin] was insulted and received death threats for making The Cut, the director ‘did not get any trouble’ from the government and describes a ‘live and let live’ response from the authorities.”
Kebab-Western aus Mazedonien

Filmfestspiele Venedig: Der Eröffnungsfilm "Dust" von Milcho Manchevski und die Globalisierung des Kinos

Von Hanns-Georg Rodek

Wer am Sonntag um 17 Uhr noch nichts festes vorhat, dem sei ein Abstecker nach Venedig zum Filmfestival empfohlen. Im Casino auf dem Lido ist eine Diskussion angesetzt, die spannend zu werden verspricht. Titel: "Eine andere Welt ist möglich". Teilnehmer: Regisseure, die beim GS-Gipfel in Genau dabei waren.

Dies sind die ersten Festspiele nach Genau, die ersten nach der Wahl Silvio Berlusconis zum Ministerpräsidenten, und die Jury leitet Nanni Moretti, der in Cannes gewann und zeitgleich seinen Kreuzzug gegen Berlusconi verlor. Es wäre voreilig, die 58. Biennale zum politischen Festival zu erklären, aber wenn sich die Globalisierung des Kinos exemplarisch demonstrieren lässt, dann im Autorenkino; auch wenn sich kaum ein Filmemacher findet, der an dem "G"-Wort ein gutes Haar lässt.

Bald die Hälfte der Filme ist nicht mehr eindeutig einem Entstehungsland zuzuordnen; Benoit Jacques "Tosca"-Verfilmung firmiert als französisch-italienisch-deutsch-britische Koproduktion, Ken Loachs "Navigators" segelt unter deutsch-englisch-spanischer Flagge. Der Grund liegt darin, dass sich Autorenfilmer ihre Finanzierung zusammenstöcken müssen, wo sie sie bekommen.


Milcho Manchevskis zweiter Film nach "Before the Rain" (der 1994 in Venedig gewann) lieferte eine Eröffnung, wie man sie bei den großen Festivals geraume Zeit nicht erlebt hatte: ein Wagnis, ästhetisch, formal und inhaltlich. Daran ist im Einzelnen eine Menge auszusetzen, aber wir sind jüngst von so viel Auf-Nummer-Sicher-Gehern eingeschärft worden, dass

Manchevski allein für die große Geste Beifall gebührt.


"Dust" wird als ehrgeiziger Versuch in Erinnerung bleiben, der amerikanisch dominierten Globalisierung eine europäische orientierte entgegenzusetzen. Manchevski belegt das unamerikanischste aller Filmgenres mit Beschild, schickt seine Hauptfiguren zweimal hinüber in die alte Welt und verpasst seinen Amerikanern europäische Biografien. Auch eine andere Film-Welt außerhalb Hollywoods ist möglich. Wäre sie nur gleich gut inszeniert.
and whistles, the public in the main theatre (Sala Grande) received it very well.”

Some distributors cancelled the plans to show the film, while others cut down on and changed their release plans. *Dust* never really recovered from Venice 2001 and was hardly distributed theatrically afterwards though it was enjoying very good presales. In addition to the co-producing countries (Great Britain, Macedonia, Italy and Germany), *Dust* was presold to most of Latin America, Spain, Poland, and Japan before it premiered. The global success of *Before the Rain* made Manchevski’s second film a desirable commodity. But after the Venice ambush, it was difficult to sell the film. France cancelled the purchase, Spain renegotiated its deal, Britain and Italy scaled down the release plans. The UK Producer Chris Auty – who also ran The Works, the distribution and sales company that was handling *Dust* – didn’t capitalize on the controversy. Even though *Dust* later developed a cult following on the internet, it had a very limited theatrical distribution in Europe. It opened in Poland six years later, in 2007.

None of the reviews of *Dust* published after Venice (when the film was released in a number of territories), nor the reactions to the numerous festival and retrospective screenings of the film, deal with politics. Instead they deal with the aesthetic and artistic achievements of the film.

It opened in Macedonia immediately after the Venice fiasco. The battering the film received at the hands of the western critics did not affect how the film was perceived at home (if one indeed considers Macedonia to be home for *Dust*). Even Manchevski’s harshest critics gave it good reviews. It broke many box-office records in Macedonia. The number of academic papers on *Dust* in Macedonia surpasses even the number of papers written about *Before the Rain*. The film was called “the Macedonian Guernica” in the local press and it remains the favorite of all Manchevski films to many home viewers.

In 2004, *Dust* was the subject of an academic conference (Re)inventing Collective Identities at the Leipzig University. It was also part of a film series on the Balkans at Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel in 2003/2004 and is part of teaching curricula at numerous universities.

**EPILOGUE:**

Scandal and controversy are nothing unusual at major film festivals. It is, however, difficult to escape the feeling of unfairness and viciousness permeating many of the articles written about *Dust* from Venice 2001. Some baselessly insist that the director is trying to put across a crude political message, even propaganda. Some contain defamatory attacks – including unfounded and outrageous accusations of racism – attacks without parallel in the recent history of film journalism. Many of the arguments were not based on an analysis of the film; instead they were based on the critics’ reading of a current political situation and of Manchevski’s public statements unrelated to the film. Manchevski’s ambitious experiment with narrative structure and his complete and intricate tapestry of visual, aural, narrative and character elements was ignored.

People interviewed for this text often spoke of the curse of the second film, when talking about the reception of *Dust* in Venice. Opening Venice might have been the wrong choice, they noted; the audiences might have expected something lighter. *Moulin Rouge* was the opening film in Cannes that year. Still, it seems that the curse of the second film had more to do with the perception than with the actual second

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28 Quoted from Vizzavi.it, Speciale Venezia 2001
29 (Re)inventing Collective Identities - an interdisciplinary conference on the film Dust was organized by the Philosophy Department and the Art and Communication Project, at the Leipzig University, January 15-17th, 2004. Here are the titles of some of the papers on Dust presented:The Kinesthetic of Dust – The End of Drama by Prof. Andrija Dimitrijevich; The Living and the Dead – Master-narrative, Narrative Frames and Collective Identity in Dust by Beatrice Kobow; Mental Maps. Constructions of Identity in Space and Time by Dr. Claudia Weber; The Wild West of the Balkans by Prof. Stilian Yotov;
30 Director Mira Nair won the Golden Lion with Monsoon Wedding that year and declared upon receiving the prize: “This one is for India, my beloved India, my continuing inspiration.” Would anybody consider Nair responsible for the continuing high-risk nuclear power politics of the Indian government? For the quote see: www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/film-and-tv/news/i...rector-is-first-woman-to-win-golden-lion-668799.html? (September 1st, 2008)
film. While doing research for this text, the author spoke with a critic who had written about the film. He stated that today he wouldn’t write anymore that *Dust* was a nationalistic film, and that he had surely done Manchevski wrong.

Manchevski refused to answer Alexander Walker’s accusation at the press conference in Venice 2001 that he had made a racist film and had a political agenda in *Dust*. He felt that a biased and charged question like that didn’t deserve an answer. However, he takes up the question later. When *Dust* is released in the UK in 2002 (the initial plans were changed and it is shown on only three screens in London), The Guardian asks Manchevski to comment on the critical reception of the film in Venice. Even though the piece wasn’t published31, it gives insight into the position of the director concerning the political reception of *Dust*. He talks about this in several further interviews32. “How do you defend yourself against an accusation that you are a racist? Are you implicitly accepting the accusation as soon as you have started answering it? [...] Why is it so difficult to see a film that draws on non-geographic human experiences, including film genres? Racism? How to tell a critic: No sir, you’re wrong. This film is not trying to satisfy your ethnocentric curiosity nor is it trying to confirm your understanding of ‘the other’? This film is ethno-blind and color-blind. It’s about people. You are the ones who see Albanians, Turks, Macedonians, Slobovians, where I see good guys and bad guys rolled into complex characters. In this film all men with guns are bad guys, regardless of ethnicity, but can you see that from London or Berlin? Are you the one requiring a person’s ethnic DNA before deciding if s/he is a good guy or a bad guy? Do you project your own fears, prejudices and bigotry upon me, as the ‘savage’ other? How does one protect a work of art (as Mike Figgis would say) from the tabloid power of a critic? More importantly, how does one protect it from his/her ethnocentric PROJECTION? Where have you gone, Pauline Kael?”

Upon the US premiere in 2003, Manchevski said in an interview that he did not take the Venice reviews at face value: “In Europe, politics substitutes for gossip. I guess Macedonia was the bad guy at the time. And I think there was hostility (to the film), which had nothing to do with politics. The way the film plays with structure is in your face.”33

Manchevski also said he had no intention of making a straight genre film: “They read the fact that *Dust* on purpose goes against expectations as a failure to fit in within their expectations. If you’re making a living quickly analyzing and putting a film into categories, then it’s probably going to rub you the wrong way. If it pisses off a lot of petite bourgeois, the gatekeepers, then great.34

“Mainstream narrative cinema is all about expectations, and really low expectations, to that. We have become used to expecting very little from the films we see, not only in terms of stories, but more importantly and less obviously in terms of the mood and the feeling we get from the film. I think we know what kind of a mood and feeling we’re going to be immersed in before we even start watching a film. We know it from the poster, from the title, the stars, and it has become essential in our decision-making and judging process. I believe it’s really selling ourselves way too short. I like films that surprise me. I like films that surprise me especially after they have started. I like a film that goes one place and then takes you for a loop, then takes you somewhere else, and keeps taking you to other places both emotionally and story-wise... keeps changing the mood, shifts the process, becomes fearless.”35

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31 In the end the editors at the Guardian thought the piece, titled *Projection Protection*, too specialised in the context of the limited release and asked him for a more general approach in the text. Manchevski declined.
33 Brown, Keith: *Independence: Art & Activism/ A conversation with Milcho Manchevski*.
35 Ibid.
36 Raskin, *On Unhappy Endings.*
“A puzzle. After watching the film, the viewer needs to put together the pieces of the mosaic and to try to understand it. Not without effort. The present and the past constantly intertwine in one story which is rightly defined as Cubist. Like a Braque painting, actually.”
(L’Eco di Bergamo)

“Passion, hatred, greed, cruelty, blood, destiny, repentance in the Balkans. Ambitious and fascinating, sometimes great, sometimes rhetorical, compelling but sometimes slow, violent but with touches of virtue, the film by Milcho Manchevski is a Balkan Western, a fine example of imperfection to love.”
(“La Repubblica”)

“This extraordinary TransContinental, TransCentennial epic plays like a cross between a savage Leone Spaghetti Western and an arthouse experiment in temporal narrative structure. […] The clever ending keeps you guessing right up to the last. By juggling past and present in what might be described as a cubist mosaic editing style, the whole grapples at some length with the meaning or futility of human existence begging questions long after viewing. Director Milcho Manchevski is a real original and Dust (a Feta Western?) unlike any other film you’ll see this year. Besides, where else can you see a frail old lady bloodily knock a young male burglar for sin?”
(4 stars out of 5; Jeremi Clark, What’s On In London)

“[Features] a brooding central performance from Joseph Fiennes, and is superbly eccentric on most levels. […] The conflation of Sam Peckinpah’s Wild West aesthetic with the chaos of Eastern Europe is often startling to watch.” (The Independent Review)

“Manchevski has a rare visual intelligence, whether filming the face of a dying woman or Times Square’s reflection in a windshield.”
(Village Voice)

“Part tragedy, part farce, quirky melodrama and buddy flick; Dust is a very strange film… It does make sense, but you have to be wide awake to catch it… Dust is flawed, but it has a certain appeal. Although at times disjointed and incoherent the film embodies a kind of outlandish ambitiousness that would make David Lean proud.”
(James Gorman)

“Dust is a twist of the standard western scenario but retains the heroic, desert-choked essence of the genre.”
(Australian video review)

“The chaotic, brutal iconography of Italian Westerns is put to novel use in this time-traveling, self-referential, hugely ambitious story… The Macedonian sequences are breathtaking, unfolding against a sere, desert landscape of blasted villages and bloody corpses. Manchevski has nothing less in mind than an investigation into the nature of storytelling, twisting and fracturing his narrative and using jarringly disjunctive images to pull the past and present into a moebius strip of cruelty, retribution and hope of heaven.”
(Maitland McDonagh, TV Guide)

“High-end surreal western” (stopklatka.pl)

“In the end Dust is about how love can blossom even in the hardest of hearts.” (The Globe and Mail)“Milcho Manchevski’s stylized western, Dust is a potent, assured and ambitious piece of filmmaking… Mr. Manchevski suavely shuffles his various narratives, sometimes smoothly presenting the juxtaposed tales and on other occasions cutting violently from one story to another. The literal violence -- gun battles and punches detonating all over both stories and leaving a spray of intentional confusion -- is staged with bracing clarity… Mr. Manchevski demonstrates his gifts as a visual stylist and a filmmaker in command of the technical aspect of the medium. The constant onslaught of information -- sounds and pictures -- quiets down, and by the end everything makes sense, to the extent that it needs to. (He even uses howls of despair and pain as transitions.) The scenes that act as triggers to propel us into the dual stories work amazingly well… There’s enough culture clash that Dust doesn’t need the equivalent of a Zen koan.”
“Dust is an anachronistic and iconoclastic crosscultural “baklava Western” that explores what happens when West meets East in the violent history of the Balkans... In both features, Manchevski uses diverse characters and a fragmented narrative structure to create a mosaic in which the details of history are subjective, contradictory, and illusory, and recollections are repeatedly altered to suit the desires of the storytellers or the narrative structures of the stories that they want to tell. In Dust, Manchevski carries this approach to abstract and surreal dimensions... The filmmaker also plays with the authority of documentary photography; in Dust, photos are records of a past which, as the stories unfold, we realize might never have happened. The photographs are only as true as the tales in which they reside... But perhaps Dust is most significantly a film about Manchevski’s love for the act of storytelling, which passionately endures despite violence and loss.”
(Roderick Coover, Film Quarterly)

“Gloriously uneven, deliriously delightful film... Yet these frustrations with the story make the film fascinating rather than distracting. Manchevski seems so confident in his storytelling abilities that we trust him even when we don’t understand him. There is never a dull or belabored moment here – every scene advances whatever metaphorical point Manchevski is making, and it does so with outstanding visuals and terrific, subtle performances from the four leads. At 124 minutes, the film seems shorter than it is, because it moves so quickly and captivates us so totally.”
(Film as Art: Daniel Griffin’s Guide to Cinema, 3½ out of 4 stars)

*In 2004, Dust is the subject of an academic conference (Re)inventing Collective Identities at the Leipzig University.
The Kinesthetic of Dust – The End of Drama by Prof. Andrija Dimitrijevich;
The Living and the Dead – Masternarrative, Narrative Frames and Collective Identity in Dust by Beatrice Kobow;
Mental Maps. Constructions of Identity in Space and Time by Dr. Claudia Weber;
The Wild West of the Balkans by Prof. Stilian Yotov;
Collective Identity - or: Who Are We? by Prof. Georg Meggle
Dust - on Politics, War and Film by Dr. Iris Kronauer
A Shootist for VMRO - a Double Redemption and a Sin by PD Nikolaos Psarros
When A Story Hides the Story - Dust as a Form of Collective Rorschach Test by Erik Tangerstad
De(constructing) Balkanism in the Film Dust by Milcho Manchevski by Prof. Despina Angelovska
Balkans as a History of Violence? by Prof. Wolfgang Hopken
(Re)Staging of the Real - Painting and Film by Ulrike Kremeier
Milcho Manchevski’s Dust is a gloriously uneven, deliriously delightful film about the emergence of the Old West mentality into contemporary times. At least, I think that’s what it’s about: It is so convoluted and choppy that it doesn’t even pretend to make a lick of sense, but then, neither did the West itself, a place where men were driven by the unnameable spirit of the land to do inexplicable, brutal things to one another. Manchevski, no stranger to intricate storylines (his brilliant Before the Rain was hailed as the European Pulp Fiction for its multiple, interwoven continuities), has created one here so elaborately visionary that it is nearly too much for him to contain, but his stirring visuals and brilliant juxtaposition of conflicting images enables him to keep up with himself.

The film tells three intersecting stories from two distinctly different eras. On the outer ring, we have Edge (Adrian Lester), a small-time burglar living in present-day Manhattan who robs the home of 93-year-old Angela (Rosemary Murphy) in hope that he will find enough money to pay back debts he owes the mob. Things take an interesting turn when Angela turns out to be more feisty and resourceful than the average elderly woman: She promptly breaks Edge’s nose and holds him at gunpoint. At this point, she forces him to listen to the story of her life, and she keeps him interested by promising a fortune of gold if he sticks around for the tale’s end. This is enough incentive to keep around anyone who owes the mob money; it helps that Edge is really a decent fellow who has been forced into crime against his will. Throughout the film, a mother-son relationship will develop between Edge and Angela; he maintains that he only wants the gold, but he makes a series of critical choices throughout that reveal his growing affection for the woman.

Angela’s story concerns American gunslinger Luke (David Wenham), an archetypal cowboy living during the turn of the twentieth century. Most of the film occupies his tale. To Luke’s chagrin, he has survived the Old West, watched civilization tame it, and now restlessly searches the earth to find a place that will develop around for the tale’s end. This is enough incentive to keep around anyone who owes the mob money; it helps that Edge is really a decent fellow who has been forced into crime against his will. Throughout the film, a mother-son relationship will develop between Edge and Angela; he maintains that he only wants the gold, but he makes a series of critical choices throughout that reveal his growing affection for the woman.

Eventually, we get that story too, in another flashback arch about the brothers, when they were younger and living in the American West. Manchevski cleverly sets these scenes apart from the Macedonian sequences by shooting them in black and white; otherwise, it would be difficult to tell exactly when these scenes take place, and where (we’ve known since the Spaghetti Western that the West and the East are remarkably similar scenically). It is only these moments that develop Luke and Elijah as three-dimensional characters and establish exactly why they are fighting on different sides in the Ottoman rebellion. These scenes are fleeting, but they are also crucial because they clearly outline the brothers’ hatred for one another. I won’t give much away here, but let’s just say that in the spirit of the great Western archetypes, there’s a woman involved.

I leave it to you to see how all of these various threads from different eras all tie together, but Manchevski (who also wrote the screenplay) weaves through the labyrinth in a way that is always compelling, even if it doesn’t make much sense. Most characterizations are so vague that viewers will have to fill in the gaps; the San Francisco sequences seem like they belong to an entirely different movie, and the chief scenes in Macedonia never take the time to develop persuasive characters or motives from the supporting cast. The heart of the picture lies in the black-and-white sequences, which essentially boil the century-long tale down to the anger felt between the two brothers, which, even nearly one hundred years later and across two continents, still resonates with pain and betrayal as it leaks onto Angela and Edge’s storyline. But the film takes a long, articulate road to the revelations found in these flashbacks; it suggests far more than it reveals before it finally unites all the plot threads, and even then, we’re not sure exactly how they all fit.

Yet these frustrations with the story make the film fascinating rather than distracting. I think this is because Manchevski seems so confident in his storytelling abilities that we trust him even when we don’t understand him. There is never a dull or belabored moment here—every scene advances whatever metaphorical point Manchevski is making, and it does so with outstanding visuals and terrific, subtle performances from the four leads (the two brothers in the past, Edge and Angela in the present).

What is the point? I think the clue is found in Manchevski’s juxtaposition of images and sounds from various eras and cultures. They often run together, and it’s absorbing (and surprising) how smugly they blend. An example: During a decisive showdown between Luke and Elijah, the two struggle and shoot at one another until they find themselves in a stalemate—they stand inches apart with their guns literally pushed into each other’s faces. The scene proceeds as any such western showdown would, with pervasive, twitching close-ups as each brother silently deliberates his next move. But then, out of nowhere, the soundtrack turns into angry, explicit gangsta rap, which adds entirely new dimensions to the proceedings. The rhythm of the contemporary music is stunningly appropriate in this ancient setting, and as we watch this paradox work itself out in front of us, Manchevski jumps back to the present, to reveal that it is music coming from outside the window where Edge and Angela chat. Edge shuts the window and laments, “I hate that music!”

But the ultimate punch-line isn’t the crucial factor here. What’s curious is Manchevski’s revelation that the rap music works seamlessly in the Western context. For as much as Luke feels he must travel the earth to find another place as untamed as the Old West, Manchevski’s fusion of old and new reveals that America is still as untamed and as frigid as it ever was. Folk songs have simply been replaced with rap, and gunslinger outlaws are now desperate burglars from the hood. The beat is different, of course, but the song has always remained the same.

But Manchevski’s theme isn’t so one-noted that I can sum it up with one example. Though Luke is sparse, he is an increasingly complex character the more he moves about the Ottoman Empire and encounters various villagers and soldiers. For that matter, so are Elijah and Edge, who emit with decency even as they descend farther into revenge and greed, respectively. Both timelines feature a hunt for gold and acts of unspeakable violence to other human beings, and yes, there is the inevitable Western showdown where guns blaze and the soundtrack soars. But Manchevski cushions these moments with sincere and moving acts of decency from these hard-boiled characters. He doesn’t stop to wonder why they periodically make the right choices, but I don’t think he has to: His point is that for all of our depravity and selfishness, even the worst of men can be compelled to do the right thing simply for the sake of humanity. The film eventually reaches a point when all three men must make critical choices; on one hand, they can preserve themselves, on the other, they can put themselves in danger to help someone else. You might be surprised to see which character chooses which option, and the actors are never anything less than convincing as their characters shift and deviate.

At 124 minutes, the film seems shorter than it is, because it moves so quickly and captivates us so totally. It helps that it is gorgeous to look at, with Barry Ackeroyd’s stark cinematography constantly reminding us that this is western, despite its various global settings. As a Macedonian himself, Manchevski must have seen a strong connection between the barbaric wars of his country and the struggles against civilization in the Old West. That Luke and Elijah, two decidedly Western characters, fit so well in this Eastern struggle confirms the director’s theory, and even as Manchevski delivers a strong cultural sense of his own country’s revolution, the archetypes and images grounded in the Western maintain its sense of familiarity for American viewers. Never does the film seem foreign or its characters displaced. In Manchevski’s universe, the Wild West spans all time and space.

The final scene is likely to cause a mess of a headache for anyone who tries to take it literally. It suggests that every plot point we’ve thus far seen in the various narratives is utterly pointless, except as one gigantic metaphor pointing to the theme that it represents. After two viewings of Dust, I still can’t quite figure out how much of what we see is real, or if it really all a delusion. But if it is a delusion, whose is it, and what does this mean for the characters with whom we have spent the last two hours? Manchevski doesn’t say, and this is likely to outrage some viewers who feel like the film has been wasting their time. I personally found it quite compelling, but you’ve been warned.
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Dust 2003, Movie, R, 127 mins

The chaotic, brutal iconography of Italian Westerns is put to novel use in this time-traveling, self-referential, hugely ambitious story of American brothers who, in 1900, play out their bitter sibling rivalry in the wild, wild East. Their legacy of love and hate extends directly to New York City 100 years later, where a nervous young burglar, Edge (Adrian Lester), is叁なed to find mid-robbery by the apartment's elderly tenant, Angela (Rosemary Murphy), Edge slugs her; much to his surprise, the frail-looking Angela fights back, breaking Edge's nose and pulling an ancient but lethal looking pistol. Gun in hand, Angela demands that Edge listen to a story that begins in 19th-century Oklahoma, where two brothers are about to be set at each other's throats. Biblical names notwithstanding, Luke (David Wenham) and his younger brother, Elijah (Joseph Fiennes), are opposites; Luke is a hell-rising, skait-chasing, stone-cold killer, while virginal Elijah is a bible-quoting straight arrow committed to the path of righteousness. Luke naturally leads Elijah astray, escorting him to a local whorehouse where the inexperienced Elijah falls under the spell of a French hooker prophetically named Lilith (Anne Brochet).

Elijah marries Lilith, but Luke sleeps with her anyway then flies to Europe to avoid Elijah's wrath. Luke sees his future in a French cafe, in the form of a flickering newsreel about turmoil in Macedonia. Gangs of every political, religious and mercenary persuasion are running riot, and when chaos reigns there's money to be made by a heartless opportunist like Luke. But while Luke can run from his past, he can't hide. Elijah follows him halfway around the world, his heart seething with vengeance for reasons that are only gradually revealed. And Luke's quest to make his fortune by killing a rebel leader with a price on his head becomes a baroque odyssey through escalating levels of hell on Earth. Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski's film is far from flawless, in particular, the evolving present-day relationship between the cocky Edge, who isn't asstreetwise as he imagines, and the dying Angela feels falsely sentimental. But the Macedonian sequences are breathtaking, unfolding against a serene, desert landscape of blasted villages and bloody corpses. Manchevski (ansacking a run-down apartment; surprise filming was the dark cannibal comedy RAVENOUS; he was replaced by Antonia Bird) has nothing less in mind than an investigation into the nature of storytelling, twisting and fracturing his narrative and using jarring disjunctive images to pull the past and present into a moebius strip of cruelty, retribution and hope of heaven. LEAVE A COMMENT  --Maitland McDonagh
Dust

director Mihoko Manchevski
venezia 58 tori concorse

100年の時間を超境する「物語」のパワー。「ダスト」は何を

Dust
how the east was won

by manuel vecchina

The long wait is over: Mihoko Manchevski’s Dust marks his return six years after his Before the Rain, which not only earned him a nomination for an Oscar, but also won him the Golden Lion. It evidently stopped raining a while back on the sunny Macedonian plateau of Stavitzka, which was used for the set. Such a strong sun is a dramatic contrast to the New York nights acting as the backdrop to the very start of the film. Dust is a film of contrasting positions, opposites that inevitably attract each other: feelings and memories, blood and tons of bullets, fired with the blind violence of a spaghetti-style western. These are elements that blend in a plot that has two lines: the present and the past, rejoined by the thread of memory. An old woman (the TV actress Rosemary Murphy), catches a thief who has broken into her house during the night and makes him listen to her story. If he stays until the end of the story (what choice does he have with a gun pointing at him?) he will be rewarded with a gold coin.

This piece of treasure, a tool of memory, leads us through a Balkan western where two pistol-toting American brothers end up in Turkey in the middle of a civil war at the start of the last century. Australian David Wenham, who we saw in Moulin Rouge, plays alongside the younger of the Fiennes brothers, Joseph, who has abandoned Shakespeare and the role of Danilov in Enemy at the Gates to try his hand as a cowboy in love with the latest belle. But unfortunately the woman doesn’t like him, and that’s when the trouble starts. Manchevski does an admirable job in a plot that is intricate, to say the least, and makes use of the experience he gained in his previous film, which interwove a good three stories. An energetic confident style with two genres that merge into each other so as to bring the two narrative tempos perfectly together at the end, with the artists at the limit of relativity.
Il secondo film di Manchevski, primi piani alla Sergio Leone
tanta polvere e omaggi all’esotismo di Hugo Pratt

Dust, lungo racconto tra New York e Balcani

di ROBERTO NEPOTI


Vincitore del Leone d’oro ‘94 con il suo film d’esordio, "Prima della pioggia", il macedone Milcho Manchevski ha aspettato sette anni per realizzare il secondo. Forse un intervallo troppo lungo, con troppo tempo speso a pensarci su: perché Dust contiene tutto e il contrario di tutto, traversa il tempo e lo spazio, sintetizzandolo come un dipinto cubista, è nuovo e vecchio al tempo stesso.

Insomma è un mezzo pasticcio: costellato di momenti visivamente potenti, però un mezzo pasticcio. Nella parte newyorkese il regista adotta fotografia e stile da actioner metropolitano, con un montaggio concitato e un bel ritmo. Gli episodi al passato, invece, regrediscono ai tempi dello spaghetti-western; ma uno spaghetti-western diretto da Kusturica, con primi piani alla Leone e truculenze degne di Giulio Questi, che qualcuno ricorderà (Manchevski di sicuro). Mentre trapelano sporadici omaggi all’esotismo di Hugo Pratt, inclusa un’ironica comparsata di Corto Maltese, Dust si abbandona a espedienti da vecchio metacinema, come il ritocco delle inquadrature con sparizione a vista del personaggi. Poi la polvere torna alla polvere e il film viene archiviato, tra molte perplessità.
When Miklo Manchevski persuaded Joseph Fiennes to star in his movie in the
Indians, nobody mentioned forest fires, dynasty, mad shey, jingoes of warps...
or the nearby war. Pat Cooper reports from the set of the 'eastern western'
"Come On. It'll Be Fun"
La vecchia narra una storia feroce

Lina Yordanova

Dell' storico Macedone Milcho Manchewski, il regista di film come Last Stop, The History of Violence e jedenährig im Paradies, la nuova pellicola, Dust, è sull'attacco. Il film, che ha il suo ambientazione in un paese immaginario, affronta temi come la guerra, il colonialismo e la violenza.

Dust è ambientato in una terra immaginaria, dove la guerra è quotidiana e la violenza è normale.

Matematica, amori e sottomarini

Un "Enigma" in Inghilterra, nella seconda guerra mondiale

L'Enigma è doppiamente in Inghilterra. Nel 1943, il matematico Alan Turing, interpretato da Colin Firth, lavora a Oxford per decifrare le code utilizzate dall'Ingegneria Segreti sovietica. Nel 1949, un nuovo enigma è risolto: il codice Enigma utilizzato dal Terzo Reich. La storia è ambientata negli anni '40 e '50, tra Oxford e Cambridge.

Enigma è interpretato da Colin Firth, Mark Strong, Kate Winslet, Jeffery Baydon, Jerry Northam e altri.}

Viaggio in Macedonia sul set di Dust, il western di Milcho Manchewski

A sei anni da Prima delle pietre, l'attore Lucio Bacchetti, interpretato da Joseph Fiennes, si immerge nell'universo macedone e nella violenza delle battaglie. Il film è ambientato in una terra immaginaria, dove la guerra è quotidiana e la violenza è normale.

Due cowboy nel Far East

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Dust
Presentato all'apertura del Festival di Venezia dello scorso anno, il nuovo film di Milcho Manchevski ha suscitato moltissime polemiche e pochissimi consensi. Un "errore di valutazione" come ha confessato il produttore Domenico Procacci, sebbene era difficile per chiunque immaginare quello che sarebbe accaduto nei Balcani proprio in quella caldissima fine agosto, né tanto meno prevedere le aspettative "politiche" che "Dust" ha poi creato. Ma come tentò di sottolineare in conferenza stampa il regista macedone, allora come oggi il film non ha mai voluto sollevare alcuna riflessione o inclinazione politica. Attraverso la sua narrazione fluttuante tra spazio e tempo di un racconto in un racconto, Manchevski riecrea con straordinario estro l'epopea di un Est selvaggio, la rivoluzione macedone dei primi del '900, che tanto somiglia a quella messicana e in cui uomini con grandi ideali di libertà, cavalcarono e uccidevano senza sosta. Un selvaggio Est che sembra il riflesso proprio di quel selvaggio West da dove partono i due eroi, Luke ed Elijah, fratelli in costante lotta tra loro e perdutamente innamorati della stessa donna, che finirà con lo sposare Elijah. Nessun altro genere cinematografico riesce a creare immagini tanto forti e quasi mitologiche come il western.
Gunfight at the Old Macedonian Corral

By ELVIS MITCHELL

M

ilcho Manchevski’s stylized western, "Dust," is a potent, assured and ambitious piece of filmmaking brought down by weighted dialogue and, playing Americans, the British actors Adrian Lester and Joseph Fiennes and the Australian David Wenham. This dazzling and dazed movie begins on the streets of contemporary New York, as a camera moseys down a street and then crawls up the side of a building, peering into several windows as various apartment dwellers play out their lives. It’s as if Mr. Manchevski were thumbing through a selection of stories as we watch, deciding which appeal to him the most.

He and "Dust" settle on a darkened room that Edge (Mr. Lester) has just broken into. He’s prowling the apparently empty place for valuables, casting around and finding nothing but old photographs, some of which seem to date to the beginning of the 20th century. He hits her, but before he can escape, she whips out a large antique — but still functional — six-shooter and proceeds to prattle on about her life. Her tale, unfolding in black-and-white, is the story of two brothers, the lusty outlaw Luke (Mr. Wenham) and the virtuous, religious Elijah (Mr. Fiennes).

Their story starts in the Old West, with a fight over a prostitute (Anne Brochet), whom they both love and Elijah marries. The resulting envy and bitterness send Luke fleeing to Macedonia. After seeing a silent film about the region and its lawlessness — an external turmoil obviously meant to mirror his own inner conflicts — and a bandit known as Teacher (Vlado Jovanoski) with a huge price on his head, Luke also decides it’s a place to make his fortune.

Mr. Manchevski suavely shuffles his various narratives, sometimes smoothly presenting the juxtaposed tales and on other occasions cutting violently from one story to another. The literal violence — gun battles and punches detonating all over both stories and leaving a spray of intentional confusion — is staged with bracing clarity.

When Luke arrives in Macedonia, the screen is deluged with hot, bright desert colors that are oddly soothing to him given the foreign locale. The director signals that he is as unreliable a narrator as Angela because communicating emotion is more important than relaying facts in "Dust." He wants to convey the sense of being torn, which both Luke and Edge feel. Edge is hustling for money because a pair of thugs he owes are slowly — and happily — breaking parts of his skeleton piece by piece until they’re repaid.

Mr. Manchevski demonstrates his gifts as a visual stylist and a filmmaker in command of the technical aspect of the medium. The constant onslaught of information — sounds and pictures — quiets down, and by the end everything makes sense, to the extent that it needs to. (He even uses howls of despair and pain as transitions.) The scenes that act as triggers to propel us into the dual stories work amazingly well.

"Dust," which opens today in New York and Los Angeles, almost has the feel of a spaghetti western made by Bryan Singer, who demonstrated the same superlative skills of legerdemain in "The Usual Suspects," in which the point was also to keep the audience off guard and consistently move the balance of power among the protagonists.

But Mr. Singer recognized that the best way to such mastery of craft was in a plot that didn’t seek to make emotional demands; his film was essentially an urban legend told over a campfire, with pieces added for spice just when the audience thought it knew where the film was headed.

Mr. Manchevski employed a similar splintered-storytelling approach to insinuate the plot of his ingeniously realized "Before the Rain," in which the silvers of apparently haphazardly scattered plot all came together. (In that film the Godardian cubist style was buttressed by titles that acted as chapter headings.)

"Dust" takes this ghost story approach while simultaneously trying to limn a film rife with dovetailing displays of devices like parallels and metaphor, trying to use all these elements to explicate character. Both Luke and Edge undergo a series of tests, obstacles they must conquer to understand what they are, and are not.

Luke’s baptism of faith comes in his time with Neda (Nikolina Kujaca), a pregnant peasant angel in Macedonia, and his attention to her is eventually tangled with another skirmish between Teacher’s forces and his opponents. The scale is almost as biblical as the Scripture quoted by the underwritten, and overaccented Elijah. Mr. Wenham rises to the challenges of material that requires his growth to come in a profusion of stages.

Edge’s trial pushes him to overcome selfishness, but the presence of Angela in his life is also a parallel. It is overly convenient, and such an underexplained mystery that it never makes any sense. There’s enough culture clash that “Dust” doesn’t need the equivalent of a Zen koan.
COWBOY MODERNO

Un film ambientato in diverse location dal West all’Est Europa di fine secolo

Appariva così la sfilata di Cerruti 1881 presentata lunedì a Milano nell’ambito della settimana della moda. In effetti dalla casa di moda hanno spiegato che la collezione è stata realizzata proprio pensando a una pellicola proiettata a diverse velocità e dal film “Dust” di Milcho Manchevski è stato ripreso il concept di una collezione che ha fusso passato e presente. I protagonisti della sfilata sono stati tanto eroi buoni - vestiti di tonalità speziate - che personaggi cattivi – con addosso colori neutri e color sabbia. Gli abiti, disegnati da Adrian Smith, sono stati presentati tanto nella versione modellata, che nei volumi più ampi e comodi. E per il giorno anche pantaloni da pistoler del Western ripensati in tessuti moderni e colorati e magari abbinati a giacche eleganti e maglie da cow boy. A dominare la scena tanto blu notte, ma anche colori come il tamarindo, l’arancione bruciato ed il nocciola. A partire dalla collezione del prossimo anno tutto sarà firmato Cerruti 1881. Le diverse linee saranno invece tra loro contraddistinte da un’etichetta nera con un diverso tratto colorato (grigio, cobalto o arancio per la prima linea per quella a diffusione e quella sportwear).

“Il restyling del marchio - hanno spiegato dalla casa di moda - è un vero e proprio ritorno all’essenza dei valori di casa Cerruti racchiusi e rappresentati da una cifra 1881”.

A margine della sfilata l’amministratore delegato del gruppo Fin.Part, che controlla la casa di moda, Gianluigi Facchini, ha dichiarato che la finanziaria sta puntando sempre più a focalizzarsi sul rilancio di Cerruti e di Pepper. La holding ha invece trattative in corso per dismettere le calzature (dopo che venerdì scorso è stata annunciata la cessione di Maska) e per realizzare una scissione della controllata Frette.

Cowboys ride again in a bad world

By Matthew Temple
Published: May 21 2004 17:58

Though John Wayne dismissed Westerns as fashion vehicles - “You can wear a blue shirt, or, if you’re down in Monument Valley, you can wear a yellow shirt” - the catwalk embraces the genre, albeit more Butch Cassidy than Rooster Cogburn. Or even, in the case of Cerruti, the Balkan Western Dust by Milcho Manchevski, who chronicled a demythologised Wild West: “The good were good and the bad very bad. No Hamlets there.” The film is “more metropolitan and intellectual”, says Cerruti 1881’s Pier Davoli, themes reflected in the collection. Elegant-rugged Sundance suits, gunslinger coats and holster-like man bags all in dustbowl colours evoke High Noon meets high style. But Davoli insists Cerruti’s cowboy wears the “form and colour of the Wild West without being tied to the traditional concepts portrayed in American movies”. His hero isn’t Wayne; it’s Clint Eastwood, il mascalzone (the scoundrel): “A symbol of life without fear.”
奇妙な映像の活力に満ちた「人間の存在」を問うミステリー

ダスト
7/13号

STAFF & CAST

キャスト：マーシュル・マンデフスキー、マック・ディア、アラシ・オーラ

スタッフ：エドワード・パーキンス、アナ・プロシモーナー

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VENICE — Breaking a six-year trend of Hollywood domination, the return of a European production to the Venice Intl. Film Festival’s prestigious opening night slot should have been a local industry celebration.

A European production to the Venice Intl. Film Festival’s prestigious opening night slot should have been a local industry celebration.

Instead, the Aug. 29 world premiere of “Dust” provided a seriously ironic, zabawnego humoru, który okazał się udoskonaleńcem dymu, utrudnienia niezbyt konwencjonalnej twórczości Manchevskiego.

Reżyser Milcho Manchevski skazał się udoskonaleńcem dymu — z wiele wtrapączej zażegnaniu kilku konwencji, stylami i gatunkami filmowymi. Z tego skoku cyrkowego popały powstała produkcja, która w wyjątkowy sposób absorbuje widza, przedstawiając mu złożone świat sumefalciarskich wizji mieszających się z rzeźbiarską ikoniczną.


Możliwie mi wzięć, że jest to jedynie uwarunkowany zarys fabuły trwającego niesie ponad dwa godziny seansu, w ciągu którego publiczność przestronny jest spektakl przerwany, zwrotem sygna akcji i sumefalciarskich wizji. Rytm tego filmu jest niezwykle dobrej jakości sceny walk, aby zaraz zwrot tempero i delikatnie wprowadza na wody kina kontemplacyjnego. Manchevski postarał się jednak, aby żaden ze stylów prowadzenia narracji nie dominował, zachowując przytoczoną dla publiczności równowagę.

To, co przypomina w „Prochu i pył” to uznawalny dyskusje twórców, do ukazywanych wydarzeń. Wiele scen mającymi cechować się o przemocie, brutalności w postaci aktorów, co pozwoliło zaimportować do obrazu niesie ironicznego, zabawnego humoru, który najpierw daje o sobie znać w fragmentach niezbyt powściągalnych się w opowiadaniu Nowym Jorku.
Universality of bloodlust and excess in an unusual western

'Dust' stretches to set a visually gripping but unrealistic and overtly violent gun-slinging showdown in Macedonia.

August 22, 2003 | Kevin Thomas | Times Staff Writer

'Dust' is a bust, a big bad movie of the scope, ambition and bravura that could be made only by a talented filmmaker run amok. Macedonian-born, New York-based Milcho Manchevski, whose first film was the elegiac 1994 "Before the Rain," attempts a Middle Eastern western, a fusion suggesting the timeless universality of chronic bloodlust. It's a potent visual idea, full of darkly amusing irony but undercut by wretched excess, underdeveloped characters and a queasy mix of sentimentality and violence. Its framing story, while absolutely a stretch, is far sturdier than its flashback, in which three central figures are never more than mere ciphers. It has energy and cinematic flourishes to burn, but its savagery is so incessant that the film is ultimately merely numbing when it aims to be wrenching.

An elaborate tracking shot commences in a seedy New York street at night and climbs to the window of a small, cluttered apartment. Inside, a young burglar, Edge (Adrian Lester), is ransacking the place with little reward and increasing angry frustration when he comes upon Angela (Rosemary Murphy), an ailing, elderly woman in her bed, lying in darkness and surrounded by countless medicine bottles. Edge seriously underestimates Angela's sharpness and capacity for self-defense; the upshot is that she tempts him with allusions to a stash of gold coins to get him to listen to her spin an incredible tale.

Once the screen goes a luminous, hazy black-and-white to suggest the past, it's clear that in the flashbacks there will be no ordinary western unfolding, for "Cherry Orchard" is the least likely name for a brothel of the Old West, with nary a Madame Ranevskaya in sight -- nor a virgin for the picking, for that matter. A popular regular, the gunfighter Luke (David Wenham), brings along his Bible-quoting younger brother, Elijah (Joseph Fiennes), so that his favorite, Lilith (Anne Brochet), can initiate Elijah into manhood. So taken with Lilith is Elijah that he promptly marries her, inflaming Luke's jealousy to the extent that enmity between the brothers drives Luke to Europe, where in Paris he sees a primitive newsreel reporting the fall of the Ottoman Empire and images of Macedonia overrun by savage hordes of bounty hunters, their most lucrative target a Macedonian revolutionary leader called Teacher. Luke sets off to nab the Teacher, lunging into a torrent of bloodshed and slaughter, intensified by invading Turkish forces. For reasons of his own, Elijah pursues Luke to Macedonia for a standoff.

Manchevski cuts furiously between past and present, and the implication that Angela may be embellishing Luke's exploits could be amusing had Manchevski given Luke and Elijah any dimension or personality and not wallowed in nonstop violence. This is not to say he exaggerates the horrors of this or any subsequent Balkan uprising. That Atom Egoyan's eloquent "Ararat," which has some virtually identical images, approaches the Turkish genocide of the Armenians indirectly makes Egoyan's tactic seem all the more powerful in its effect compared with Manchevski's head-on bluntness.

That acerbic, fearless Angela could have such a potentially transforming effect on the brutal Edge seems a sentimental stretch. But the talents of Murphy, whose screen appearances are infrequent, and young Lester make Angela and Edge's relationship more persuasive than it has any reasonable right to be. (Only at the film's climax is it revealed how Angela is connected with Luke.)

Murphy is unquestionably the film's star and major character, and she is a glory even if the film is not. Had Manchevski given the same kind of substance and weight to Luke and Elijah he could have achieved a balance between past and present, a major drawback of the film along with its excessive violence. Under such circumstances there's little incentive to consider the film's allegorical implications and various allusions.

"Dust" is a great-looking film of vast scope, and cinematographer Barry Ackroyd brings it a rich texture and bold panache, which could also be said of David Munn's imaginative and detailed production design and Kiril Dzajkovski's score. The passion, free-spiritedness and vision that Manchevski brings to "Dust" makes his self-indulgence all the more depressing.
Dust (2001), Macedonian filmmaker Milcho Manchevski’s second feature, is an anachronistic and iconoclastic crosscultural “baklava Western” that evo-
quires what happens when West meets East in the vi-
idiently with European funds following
Manchevski’s fall out with Miramax over control of the picture and, despite its Western
themes and interna-
tional recognition, it had difficulty finding American distribution. It was only
in 2003, when Lion’s Gate purchased the U.S.
distribution rights.

Dust is a long-awaited successor to
Manchevski’s Oscar-nominated debut feature, Before the Rain (1994), which presented a tragic
set of stories about love and violence in mod-
edern Europe. In the wake of an infa-
mous burst of violence in Macedonia and
far away in London. In both features, Manchevski uses
diverse characters and a fragmented narrative structure to
create a mosaic in which the details of history are subjective, contradictory,
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tions are repeatedly altered to suit the desires
of the storytellers or the narrative structures of the stories that they want
to tell. In Dust, Manchevski carries this ap-
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The Macedonian-born Manchevski studied film in the U.S. at the Univer-
sity of Southern Illinois and is now a professor in the Graduate Film Program
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Manchevski’s world of Dust as intruders. The film begins with a break-in:

Dust (2001), Macedonian filmmaker Milcho Man-
chevski’s second feature, is an anachronistic and iconoclastic crosscultural “baklava Western” that explores what happens when West meets East in the visceral world of the Balkans. The film takes viewers on a wild ride across time and space that begins in contemporary New York City, goes back to the American Wild West, and then to the Macedonian revolution of 1903. Stories about love and violence in modern Europe. In the wake of an infamous burst of violence in Macedonia and far away in London, in both features, Manchevski uses diverse characters and a fragmented narrative structure to create a mosaic in which the details of history are subjective, contradictory, and illusory, and recollections are repeatedly altered to suit the desires of the storytellers or the narrative structures of the stories that they want to tell.

In Dust, Manchevski carries this approach to abstract and surreal dimensions. The histories that the characters present seem to change at whim, and the characters even insert themselves into events that would have occurred long before they were born. The surreal qualities of their stories are enhanced by dream sequences, bizarre anachronisms, faux archival recordings, and strange settings. Manchevski also combines black-and-white and color film to play with audience expectations about what is past and present. In these ways, the filmmaker intentionally undermines “a basic author-viewer contract,” as Manchevski describes it, “that the film will maintain a unified tone and surface line as an old-fashioned painting.”

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Dust, a young criminal, searches through a dark apartment for loot, but instead finds a gun-toting old woman named Angela, whose quickness on the draw already suggests an unusual past. Holding Edge at gunpoint, Angela tells a story of two brothers, Luke and Elijah, who live in the Wild West around the time of Angela’s birth. After Luke sleeps with his brother’s wife, he flees to Macedonia (then under the rule of the Turks as a part of the Ottoman Empire), where he becomes a bounty hunter and pursues a revolutionary warrior known as “The Teacher.” Elijah pursues Luke. Arriving in 1903 Europe at the end of the cowboy era, they are characters caught out of time.

Despite his faithfulness to his research, Manchevski says he is more concerned with how differing versions of the same past are constructed (and what they tell us about the individuals caught in such mo-
ments of conflict) than with any particular historical or political overview. He questions the nature of cinematic evidence: “Once I set the film where I set it, I felt it was my responsibility to portray the times and the human elements—behavior, language, costume, relationships, attitudes, body language—with as much ac-
curacy as possible, since, for better or worse, film is way too often taken as a record of the times. Sort of the way paintings and frescoes were treated hundreds of years ago—people thought, if we see it painted here, it must’ve happened. So, the paintings were used to tell a lot of lies.”

Manchevski mixes old photos, film clips from the silent era, and Faulknerian clips he has created, to show how history is an anachronistic product of the imagination. In one scene, Luke unknowingly steps between a movie projector and the screen to become a spectator of the fading world of the Wild West from which he comes, and in another scene, he reappears almost 50 years after his death to haunt his aging brother. Viewers soon discover that Angela is an unreliable narrator who will place herself in scenes occur-
ing before she is even born. Her subjectivity helps draw into question the value of archival evidence in judging the past.

Historical referents are continually mixed, remixed, and altered in the act of storytelling: events are comically and tragically exaggerated, and at times even retold with entirely different endings.

By way of Angela’s tale-telling and through the adventures of two American gunslingers, Manchevski offers a distinctly Macedonian perspective of Balkan history. Viewers enter into what Manchevski repre-
sects as a heroic (if also tragic) period in Macedonia’s struggle for independence, violently quashed by the Turkish, Greek, and Albanian players in the region. Their violence is widespread and indiscriminate. The groups of bandits and bounty hunters seem to attack each other as much as the guerrilla fighters they are meant to be pursuing, resulting in, literally, a bloody mess. This violence is equaled only by the fighting between the Turkish soldiers and the revolu-
tionary warriors; the Turkish responses to guerrilla attacks are ruthless. Manchevski shows the Greek complicity with the brutal practices of the Turks; an Orthodox priest even accompanies the Turkish major during one of the film’s most violent scenes. Meanwhile, only one neg-
ative image of “The Teacher” moderates the Macedonian’s otherwise heroic image, and the other Macedonians are shown as noble but powerless. Yet out of this free-for-all come unexpected discoveries as the protagonists make choices about how to sur-
vive and what to fight for; mercenary ambitions are challenged by acts of brutal violence, courage, and love.
In the frame story, Angela becomes a kind of mother figure for Edge, just as she is also mother to the story. When her health falters, Edge cares for her, and eventually adopts her story as his own, carrying it forward to a new generation. *Dust* is a story about brotherly love, in this case of love gone wrong, corrupted by Luke's ultimately tragic act of having sex with his brother's wife. In Macedonia, *Dust* also becomes a story about selfless love, and about societal or patriotic love. But perhaps *Dust* is most significantly a film about Manchevski's love for the act of storytelling, which passionately endures despite violence and loss.

RODERICK COOVER: *Dust* is a film about storytelling and history that takes place in worlds not usually thought of together—contemporary New York City, the American Wild West, and the Macedonian revolution. What did you learn from the contrasts between those different worlds?

MILCHO MANCHEVSKI: Contrast is good. It's good for drama, and good for art. I learned that there is more in common than you would think, and this is probably the result of our need to create little or big clichés, since life seems to be easier to explain away that way. In *Dust*, I was aiming for a story which incorporates the structure of the story itself as a crucial element of the story.

On paper, Macedonia under Ottoman rule and the Wild West sounded like an outrageous combination, but when I started doing the research and then filming, the two places felt like they could go together. The original inspiration came when I saw there were common elements in the iconography of the Macedonian revolution at the turn of the century that are visually similar to that of the Wild West and of the Mexican revolutionaries and bandits, with their long beards, bandoliers, and white horses. It is as if they all stopped in the same boutique. The warriors seemed to draw on many of the same ideals of a warrior code, at least visually.

I discovered things that seemed surreal when seen through the eyes of somebody who frequently watches Western movies, things like the fact that Billy the Kid was from Brooklyn, the fact that cowboys and Indians rarely fought because by the time the cowboys came into being there weren't many Indians left in the area—Texas and Oklahoma—or the fact that General Custer was one of the worst students ever to attend West Point.

In doing research, I also discovered that there were actually Americans coming to Macedonia. The American writer Albert Sonnichsen, who had previously been in the war in the Philippines (like an earlier and lesser-known John Reed), fought in the Macedonian revolution for a period of six months and returned to San Francisco to write a book about it called *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*. He even carried a camera with him, and traded processing chemicals with the leader of the rebels. Sonnichsen (or a nastier version of him) could be the prototype for Luke, had not Luke been written before I found out about him. Re alty did its best to support this piece of fiction. Con tempor ary New York felt like the right third side of the triangle—it is equally different from each of the two. On a more personal level, all three are integral parts of who I am. What happens as the story of a battle between brothers in the Wild West is told in the East, in Macedonia? The only difference is the fact that both brothers are away from home. When you are in a familiar environment, it is softer. In Macedonia, the brothers' conflict becomes harsher. Placing the archetypes in new contexts means questioning them as elements in how you tell a story. They can become richer, or they can be fl at. It is sort of like a Robert Rauschenberg print: a piece of it could be found art and another piece made from a photograph, some of it is an actual brushstroke, but what really matters is what these pieces tell you as a whole—when you step back—rather than what they tell you on their own.

However, I think all films are about people and not about the grand ideas underpinning the films. This be came a film about a very old woman, almost 100 years old, telling a story—and we don't know how much of it she is making up—about a thief who is, in a way, us (the listener), about two brothers in the Wild West who travel to Macedonia, about an immigrant prostitute, about a revolutionary, and about his pregnant wife. *Dust* is about the thirst to hear stories and, more importantly, to tell stories. We seem to learn a great deal about how to behave from the stories we hear in life.

Edge is us, the viewer. He is also the character who changes the most. In the process of storytelling, Angela becomes the mother to Edge and to the narrative. She doesn't have any children, but the story is hers. She adopts the thief as if to pass her story on in the few days she has left. In both *Dust* and *Before The Rain*, the women are the strong characters despite the male posturing and guns. The women support the infrastructure of what is going on. Just as in life, Edge is the listener of the story who then takes it on as his own. The story is a virus, I guess. You give it to someone else and change it in the process. Edge is us.

At first Edge shows ambivalence to the past Angela talks about. His ambivalence seems to reflect that of the audience, who must learn the value of history. There is incredible resistance to hearing history today. I don't know whether it was that way 100 years ago. But today history is almost a dirty word. Somehow anything older than the moment now is not interesting, is not cool, is not sweet. It goes with being more selfish, less embarrassed. I find that sad. Research is so much fun and at the same time it can be really dirty, perverse, unexpected, and yet somehow true. It can confirm what Tolstoy said: “History would be a great thing, if it were only true.”

In *Dust* there are different approaches to storytelling, including the use of surrealist images, movements across history, and seeming anachronisms. At one point an airplane flies over the gunslingers, at another Freud appears as a side character.

We cannot ignore the knowledge of new movements in art, pretending as if film is just technology. We can stay stuck in pseudo-realism, but then we cheat our selves out of great possibilities. However, part of what we see in *Dust*, which seems surreal, is actually his torical. Time has compressed itself, and it's only our perception of time that tries to separate the past into different drawers and files. The end of the Ottoman Empire still seems like the Middle Ages, we think the Wild West is the nineteenth century, the airplanes are twentieth century, and Freud, well, he's almost twenty-first century . . . but they all exist at about the same time. 1903 was the year of the first flight of the Wright brothers, it was when the Macedonian revolution against the Ottoman Empire happened, the time that the Wild West was just becoming history. That's the year that *The Great Train Robbery* was filmed. It is only a couple years after the Spanish-American War in Cuba, yet only four years before the first Cubist painting and only five or six years before Freud came to visit America. So, all of this was happening at the same time.

It is just our perception of history that these events belong to different worlds—it is as if we have a need to turn things into clichés. Having said this, there is the additional compression of time because Angela, the storyteller, is a contemporary of the twentieth century; she was born at the beginning of the century, and she is nearing death at the end of it. There is also a sort of scene which takes place in 1945, just after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Film is ideal to play with time—on the most physical level you can convert time into space. One second of time becomes 24 frames—which is a length of space. Whenever you edit, you shuffle it in order to create the illusion of continuous time. In *Dust* I explored that basic effect, but while keeping it still playful and easy to watch. Because when I go see films I would like to think there is a silent contract between the viewer and the filmmaker by which the filmmaker is not going to be too overbearing and I as a viewer am going to have fun while we go on this strange ride.

Is there also a political reason why you found it interesting or important to mix genres the way that you did?

The delineation of different cultures in our heads is very often only prejudice and racism. People are very similar and they behave in similar ways—it is only our fear and ignorance that speaks of “French this” and “Japanese that” and “Macedonian that.” So I'm trying to confront and crash several genres, several places, and several times. I was hoping to awaken the critical eye in the beholder to the possibilities of trans-cultural similarities and prejudices in reading human behavior and art.

More importantly, I was also trying to work with a synthesis of what we've learned in storytelling so far. Perhaps film never fully tried to explore the roads pointed to by James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Schönberg, or Picasso and Braque, but we cannot ignore these ideas anymore, we cannot pretend we live in the nine-teenth century. Yet, that is precisely what most main-stream film today does: stuck with a retelling of a cheap version of a nineteenth-century novel.
You show a great attention to fluids, which draws at- tention to the title of the film.

Well, the film is called Dust because there is no West- ern without dust and also because it asks, “What do we leave behind when we are gone?” There is a line in the film that says, “Where does your voice go when you are no more?” So, what do we leave behind? Do we leave children? Or photographs? Or recorded mov- ing images? Or stories? Or ashes? Dust? You will not- ice that the film is very dry. It is very yellow and very dusty. We used tons of dust and flour to get that look. That dryness was also a symbol of being alone, of being ashes. And, wherever there are moments of com- munal life or communal happiness, it happens around water—a round a river or people who are washing each other. Being with someone is like being in water; it is comfortable and brings life. By contrast, if it is too dry, you die.

Dust is a very violent film about a male world; men cause death not only to other men but also to the women they meet, which is something we saw in Before the Rain. How does this male aggression play out in Macedonia or, for that matter, in the contemporary story in the film?

Ingmar Bergman says something like this: “Violence in film is a perfectly legitimate way of ritualizing vio- lence in society.” I like seeing good, adult action-violence in movies. Not sadistic, passive violence. There is something exhilarating about action-vi- olence precisely because it is the movies and not real life. I am terrified of any kind of violence in real life, but put- ting violence in film is a way of exercising it. The violence in Dust also has a very strong counterpoint in the selfless actions and love that the film also shows.

On a smaller, purely cine- matic level, action-violence presents such cinematic potential because it is very kinetic. There is so much movement—and there are many aspects as to how you can portray action-violence, including what happens to the characters just before and just after. The real issue is not what, but how. I find the portrayal of violence in movies questionable when it is treated as easy. Perhaps it is a question of what you are left with at the end of a violent scene or vio- lent film. Do you walk away with a complex feeling or a simple one?

When there is violence in a Schwarzenegger or Stallone film it is very easy and clean, which I think is problematic. People are shot, and then gone. The hero takes real pleasure in it. Unless you are shot in the brain or the heart you don’t die on the spot, so what happens during those 20 seconds, or 20 minutes, or two days, while you are dying on the spot? Are you shocked? Do you cry? Do you puke? Do you curse? Do you beg for mercy? Do you get a hard-on? Do you think about the separation of church and state? What happens? When I see a guy stepping on a mine, flying through the air, then standing up and picking up his own arm with the other hand—and he’s not even aware of the fact that it is his own arm he is holding—that is a different kind of thinking.

There also seemed to be a fluid movement between the conscious and unconscious—between the seemingly natural and the surreal. After people die, their spirits live on with the other characters for a period, or a character on the edge of death might enter briefly into some other world before returning to the world of the living.

Yes, it’s fun to weave shadows and documents into one—again, as in a Rauschenberg print. It is the cu- mulative effect that counts, the overall tone, and not the elements. The jolt between different tones in the film (from a comic moment to pathos, from violent to absurd, from documentary to surreal) is more of a shock to the system, I be- lieve, than the jolt one expe- riences between different genres within the same film. It is the shifts in tone, not the shifts in narrative, that dislodge us.

This is where Dust becomes difficult to the con- servative viewer: the shifts in tone are not something mainstream and art-narrative film endorse. On the con- trary, the tone is sacred. You should either laugh, or be scared, or be inspired. Don’t confuse me.

Yet, because of my temperament, and perhaps because I consider film to be such a narrative thing, the free-wheeling and fluid movement between the document and the surreal, between the subconscious and the historical, are meticulously mapped out. They should feel like music, and the process of ini- tial creation is irrational, like when I listen to music, but the actual construction is a lot of hard build- ing—work. . . .

At this point I feel like making a film would be worthwhile only for the process of writing. Shooting would be worth it only as observ- ing in disguise, ob- serving how things are and how things do, rather than creating from the outside. I am very ambivalent about making films. I am not sure it is worth the trouble. On one level there is the pragmatic pressure because film is very expensive. It takes a long time to raise the money. It’s technolog- ical, and there are a lot of people and a lot of egos involved in making a film. Since it seems so easy and so glamorous, film attracts some of the worst characters, peo- ple with the morals of Medusa.

On another level, there is the issue of having to tell a story in a certain legible way with certain types (and number) of characters and certain kinds of end-ings—even when you are not working in Hollywood. That’s a lot of pressure on something that pretends to be a creative art. In actuality, we are all employed in the circus industry, and we pretend we are Shake- speares.

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Dust is distributed on fi video and DVD by Lion’s Gate Films (http://www.lionsgatefilms.com) and is commonly available at major video and internet outlets. Information about the film is available at the website, http://www.realtime-macedonia.org.mk, and on Milcho Manchevski’s own website, http://www.manchevski.com.mk, where readers will also find excerpts of Manchevski’s fiction, photography, art, and links to essays and conference papers generated by his films.

Abstract

Macedonian filmmaker Milcho Manchevski reflects on the nature of history, story-telling, and photographic evi- dence in a discussion of Before the Rain (1994) and his latest feature, Dust (2001/2003), a genre-crossing “Baklava Western” that explores what happens when West meets East in the violent history of the Balkans.
On unhappy endings, politics and storytelling. An interview with Milcho Manchevski

Richard Raskin

Milcho Manchevski has to date written and directed two feature films: Before the Rain (1994), which won thirty awards at international festivals, including Best Film in Venice, Independent Spirit, an Oscar nomination, and a place in The New York Times’ book Best 1,000 Films Ever Made; and Dust (2001), still unreleased. He has also made over fifty short films of various kinds (experimental films, documentaries, music videos, commercials), and has won awards for best experimental film (for “1.72” at the Belgrade Alternative Festival), best MTV and Billboard video (for Arrested Development’s “Tennessee,” which also made Rolling Stone magazine’s list of 100 best videos ever). He is also a author of a conceptualist book of fiction, The Ghost Of My Mother, and a book of photographs, Street (accompanying an exhibition), as well as other fiction and essays published in New American Writing, La Repubblica, Corriere della Sera, Sineast, etc. Born in Macedonia, he now lives in New York City where he teaches directing at the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU.

I'd like to start by asking about unhappy endings. It may be that my entire approach to this issue is wrong, but what I am most curious about is this: how can it be that a film that ends with the main character dying can leave the viewer feeling satisfied with the ending?

I don't know why and how that happens. But I know that it does happen. And probably it has to do with what we get out of a film as we leave the movie theater. Obviously we don't need the conventional “and they lived happily ever after” as the element that's going to leave us satisfied. I've never really thought about it specifically. It's more of an intuitive or an instinctive thing for me. When I do it, it's because it feels like this is the way a film should end.

In parenthesis, I could tell you for example that when I wrote the outline for Before the Rain, Kiril - the young monk - was gunned down at the end of the first act. But somehow as I started writing the script, it just didn't feel right... it's as if he wanted to live so much independently of my desire to kill him, that he just refused to die; so I let him live.

I don't know what it is. To me, it's like when you're listening to Mozart's Requiem. It's immensely sad and at the same time it's immensely elating. Perhaps it has to do with the pleasure one gets from a work of art.

If things in a work of art make aesthetic sense, if they click, because of how the work was made, how things flow together, how you sense the person - the artist - coming through, stepping down from the paper or from the screen or from the speaker, then the audience gets pleasure out of the art regardless of the conventional understanding of the “feeling” (tragedy, happy ending) the work itself deals with. That's what makes it satisfying, rather than knowing that somebody lives happily ever after. In the end, we all die anyway. Maybe it's about those moments of happiness and creation in between.

So again: I don't have a really rational explanation of why, but I know that tragic endings do make sense. Which is not to say that I don't enjoy films with happy endings as well. The real question is: what is a happy ending? A film or a story that takes you for a very satisfying aesthetic (and thus emotional) journey is something that has more of a “happy ending” than a film that neatly resolves everything and leaves the main characters married happily ever after, but is aesthetical cowardly and conservative and not terribly creative.

I understand that in your own writing, you deal with this in an intuitive way. But I wonder if there aren't some specific strategies that can help the viewer to accept the sense of loss when the hero dies. For example, at the end of Before the Rain, the very fact that the rain finally falls on Alex somehow frames his death in a kind of metaphor.

If I try to analyze the things I've directed - and the fact that I've directed them doesn't necessarily mean that my analyses are right - my guess would be that things that feel essential to a tragic ending are more important than the actual tragic ending itself. Things like self-sacrifice, rebirth, cleansing. So in a way, maybe what's happening in these features is that they're encapsulating the essence of sacrifice and rebirth as part of the same whole. So in that sense, you can say "They lived happily ever after” in a larger perspective.

Another thing I noticed is that when Alex is riding on the bus to his village, and talking with a soldier, the soldier says: “What are you doing here? Don't you realize you can get your head cut off?” And Alex says, "It's high time that happened." This is a kind of foreshadowing or even acceptance on his part of what was to come.

Well, at that point in his life, he is fairly fatalistic. And I think that as a character, Alex has probably always been fatalistic, but at the same time, very active. Fatalistic but positive. However, at this point in his life, he perceives himself as someone who's done something terribly wrong. So he's become more of a tragic fatalist. Of course, he packs it in with a sense of humor, with a joke, so you are never sure - and I don't think he's ever sure...
- how much of it is a joke and how much of it is fatalistic acceptance of life's tragic unfolding. Perhaps he's hoping that his fatalism and his acceptance of responsibility will fend off tragedy. In the same scene, we see him play with the facts, as in a sick joke. When the soldier asks him about his girlfriend, Alex says "Oh, she died in a taxi," even though we know she's alive. And we realize: oh, that's when they broke up - in a cab. That is also more like the way people really talk. You know, people don't always deliver what the audience needs them to deliver, in order for the story to advance.

You kill off some of your main characters in Dust as well.

Yeah, I am still the same filmmaker with the same take on things as in Rain, except Dust is more complex, and more playful. It switches gears and mocks genres. Yes, there's quite a bloodbath in the film. But mind you, not even close to how many people die in Shakespeare's plays. Not even a fraction. Or in the Bible, for that matter. I found this interesting thought by Bergman, who says that film is perfectly legitimate way for society to ritualize violence. Mind you - ritualize, not glorify.

Is it OK if we move into the area of film and politics, and maybe compare Before the Rain to Dust? In Before the Rain, if I'm not mistaken, you do everything you can to show the conflict from both sides, from both points of view.

Actually, to the detriment of the proverbial Macedonian side. If you look at the characters, the more aggressive ones are all Macedonian. As a sign of good will, because Before the Rain is not about sides in a war, it's about right and wrong, and love and understanding. And it's about how humans behave. But go on.

Do I remember correctly that there is a point where Alex says "Take sides!"

Ann says "Take sides!", "You have to take sides." And he says, "I don't want to be on any of their sides. They're all idiots."

Now Dust portrays a very different situation, where you have the Turkish invaders opposed by the Macedonian rebels who are defending themselves, defending their own land. And there, there is clearly a taking of sides. Is this what gave rise to misunderstandings about your politics?

All killers in Dust, whether Macedonian, Turkish, Greek, Albanian or American are - killers. Not particularly nice people. They are, of course, nuanced characters, since we are not in a Schwarzenegger or Stallone movie. The really good guys are the ones who give, and in that respect the proverbial good guys are all women - Neda, Angela, Lilith...

The very second question that I was asked at the press conference in Venice when Dust opened the Venice Film Festival was - and this is pretty much a quote: You've made a racist film, because it portrays the Turkish army and Turks in a bad light. This obviously had to do with an attempt [on my part] to keep Turkey from becoming a member of the European Union. End of quote. (Laughter.) This is on record from a respected English journalist and reviewer. (What's next - I am going to get the US out of Iraq with my next film?! Then I'll liberate Tibet, and then solve the Palestinian issue.)

So how do you answer something as ridiculous as this? It's obviously an assassination. Do you dignify the concept of someone feeling free to slander you and to project his prejudices upon yourself, by responding to it? What do you say first? Do you debate the fact that both with my actions in my life and in my films, I have shown that I am not a racist? That I deplore racism of any sort (and let's not forget - neither the Holocaust nor the atom bomb were invented in the Balkans)? Do I talk about the tolerance-building effect of my films, or about the multi-ethnic make-up of the crew who worked on my films (13 nationalities on Before the Rain, more on Dust), or about girlfriends and friends of other ethnicities I've had? It's ridiculous. Actually, it's much more than that - it's insulting, manipulative, ill-intentioned, arrogant and - racist.

Do you sue the guy for slander? Do you say: "Hey, it's not even in this film. You're misreading it." Do you say: "Actually, you have a racist past as a member of the Orange militia in Northern Ireland," as that particular critic did?

Basically, you're a sitting duck.

And then I heard - I didn't even read it - that there was an article published in Croatia, in a magazine that has distinguished itself as an ultra-right-wing nationalist publication, taking me to task for not understanding the plight of the Albanians in Macedonia. I'm sure their reporter who's never been to Macedonia understands it much better from Zagreb. (Laughter.)

I can't really speculate as to why industry insiders chose to misrepresent Dust. As a matter of fact, a lot of people misrepresented Before the Rain as well… but in a different way.

(I have probably repeated literally hundreds of times in interviews that Before the Rain is not a documentary about Macedonia. It's not a documentary about what used to be Yugoslavia. And it's not a documentary at all. I wouldn't dare make a film about the wars of ex-Yugoslavia of the 1990s because it's a much more complex situation than what one film can tell you. It should be a documentary; it shouldn't be a piece of fiction, because a piece of fiction is only one person's truth and a documentary could claim to be more objective even though they seldom are. And finally because I wasn't even there when the war was getting under way. I thought it was obvious from the film, because it is so highly stylized that I don't think anyone who's watching it while awake could see it as a documentary. Just the approach to the form, to the visuals, to the landscapes, to the music, the characters and everything - and finally the structure of the story - show that it's obviously a work of fiction. Still, some people chose to see Before the Rain as a "60 Minutes" TV segment, a documentary on the Yugoslavia wars.

But that misrepresentation - even if it could be as damaging - it wasn't as hostile as the misrepresentation or the misreading of Dust.)

With Dust, there are a couple of things I could start thinking about out aloud, and I haven't done so in public so far.

Number one: as a filmmaker, you are often put in a position to debate other peoples' perceptions of you, their projections of you and their projections upon you. As an object of their analysis, you can never properly discuss their motivation, their prejudice or their misreading of the text. Or their real intentions. Yet, although they are active subjects who shape, reflect or bend the launch or the very public life of a film, they themselves and their motivations are conveniently not part of the debate.

The second thing that I would like to think about out loud is that a filmmaker's or an artist's political views, a filmmaker's or an artist's life, and the works that he or she creates, are three completely separate things. And I subscribe very much to what Kurt Vonnegut said; which is, if you bring your politics into your art, you are bound to make shit. I think daily politics doesn't belong in art. The artist has other, more interesting and stronger points to make than just who's in the White House these four years and will s/he go to war. Such as how absolute power in the hands of people with corrupted spirit can cause thousands of deaths.

As far as Dust is concerned, it's a film about Angela and Edge, an old woman and a thief. And about Luke and Elijah, brothers from the American Wild West. And about Neda, who gives birth while dying. It is about small people caught in the big wheels of history, who are big when they love and when they give. It's about the thirst to tell stories. About the question what we leave behind: children, pictures, stories or dust. About responsibil-
ity and self-sacrifice. It's not about ethnic conflict. The conflict we see in the film is not really ethnic; it's like all wars: it's about real estate and it's about political power. As part of the continuously shifting point of view in this film, we see part of the fighting through the eyes of Neda, who has saved Luke. Of course, she is lecturing him from her angle, advocating her take on the fighting and the killing, which doesn't automatically make her right. And Luke’s answer is: “Oh, I’m sure you’ll be really nice to the Turks if you win.”

We see the leader of the Macedonian rebels, the Teacher, as a ruthless murderer who kills a scared young soldier by slashing his throat. The Macedonian revolutionaries also shoot wounded soldiers. On the other hand, the Turkish army kills civilians. And they did, historically. It’s really hard to make films according to p.c. [politically correct] scenarios of how the world should be if you happen to be portraying events that weren’t p.c. Most of history was not p.c. At the turn of the 20th century the Ottoman army would go into villages and kill civilians, even pregnant women, would burn young children alive and chop peoples’ arms and heads off. That is a documented fact (and, unfortunately, this was not the only army that did this). So I don’t see why it constitutes a prejudice on anyone’s part if this historical truth is being mentioned or portrayed. Sounds like a chip on someone’s shoulder. (Yet, focusing only on painting this or any kind of historical truth alone should not be the sole goal of a good work of art; good art deals with aesthetic interpretation of people’s feelings and philosophical concepts.)

I am prepared to debate the actions of the Ottoman army in Macedonia at the turn of the 20th century, as well as the actions of various revolutionary and criminal and nationalistic and self-serving gangs. I strongly object to interpreting the portrayal of the Ottoman army in Macedonia as a metaphor for anything but the Ottoman army in Macedonia, as some respected German newspapers did (who claimed that the Ottoman army was a metaphor for the Albanians in Macedonia). I think that’s in the eye of the beholder, and taking him to the eye doctor would provide for a fascinating look into one’s psyche.

May I ask about one thing that’s not really political? The Turkish major is the most amazing character…

Precisely! If you were a racist, why would one of your most complex characters in the film, and the most urbane and the most educated, be of the people you are trying to slander?

Exactly! Was he modeled on a particular person?

No, he wasn’t, but he was based on research. I started with the concept that the Ottoman officers were some of the best educated people in the Empire. It had been a powerful - in many respects admirable - multi-ethnic empire, at this point nearing its sunset. The Ottoman officers were well-educated and spoke foreign languages. From the research that I did (our core bibliography consisted of 160 books and articles written at the time and about the Wild West and about Macedonia under Ottoman rule), some were trained in Germany and had strong ties with the German military. This particular character, the Major, speaks German, he speaks French, we don’t know whether he speaks English or not, but he does tell Luke that he doesn’t speak his “barbaric language.” He makes a point of that. Because to him, this character is an illiterate punk, a bounty-hunter from this remote corner of the world (America), who’s come here to try to make a living… by meddling in the local affairs…and all for money.

The Major has a very strong sense of duty. To him, none of this is personal. He does say: “Look, these people are fighting against my emperor. And I have to protect him. It’s my duty to find them and bring them to justice.” He is one of the few characters in that place who has a very strong sense of order.

But it’s interesting in this context to actually get a little more analytical and look into what it is that makes a film reviewer be so obviously biased. Is it something in the film that provokes people to project their own prejudices and their own problems upon this film? Or is it something off-screen? Is it my attitude to the stale and corrosive film industry? Or does it have to do with the current politics of Macedonia at the time? Does it have something to do with the op-ed pieces that I published just a couple of weeks before the film came out?

What did you say in those pieces?

It was actually one piece, which was written for The New York Times, but they didn’t publish it. Yet somehow, it made its way to The Guardian. When they published it, they changed the title and chopped off the end. And took out some other things. There is a journalist in Slovenia who published a parallel of the original article and the article that came out in The Guardian. Then I submitted it to a German newspaper - I think it was the Sueddeutsche Zeitung, Pravda in Russia picked it up, as did the Standaard in Belgium. I don’t know whether any of these newspapers published it in its original form or whether they changed anything, like The Guardian.

The gist of the argument was that NATO had a major (but not sole) responsibility for the spill-over of the Kosovo war into Macedonia, and that they had to act upon it. And that they had to protect the order and sovereignty of Macedonia. As they didn’t. And at the time, I was comparing it to Cambodia or Laos or to Afghanistan, as examples of spill-over and blowback (this was pre-9/11). A lot of the people who instigated the fighting in Macedonia in 2001, who killed soldiers, policemen and even civilians were armed and trained by NATO for the war in Kosovo.

That’s what this article was about. And actually the Standaard in Belgium published the article and then published the response by an Albanian. It was signed “an Albanian student.” A person I don’t know. First of all, it was strange that they would publish such a response because I wasn’t taking nationalistic sides. I was taking the side of rule of law versus armed intrusion. Also, in terms of media manipulation, I was raising the following issue: accepting that somebody can just pick up arms and kill police because they are allegedly fighting for language rights, is something the West doesn’t accept at home, but can accept in the Balkans, because their projection of the Balkans is as an unruly bunch. There was a high-ranking NATO officer saying that every house in Macedonia has a gun. I want him to come and find the gun in my house. See, that’s racist. (How would that officer feel if someone said that every house in Germany is anti-Semitic.)

So when there’s fighting, in their minds it’s not because somebody’s killing policemen. It’s because: “Oh, two ethnic groups are fighting.” Wild tribes. But, that was not the case in Macedonia (and I hope it stays that way). As is becoming clear today because some of the people who were supposedly fighting for human rights and language rights two years ago are now on the list of human-traffickers and drug-smugglers, and some are government ministers and parliamentarians.

Let’s put it this way: if somebody picked up arms to kill policemen in Miami because the killers claimed that they wanted Spanish to be spoken in the Florida senate, I believe those people would be shot or put in jail. NATO wouldn’t come to mediate and take the situation to a point where those very same murderers sit in the parliament two years later, as is the case in Macedonia.

Anyway, what happened in the Belgian Standaard was that they took the article as though it advocated one ethnic side when it was actually advocating the rule of law. So they published a response by someone signed “an Albanian student,” whom I didn’t know. And that same person is the vice-president of the Macedonian parliament now, today, as a representative of the political party which came about with the transformation of the
Albanian militants. I'd be curious if he were a student at the time, since he seems to be in his late 40s.

So back to the really interesting question: is it something in the film that provokes some reviewers, particularly those with a chip on their shoulder? Or is it things outside the film? Was it the articles? Was it the war in Macedonia? Was it my earrings? (Laughter.) Was it the fact that this film opened the Venice Film Festival? Was it the fact that I pissed off so many people in the industry in the seven years between Before the Rain and Dust? (I refused to play by the industry rules, to accept unethical standards and the dictatorship of the oxymorons - creative executives - over the artist. The film industry both in Hollywood and in Europe stifles creativity and is an extension of repressive mechanisms. Censorship is so ingrained and often self-inflicted that no one even raises the issue. I felt it was my duty to fight it, and I made a lot of enemies along the way. The industry paid back by strangling the film in the crib, so the regular viewer never got a chance to see the film.) Was it my unpaid bills to Screen International? (Laughter.)

I'd be really curious because if it is something in the film itself, as a shrink friend of mine claims, that would be really something. That means there's something in the film - whether it is the characters themselves (none good, none bad, most created from clichés/archetypes that have been inverted) or the actual relationships between the characters (stark), or the way I have treated violence and compassion and sex and self-sacrifice that has triggered such a violent outburst from many film reviewers and not nearly so from the very few regular movie-goers who got to see the film. Or, is it the fact that Dust subverts our expectation that a film has to have neat linear structure and - more importantly - simplified and uniform emotional template (a horror is a horror, a comedy a comedy)....? You could argue that it's not pleasant to be at the receiving end of bourgeois anger, or you could compare the level of animosity to the way some other artists have been received for their non-conformist works: Rules of the Game, Cubism, The Wild Bunch, Bunuel, Joyce, Nabokov...

I am interested in Cubist storytelling - when the artist fractures the story and puts it back together in a more complex (and, thus, more interesting) way. More importantly, when the artist keeps shifting the emotional tone of the film, bringing a narrative film closer to the experiences of modern art.

Either way, that's not something for me to judge. At least not at this date. Maybe ten years from now, when I have a perspective to the film, I'd be able to judge a little more clearly. Maybe I'll see it then and I'll decide that I'd made a bad film -- or maybe not - yet the value of the film doesn't justify the prejudiced and violent assassination of Dust by the industry gatekeepers and political pundits.

Concerning your portrayal of storytelling in Dust, I don't have a specific question. I was just hoping you would tell about your preoccupation with showing the very process of storytelling.

I think it has its roots in two things.

One is my interest in structuralist and conceptualist art. On the surface, the form of Dust is not that of a structuralist or conceptualist piece. But, in its own way, it picks up on what these movements were trying to tell us, and builds it into the popular idiom of narrative film. You have to take into consideration the inherent elements (and expectations) typical for film as a story-driven and popular discipline and then incorporate them into the film.

The second thing is that, just like any artist, I'm making autobiographical work. Since I am a storyteller by interest and by profession, I became preoccupied with exploring and exposing the process of storytelling, but more importantly, with exploring the thirst to tell and to hear stories. I am not talking only about storytelling in film. I'm talking about writing, oral tradition, teaching, journalism, fairy-tales, myths, legends, telling jokes, bed-time stories, religion, writing history... it's actually such a huge part of society. And it's probably more essential than we are aware of or than we would acknowledge. It's one of the main modes for teaching and learning from each other how to behave, what life and society are about. Storytelling is the nervous system of society.

As I was making films, I became more and more interested in the essence of what it is that a viewer wants from storytelling. I realized we look at stories, but don't see the storytelling. Even when it's to the detriment of the listener. So, I went with the assumption that if I strip the process for the viewer, and then incorporate it in the story, that he or she would come for the journey into the nature of storytelling. The viewer would be involved in unmasking the process (while still keeping it somewhat part of the illusion) and maybe get a different kind of pleasure from this kind of a ride -- as opposed to just being a participant in a ride which is all about the illusion, the mask, the manipulated unified feeling. Perhaps one would enjoy this complex (and fractured) ride better and learn more about this aspect of our social lives.

Mainstream narrative cinema is all about expectations, and really low expectations, to that. We have become used to expecting very little from the films we see, not only in terms of stories, but more importantly and less obviously in terms of the mood, the feeling we get from a film. I think we know what kind of a mood and what kind of a feeling we're going to get from a film before we go see the film. It's from the poster, from the title, the stars, and it's become essential in our decision-making and judging processes. I believe it's really selling ourselves way too short. I like films that surprise me. I like films that surprise me especially after they've started. I like a film that goes one place and then takes you for a loop, then takes you somewhere else, and keeps taking you to other places both emotionally and story-wise... keeps changing the mood, shifts in the process, becomes fearless...

All of this needs to be unified by an artistic vision, making it a spirited collage, not a pastiche. A Robert Rauschenberg.

In the end, I'm surprised to see that it's the reviewer rather than the regular movie-goer who expects and even demands to see a film limited, predictable, subservient to expectations, a film that neatly and vulgarly folds within the framework of a genre and a subgenre. It's especially sad when the genre in question is what used to be known as "art film."

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Independence: Art & Activism / A Conversation With Milcho Manchevski

By Keith Brown

Milcho Manchevski was born in the Yugoslav republic of Macedonia in 1959. He went to film school at the University of Illinois in Carbondale, and after graduation made several music videos and experimental short films. His first feature, Before the Rain, tells the story of a war photographer who returns home to his native Macedonia to find an atmosphere of intercommunal suspicion and violence. Widely distributed in 1994, when the fighting in Bosnia was at its height, the film was embraced by Western audiences as a powerful portrayal of Balkan fratricide, and also won critical acclaim, including the Golden Lion at Venice and an Academy foreign language film nomination, for its non-linear, interlocking narrative form. Manchevski’s second feature film, Dust, was released during armed conflict in Macedonia in 2001. More ambitious in scope and form, the film jumps between continents and centuries to undercut simplistic ideas of historical truth. It was nevertheless again read as the director’s commentary on the present, and was less well received outside Macedonia. Manchevski now teaches in the graduate program at New York University. His new film, Shadows, was released at the Toronto Film Festival in September 2007 and was chosen as the Republic of Macedonia’s entry for the 2008 Academy Awards. Set mostly in present-day Skopje, Macedonia’s capital city, Shadows is a psychological thriller which has been read as telling the story of modern Macedonia’s emergence from, and reckoning with, the trauma of its history.

This interview was compiled from conversations with Milcho Manchevski in December 2002 and April 2007, both at the Watson Institute at Brown University, and subsequent telephone and email exchanges over the summer of 2007.

Brown: Let me start by quoting a couple of academic responses to your work. In 1997, Slavoj Žižek wrote that “Before the Rain offers the western liberal gaze precisely what this gaze wants to see in the Balkan war, the spectacle of a timeless, incomprehensible, mythical cycle of passions, in contrast to decadent and anemic western life.” And Dina Iordanova, in 2001, wrote “The film mirrors the long standing stereotype of the Balkans as a mystic stronghold of stubborn and belligerent people… and asserts the existing Balkan trend of voluntary self-exoticism.” What do you do with comments or reactions like this?

Manchevski: Before the Rain and Dust are meant to be, and I think they turned out to be, films about people. They’re not about places, and not about people from particular places. The mythical and mystic in them is not about Macedonia, but rather about those particular stories and those particular people. I think these critics make the same old, same old mistake – they read a film from Macedonia as if it is a film about Macedonia.

They can’t shake off their need to put things in neat little folders. That stereotyping disguised as defense against stereotyping borders on intellectual racism. A good work of art is about people and ideas and emotions, not about geopolitical concepts. I don’t see why Wong-Kar Wai couldn’t make films about New York or Bergman about Taipei or Tarantino about Lagos. Those films would not be that different from the films these filmmakers have already made.

Brown: I’m struck that Žižek sees the film as offering a gaze from outside the region, and Iordanova as a construction from within. Both Before The Rain and Dust feature characters who struggle to straddle worlds and perspectives. Do you?

Manchevski: Yes, the outline for the film, the synopsis, was set in Macedonia, but at the time it was a part of a country that does not exist anymore. Sort of like being born in Austro-Hungary. I was educated in the U.S. Midwest, yet I spent most of my life in New York, and my films are financed in Europe. More importantly, my artistic, intellectual and cinematic influences are international, or rather – cosmopolitan, as is the case with most filmmakers. Film heritage today in the era of globalization is transnational, and no amount of reactionary crypto-racism will change that. As a matter of fact, I believe art has always been interested in means of expression, regardless of its origins. It is usually the outside forces that try to limit the ways in which an artist can express himself or herself.

Brown: In fact, Before the Rain, originally, wasn’t going to be set in Macedonia, right?

Manchevski: I was born in Macedonia, but at the time it was a part of a country that does not exist anymore. Sort of like being born in Austro-Hungary. I was educated in the U.S. Midwest, yet I spent most of my life in New York, and my films are financed in Europe. More importantly, my artistic, intellectual and cinematic influences are international, or rather – cosmopolitan, as is the case with most filmmakers. Film heritage today in the era of globalization is transnational, and no amount of reactionary crypto-racism will change that. As a matter of fact, I believe art has always been interested in means of expression, regardless of its origins. It is usually the outside forces that try to limit the ways in which an artist can express himself or herself.

Brown: But now you have Macedonia, are you interested in directing a Macedonian film? A Macedonian story?

Manchevski: That’s a very good question. I have always been interested in means of expression, regardless of its origins. It is usually the outside forces that try to limit the ways in which an artist can express himself or herself.
things are not central to the film, you have to make those decisions. Of course, you can go for the “neutral,” but that often means bland. This never stopped Hollywood from making unconvincing films set in foreign places where everyone still speaks English and they dance exotic dances invented in Burbank. As a filmmaker, I need to feel the background of the place, not because it’s a statement about the place but because this will root it for filming purposes. Once I started writing, *Before the Rain* somehow took place in Macedonia. Perhaps I was lazy. But it’s not about the place, it’s about people. They could easily live somewhere else. I have had people come to me after screenings and say, “I’m from Israel. This film could easily take place there.” Or “I’m from India. This film could easily take place there.” And I was very happy to hear that.

**Brown:** But you do spend a lot of time on research—especially Macedonian ethnography and history.

**Manchevski:** I feel a moral responsibility to whatever it is we are filming to do as much research as possible. The core bibliography on *Dust* was about 160 pieces and this was mainly things written at the time, from the turn of the 20th Century. The film deals with the Wild West, with the Ottoman Empire, a very small bit deals with Paris at the turn of the century, and then the rest is New York City today. Now, we are never really recreating the period. It’s not a document, it’s not a documentary. We can’t recreate it, we were not there. Narrative film takes a lot of shortcuts anyway. But since people tend to see things that way, tend to see films as if they really are documents, I would like to have as much background work done as possible. Research also helps the actual work. Even when you don’t see it on the screen, it gives you the confidence, it gives the art director the confidence, it gives the actor the confidence. It sort of seeps through the pores and pours onto the screen, and can help your take on whatever you’re talking about.

**Brown:** Which is?

**Manchevski:** Well, *Dust*, both in its form and in what it talks about, is about the thirst to tell stories and to hear stories. I think to a great degree, we learn how to be through stories, through stories, through gossip, through anecdotes, through history, through *CNN*, through jokes, soaps, myths, legends. *Dust* deals with that in a formal way, deconstructing the story. In a way, it’s a Cubist take on storytelling. It helped me and everyone else who worked on the film when we saw how much of the myths we were dealing with were actually fake - both the myths about the American west and the myths about the fight for independence in Macedonia. For example, I discovered that that famous Western gunslinger Billy the Kid was from Brooklyn, or that most of the people he was supposed to have killed in duels he actually shot in the back. And there were a lot of black cowboys—you don’t see that in John Wayne films. General Custer was one of the worst students at West Point (which makes sense, and makes for great dramatic potential when combined with his apparent arrogance). Cowboys and Indians were pretty much never at the same time in the same place, because most Indians were driven out of Oklahoma and Texas by the time the cowboys took over as they were needed to herd cattle to the railroad, which then took them up North. I discovered that the gunfight at the OK Corral happened just a few years before a big labor strike in the silver mines in Arizona, next door. You somehow don’t put those two together, gunfights and the labor movement; in our compartmentalized brains we think they belong to different eras. And precisely this was one of the things *Dust* was dealing with — decomposing clichés: we have in the same film (because it happened at more or less the same time) the waning of the Wild West, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the birth of the new times as seen through Sigmund Freud, the birth of the airplane, the birth of modernism through Cubism. So, research is fun.

**Brown:** Both *Before the Rain* and *Dust* have multiple, interlocking story-lines. Do you want your audience to have to work hard?

**Manchevski:** Writing comes easy to me, and stories are easy to tell, and I can riff on any subject, and come up with stories and change them and restructure them, and maybe because of that I also find it sort of boring to tell the story in a regular, linear way, going one, two, three, cause and effect, 2 hours, plot, subplot, turns… especially in film. But if we can find a slightly more interesting form of telling that story, then we have a little bit extra in that it also engages a little bit more of our artistic muscle, both for the teller and the listener. The process is more fun, as is the result. I like comparing it to movements in painting (not that it’s a perfect comparison), but it would be like painting a portrait vs. painting a portrait in a cubist style, or like using a collage the way Robert Rauschenberg does (where it feels, very sort of modern and broken down, but it actually has very old-fashioned aesthetics to it).

Ultimately, for me it’s about playing with the story, and hearing it like music, hearing when it works well and when it doesn’t. I find it a very helpful tool when writing, or before writing, or while
writing, to tell the story to somebody, and as I’m telling it I realize
that I’m honing it. I’m dropping parts that don’t help the telling, and
I see when people need more explanation so I start focusing a little
more on those, which I guess is sort of like testing films. The differ-
ence is that here the actual artist does the testing, and not a suit with
the power, but without the chops to make art.

**Brown:** And was it that playing and testing which produced the
non-linearity that really caught critics’ attention in *Before the Rain.*

**Manchevski:** There are many films in three parts, but telling a
film in three parts where the ending of the third part could be the
beginning of the first one was, I guess, relatively new. But playing
with linearity is not a new invention, I mean it was done way back,
in *Last year at Marienbad* (1961) and *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959),
for example. I’m very curious what happens when you start playing
with the story creatively. I’m happy to see that that is beginning
to happen more often even in the mainstream cinema, with films
like *21 Grams, Memento* or *Babel.* However, what was important was
that in *Before the Rain* there’s thematic resonance to this - violence
going in circles and how to break the circle. This was in my mind,
but replicating it in the structure of the film wasn’t a conscious
decision. And it wasn’t really only about violence and war being
circular: it was about how things keep coming back to us. A lot of
what we do is just repetition, we put ourselves in similar situations all
the time for whatever reason.

**Brown:** You mention the violence in Before the Rain – I’ve been
in audiences where people flinch. In *Dust,* it feels like there’s more
blood, but there’s also a different tone to it.

**Manchevski:** *Dust* is more irreverent, more playful, more in-your-
face, more alive, and that scares a lot of people. It is violent, but if you
put it next to even mainstream films like *Saving Private Ryan,* you see
that it’s very tame. There’s a major debate about how you respond to
violence in the arts, and on film. I subscribe to what Bergman has
said about violence, and I am paraphrasing here from memory – he
says that film is a perfectly legitimate way of ritualizing violence. Rit-
ualizing, not glorifying. Society needs to deal with this extreme – yet
integral – aspect of its existence. Ritualizing has been a central way
of dealing with it since time immemorial. Film lends itself to ritualiz-
ing it for many reasons, and convincing "realism" not one of the
least important. I believe that hiding violence from art or from social
storytelling is not an answer—in fact, I think there’s something hyp-
ocritical about all the fuss about it. Those same people who object to
violence in films have enough other kinds of violence. What about,
say, a loyal employee being laid off after twenty-five years. For some
people that’s perfectly ordinary, acceptable. It is legitimate to ask, is
that violence? And what does the fact that we don’t discuss it as viol-
cence tell us about ourselves?

But on-screen violence in particular, I think there’s room for real-
ism. When someone gets shot, they don’t just fall back, or lie down.
Probably it hurts, maybe they stagger, then they look at themselves and
they are shocked. Do they at some point start laughing, and say, is this
really happening to me? Or do they say, damn I wish I had more sex
when I could have! Or do they whine? What happens to this person
during those 20 seconds or 20 minutes while he’s dying? So, fortunately
in a film it is all make-believe, so you can explore a little bit of that. But,
if you treat violence as something without real consequences, some-
thing fun and easy, the way a Simpson-Bruckheimer film or a Stallone
film or a Schwartzenegger film does, then you are doing society a dis-
service. I believe that what really matters in film is the tone, not the
story. It is the tone that sends the message and communicates with
the viewer much more than the story. In *Dust* we were trying to face
violence with our eyes open, and I think that that’s perhaps why some
critics had a hard time with it. I didn’t fulfill their preconceptions about
what I was supposed to be filming. I had somebody describe *Dust* this
way, he said if watching a good Hollywood film is riding a rollercoast-
er, watching *Dust* is like sitting in a car with a test crash dummy. It’s
interesting if critics find the shifts in tone hard. The film is funny, and
then it’s brutal, and then it’s very sad, and then it’s funny again. And
you say, wait a minute, what did the poster say, what did the press re-
lease say, was this a funny film or a sad film?

**Brown.** So what’s the press release for the new film?

**Manchevski.** Taglines are more fun than synopsis—though of
course that is a completely different category, a different format.
Our tagline is “sometimes the dead speak louder than the living.”
Shadows is also a film about sex and death and a few important
things in between. Or if you want a literary reference point, you can
also think of it as the story of what happens if Lady Macbeth had
lived today and survived to have a grown-up son. He would try to
come to terms with her overbearing presence in his life, and her
past transgressions.

It’s actually an old-fashioned, slow-burn of a film, and in
many ways it’s my most personal film to date. It’s scary - I love
scary films, love having to face your fears, even though it hurts and
we seldom really do it in real life. Perhaps that’s why we need
rollercoasters and scary films and tragedies. But it’s scary with no
jolting moments, cheap frills, sound bites or easy solutions. The
terror simmers underneath. It’s about a man trying to have a dia-
logue with the dead, and becoming more alive for that experience.

**Brown.** So is it fair to say that the film presents the past as some
kind of refuge from the present? I was struck by the main character’s
search for tenderness, and a certain stillness, in a sometimes sordid
and always hectic modern world.

**Manchevski.** Absolutely. It’s interesting that you would see it in
that way, because that was the emotion that ended up shaping the
movie – it is heavy and scary, but somehow liberating at the end as
we go into a flashback. As if there is something redemptive in re-
living the past of the past. As for the main character’s search for tender-
ness – none of his living family who surround him offer him much
outside of their expectations that he deliver in a hungry rat race.
The dead are much warmer to him. And yes, a little bit of stillness
when you empty your mind of adrenaline might be healthy. So maybe
*Shadows* offers something like a natural closure to the three films.

**Brown.** But more rollercoasters to come, I hope?

**Manchevski.** I only guarantee tomatoes.

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J. Watson Institute of International Studies at Brown University.
Drawing on a background in classics and socio-cultural anthro-
pology, his area of specialty is Macedonia, and he has authored
numerous works on culture and politics in the Balkans, including
analyses of international and domestic reception of *Before the Rain,* the
construction of history in Macedonia, Greece, and Bulgaria, and foreign
intervention in the former Yugoslavia.
МАКЕДОНСКИ РАШОМОН
ИНТЕРВЈУ СО МИЛЧО МАНЧЕВСКИ

Жарко Кујунџијски

Со Манчевски разговара на 27 ноември 2001 година во кафенето „Бастион“. На сите ни е познато дека овој човек не е само филммејкер, иако светска слава стекна по филмот „Пред дождот“. Вториот негов филм, „Прашина“ доби разни квалификации. Во Скопје го нареќоа „македонска Г ерника“, Италијанското романесер Александар Барико изјави: „Ми се дошапа „Прашина“. Затоа што е едно отворено дело, има сè и сосема е спротивен на сè, комбинира лингвистички иеми со архетипи… Критичарите не се подготвени за вакви филмови и книги: тоа е како да одиш на планина во кошуморски по јавноста твоето занимавање со хумор и сатира. Втора работа се однесува на хуморот, кој бележливи се две работи. Пишувани се во трето лице еднинито, некој кратки хуморески во „Остен“, списание за хумор и сатира. Забележиви се две работи. Ми се може и на еден Спилберг, на пример, со „Спасувањето на гробот“ во однос на „Рашомон“ на Роман Полански (моравам со филм е приказната, расказот не националистички или, не дај боже, шовинистички филм? Тоа како од ўбивач кога ќе се рече дека направил велам национал, а да ја претстави во колективна рамка. Но зошто Милчо се брани приказна, колку и да е интимна, лична, уметникот е тој што треба да ретовари филмот под дефиниција, не национален, малко повеќе од „Пред дождот“ на Родигер. „Прашина“ можевме да го видиме во неколку свои варијанти (инциди, сарказам, апогодат) и преку различни ликови. Во крајна линија и целото филм е едно иронично поигрување со нарративниот филм. Каква функција му припишуваш на хуморот во твото проекти: да ја олесни комуникативноста со публиката?…

ММ: Хуморот има две причини. Една – го прево комуникативен. Втора и многу поважна е тоа што е дел од некој животна сефурија. Иако не сум јас тој што треба да го каже тоа, за мене тукот е најголемата разлика меѓу „Пред дождот“ и „Прашина“ и „Прашина“ е покомлексен филм. И покрај таа збогатена комплекност, сепак најголемата разлика е во хуморот, на површина има повеќе од таа животна сефурија, а во исто време има и машина. Едното без другото не функционираат. Треба да ги имаш двата краја на спектарот за да ја добиеш комплекноста. Ако ја нема сенката нема да ти биде доволно јако ни со снето. Хуморот во сушина е страшино тежок. Неотколку што за тебе е смешишно, за мене не е. И обратно. Осамошната е покомуникации, па затоа очекуваш дека тешко ќе патуваш. Она што најмногу му изведени и она што ми беше најважно е дали публиката ќе реагира на смешниот дел.

Заклучив дека нормална публика исто се смеє на смешниот дел и во Џубу и во Скопје. Онаа причина поради која почнав да се занимавам со филм е приказната, расказот полесно да ја комуникацираат со гледачот. Тоа тукот е остварено, во противно тоа би било обичен текст, книга. Многу ми е интересен хуморот кога е ставен во неков контекст, како што честопати се сретнува во чешки филмови од времето на Форман и на Иван Пасер, потоа како што тоа е направено во „Среќа“ на Џубу и во Скопје. Онаа ќе го носи, но истовремено ти се крева носата на гледачот, потоа како во филмовите на Роман Полански (мборен хумор)…

ЖК: Лично се согласувам дека уметноста треба да зборува за универсални нешта, дека секоја приказна, колку и да е интимна, лична, уметникот е тој што треба да ја претстави во колективна рамка. Милчо се брани како од ѓавол кога ќе се рече дека направил велам национал, а да ја претстави во колективна рамка. Но зошто Милчо се брани приказна, колку и да е интимна, лична, уметникот е тој што треба да ја претстави во колективна рамка. Но зошто Милчо се брани како од ѓавол кога ќе се рече дека направил велам национален, а не националистички или, не дај боже, шовинистички филм? Тоа ми се може и на еден Спилберг, на пример, со „Спасувањето на гробот“…

ЖК: Не знам колку е познато за јавноста твоето занимавање со хумор и сатира. При крајот на седумдесетите години имаш објавувано кратки хуморески во „Остен“, списание за хумор и сатира. Забележиви се две работи. Ми се може и на еден Спилберг, на пример, со „Спасувањето на гробот“…

Блесок бр. 26, мај-јуни, 2002 Галерија Осврти

МАКЕДОНСКИ РАШОМОН
ИНТЕРВЈУ СО МИЛЧО МАНЧЕВСКИ

Жарко Кујунџијски

ММ: Не знам колку е познато за јавноста твоето занимавање со хумор и сатира. При крајот на седумдесетите години имаш објавувано кратки хуморески во „Остен“, списание за хумор и сатира. Забележиви се две работи. Ми се може и на еден Спилберг, на пример, со „Спасувањето на гробот“…

ЖК: Не знам колку е познато за јавноста твоето занимавање со хумор и сатира. При крајот на седумдесетите години имаш објавувано кратки хуморески во „Остен“, списание за хумор и сатира. Забележиви се две работи. Ми се може и на еден Спилберг, на пример, со „Спасувањето на гробот“…

Блесок бр. 26, мај-јуни, 2002 Галерија Осврти
со нешто, сигурно би го споредувал со нешто што таму сум го доживеал. Од друга страна, естетското формирање и првите 20 години
сум ги поминал тука и од тоа не можам да избегам. Како и да е секој
филм треба да е наднационален.
ЖК: Колку и да се трудиме тоа да го аплицираме, сепак заклучок е дека „Прашина“ не е цврсто врзан за едно тло и за една идеологија. Напротив, тој често ја менува теоретската стратегија, инкорпорира историски парчиња. Ритуални танци на примитивни
племиња, антички столбови, византиско сликарство, кубизмот со
„Госпоѓиците од Авињон“, потоа тука е целата историја на 20 век:
нуклеарната бомба, прохибицијата, Индијанците, Фројд, авионот
на браќата Рајт, Османлиите, Ј.Б. Тито… Може ли поставувањето
на овие историски настани и личности во некаков контекст во
филмот да се сфати како некој вид авторов коментар?
ММ: Нив ги користам како дел од колажот. Тие се дел од реквизитата, дел од палетата. Пак ќе направам споредба со тоа како
Раушенберг користи некои елементи. Сето тоа се моменти кои се
делови од нашето колективно минато и од индивидуалната психологија. Јас сум свесен за атомската бомба, за кубизмот, и не можам
тоа да го избегнувам. Како може да правам филм за комитите, а да
не го познавам кубизмот. Може нема да го споменам, но естетиката
на кубизмот е станата дел од мене, исто онака како и естетиката на
дадаизмот, на структурализмот, како и старовремските естетики. На
пример, кога цртам од нив ја користам перспективата. Прашање за
себе е колку сето тоа ќе биде видливо, колку ќе го покажеш или нема
да го покажеш. Јас цело време поаѓам од некоја претпоставка на
искреност. Со тоа го поканувам гледачот, ајде заедно да го креираме
овој филм, ајде заедно да си играме. Дел од таа искреност е да му ги
покажам шевовите во правењето на костумот, што не е нешто ново
во уметноста, но е ново во наративниот филм. Му ги покажувам
шевовите со тоа што му велам „Јас ти раскажувам приказна, значи
те лажам, меѓутоа сложи се со тоа дека ти давам до знаење дека раскажувам“. Тоа не го правам рационално, смислено, туку како дел од
играњето. Ако играњето е консеквентно, направено со талент, тогаш
тоа ќе функционира и ќе биде подлежно на анализи. Хирошима
беше еден од тие битни моменти од 20 век, кој нè дефинира нас, па
дури и тој дел од нас кои живееме во Штавица. Од друга страна сето
тоа временски е толку блиску. Целата таа историја која изгледа дека
се развлекува во период од илјада години е всушност страшно блиску. Илајџа, кој во оваа приказна тргнува од Оклахома во 1900 година
како млад човек, а во Македонија доаѓа во 1903., сосема е можно да
биде во Њујорк во 1945. кога паднала атомската бомба. Ние сме подложни на клишеа. Размислуваме на овој начин: Отоманско царство
– 16 век, каубојци – 19 век, атомска бомба – е, тоа е 21 век!
ЖК: За почеток: колку си задоволен од тоа како е прифатен
„Прашина“ надвор од Македонија? Сметаш ли дека неговата
фокусираност на одредени историски и културни детерминанти
ја намалува можноста да биде разбирлив за оние што не ја познаваат историската рамка на филмот?
ММ: Мислам дека секој филм треба да функционира на неколку
нивоа и во случајов ова што го спомнуваш е едно од нив: како се
вклопува во културата и во историјата за која зборува. Меѓутоа, филмот не треба да функционира само на тоа ниво. Луѓето треба да го
разберат и без да знаат нешто за оваа култура. Така е со секој добар
филм. На пример, за да го сфатат и за да им се допадне „Граѓанинот
Кејн“ не мора да знаат нешто за Америка во првата половина на 20
век. Тоа е мое мото: секогаш кога нешто работам – се обидувам да
видам најпрво кои се луѓето. Станува збор за човечки судбини, односи, стремежи, страдања и главно е тие да се постигнат. Сето друго
само ќе ја надополни сликата. Кога се снима филм за историјата и за
културата на едно место не се добива класичен игран филм. Тоа е или
документарец или телевизија – Сиенен. Инаку, јас не сум најповикан
да ги коментирам реакциите. Како автор ги гледам субјективно, огра-

ничено. Од тие неколку места кај што сум бил увидов исклучително
добри реакции. Тоа е сосем спротивно од дијапазонот на некои критичари во Венеција. И сега, откако гледам како го примаат публиката
и критичарите во Токио, Тајпеј, Торонто, па и во Солун, заклучувам
дека она што се случи во Венеција беше атентат врз „Прашина“.
Вистинско мерило ќе биде тоа како понатаму ќе го пречека публиката во светот. Тоа секогаш е единственото вистинско мерило.
ЖК: Во неколку наврати во домашни и странски весници и списанија се јавуваш како автор на колумни со политичка конотација.
Сметаш ли дека тоа е причината што некои ултранационалистички
критичари реагираа така во Венеција, или, пак, сметаш дека беа исфрустрирани од фактот што Милчо Манчевски, режисер од фиљан,
фиљан земја Македонија, дојден од Дивиот Исток направи таков да
не кажам уметнички безобразен филм како „Прашина“?…
ММ: … И се обидува да им дели лекции како се прави естетика, а
не да бара помош од меѓународни невладини организации. Мислам
дека има и од двете нешта што ги спомна. Не сакав да верувам, и
долго после Венеција не можев да поверувам дека едното може да
има врска со другото, но по сè изгледа дека уште долго ќе учам некои
работи. Доволно бев наивен да мислам дека луѓето ќе се занимаваат
со естетиката на делото. Заклучувам дека таквите реакции не биле
толку случајни. Ваквите мислења ги базирам не само врз реакциите,
туку и врз истражувањата што ги спроведоа други луѓе. Германката
Ирис Кронауер, која беше гостинка и во Скопје, пишува книга за
реакциите на „Прашина“. Ирис нашла текст во Германија, рецензија,
каде што критичарот вели дека два дена пред да го видат филмот се
договарале како ќе го рецензираат. Има други рецензии, кои велат
дека филмот е само илустрација на еден новинарски текст во кој го
напаѓам НАТО за неговите пропусти. НАТО, de facto, не ни е крив за
тоа што се случува, ама делумно тоа е последица и на некои негови
пропусти. Според таквата хипотетичка ситуација што некои ја поставуваат, излегува дека „Прашина“ е направен за еден месец. Жал
ми е што заклучив дека цел сегмент од културата – критиката, за
која мислев дека се занимава со естетика, всушност се занимава со
политика. Увидов дека за европските филмски критичари политиката е еквивалентна на трачот во Холивуд. Не е важно кој со кого спие
(како во Холивуд), туку кој какви политички мислења има.
ЖК: Мис Стон (камен) Неда ја нарекува Мис Рок (карпа).
Таквото метонимично заменување на означителите на знаковите
е многу често во народниот говор, го користат и футуристите, а
потсетува и на детската игра ‘расипан телефон’. Дали навистина
го сретна и тоа име при истражувањето?
ММ: Не, не го сретнав. Мис Рок го употребив токму од такви
асоцијации за кои зборуваш ти и затоа што не сакав да спомнувам
вистински настани и вистински луѓе, иако некогаш мора. Повеќе настојував да го избегнам тоа, зашто мислам дека го немам моралното
право да зборувам за нешто што со свои очи не сум го видел.
ЖК: Веќе го спомнавме терминот безобразлук во позитивна
смисла. Особен впечаток остава позицијата на раскажувачот.
Михаил Бахтин би рекол дека вршиш извесна детронизација
на позицијата на раскажувачот. Во усното пренесување на
приказните, пред стотина години неговата позицијата е позиција
на неприкосновен авторитет. Дистанцата слушателраскажувач
не е голема, но точно се знае линијата. Токму едно такво парче
– сцената со ценкањето околу бројот на војниците е еклакантен
пример за безобразно мешање на слушателот, кој, иако првпат ја
слуша приказната, интервенира во неа. Тоа говори за уште една
работа: релативноста на сè што добиваме како податок од минатото. Дали таа интервенција, не на сведокот, туку на авторот, на
оној што ја пренесува информацијата, може да стане толку голема
што нешто што денес примаме како апсолутна вистина, всушност
е чиста фикција. Зар не се брише така границата меѓу фикцијата


како жанр и историјата од учебниците како факт? Се вршат ли такви фалсификати и во време кога светот е глобално село?

MM: Тоа е повеќе од очигледно и веројатно секогаш било така. Денес повеќе станува збор за намера манипулација од политички, психолошки причини или од причини што се сведуваат на некоја форма на сећаност. Онаака како што ја гледам стварноста така сакам и табе да ти ја заметат. Фалсификатите на информациите се прават независно од тоа колку нам ни се тие информација достапни. Мислат дека тоа што се достапни за јавноста не ги прави помалку подложни на фалсификат, тукку само го прави фалсификатот поо- виглен за оној што го интересира вистината. Следнаш прашање во такво нешто како колку вистината може да биде објективна, затоа што не можеме да го приближиме на еден ист настан насекаде објектив- но, ама бидејќи понеку сме го виделе, бидејќи го поставуваме во понекогаш контекст, нашите вистини може да бидат различни. Му нешто, ако сепак појдеме од претпоета дека постои објективна вистина, факт е дека таа најчесто е манипулирани од раскажувацот и главната цел, главната тема на овој филм, е да се каже тоа на еу- форичен, пријатен, безобразен начин. Немојте да ми веруваат не, и, по инерција, немојте да им верувате на раскажуваците во филмовите и на самите филмови. Улажувте во нив, но не верувајте дека се чиста вистина. Значи, не верувајте им и на "Солунските агентато- ри", ни на филмовите со Џон Вејн, ни на Си ен ен. Барајте ја самите својата вистина. Кога можете, отидете на лице место, кога не можете – прочитайте два или три извора. Да се навратам на еден претходно прашање. Можеби таа е третата причина која посетошто толку го вобудува професионалните оценувања во Венеција. "Прашина" има и за светата структура по која тие работат веке 30 или 50 години.

ЖК: Еднаш спомена дека "Прашина" е кубистички филм. Во некои делови се чувствува влијание и од т.н. руски формализам, кој и самото е наследник токму на кубофутуризмот. Ејзенштајн е под големо влијание на тој формализам. За "Прашина" се зборуваше дека е претерано крвав филм. Виктор Шкловски, еден од основните теоретичари на формализмот, ќе каже: "во уметноста крвата не е крвава… Таа е граѓа за уметничка конструкција". Основните теоретичари на формализмот, ќе каже: "во уметноста крвата не е крвава… Таа е граѓа за уметничка конструкција". Таа е граѓа за уметничка конструкција.

MM: Апсолутно се сложувам. Тоа Хичкок го има како понароден, ако не кажеме дека повика за космополитизам и почистване на шпицата ќе познае каков ќе биде филмот. Кога размислува каков да го дефинира филмот" а татко ми, пак, викаше дека по музиката на професор по продукција кој постојано веле дека "првото што ми една задача да се заврши планот, да се биде фер кон подолга функција и со својата вистината може да биде усвоена на Далфред Хичкок и Орсон Велс кои имале навик да се појавуваат само в војни филми (се смее). Тоа се фотографија кои го играат прилично битна улога во филмот. Во "Пред дождот" флотата беше важна от таму е ембрионот на целото додека, тукку му покажуваше од Александар и затоа се вратил во Македонија. Оттука се одмотува присваката. Во "Прашина", пак, фотографијата со мајката на Лук и Илајџа, е можеби најстарата фотографија од целата колекција на Адеша. Од мајката висината тргнале обајцата. Тоа е повторно прашање. Сметам дека кога се бавиш со креативни работи треба многу да играш и да се отпаш на работата. Треба да се биде крајно конспектен во тоа играш и за мене секога најпра- ктите работи беше како да се постигне тој баланс. Како тоа да биде и играш и како да останеш одличен ученик во смисок дека со својата одговорност ќе обезбеди да се заврши планот, да се биде фер кој еднак, да се вратат парите…

ЖК: Ја го постави во релација со општиот процес на глобализација или не е лишта, Анџела, и во вториот филм прашањето беше како тоа да го врземе, а да застави во која Македонија е наследник на истата. Конкретно за ова прашање, иако "Прашина" како расистички филм, исто така најстарата фотографија од еден црвенокос човек". Значи ли тоа дека вршиш надворувување на поетиките на Алфред Хичкок и Орсон Велс кои имале навик да се појават во некој кадар од своите филмови?

MM: Апсолутно. Идејата да влезеш во мал кадар од свој филм е замислена од Хичкок, ќас само го претпазувам, правежки варијантата на тоа – се појавуваат само во фотографии (се смее). Тоа се фотографија кои го играат прилично битна улога во филмот. Во "Пред дождот" фотографата беше важна от таму е ембрионот на целото додека, тукку му покажуваше од Александар и затоа се вратил во Македонија. Оттука се одмотува присваката. Во "Прашина", пак, фотографијата со мајката на Лук и Илајџа, е можеби најстарата фотографија од целата колекција на Адеша. Од мајката важност тргнале обајцата. Тоа е повторно прашање. Сметам дека кога се бавиш со креативни работи треба многу да играш и да се отпаш на работата. Треба да се биде крајно конспектен во тоа играш и за мене секога најпра- ктите работи беше како да се постигне тој баланс. Како тоа да биде и играш и како да останеш одличен ученик во смисок дека со својата одговорност ќе обезбеди да се заврши планот, да се биде фер кој еднак, да се вратат парите…
The “Dust” Files: One Example of How Macedonia Lost the War for Truth

The West with a Skeleton in the Closet

The Venice critics agreed on how to welcome the film two days before they got to see it!

An English critic – Alexander Walker - comes up with a brilliant thought: he claims that the goal of “Dust” is to block Turkey’s admission to the EU!

The German Der Tagespiegel declared the film anti-Albanian and Neo-Fascist, saying: “Instead of the Albanian Muslims we have here the Ottomans as the „untermenschen” and the Macedonians are as innocent as lambs, which are slaughtered during the film numerous. And the black boy whom the old woman explains the Balkans to, is nobody else than the West, who has to be wake up by the sounds of the fanfare and fight against the everlasting Os- manic Islam.”

Western critics tried to fit a Macedonian film into their own inaccurate picture of the events “down there.”

For the first time ever, a country under attack by imported and local gangs declaring themselves a “Liberation Army” while carrying out ethnic cleansing, murder and outright plunder has been declared racist because it tries to defend the law and order. The US and EU political elites embraced the position of the terrorists in Macedonia, pronouncing them fighters for human rights; consequently, the image of Macedonia in foreign media reports was seen from that perspective. The US and the EU, in fact, used this story in front of their own constituencies to help them hide their responsibility for the spillover of the Kosovo crisis over the border into Macedonia.

Macedonia, its political establishment in particular, failed to produce an articulated response to this political and media behavior of the EU and the US. Whatever our politicians told us, they were not heard by the world. The battle for the truth about Macedonia was, and still is, fought outside institutions. It is fought on web sites, such as www.real- itymacedonia.org.mk or www.ok.mk, it is fought by countless personal protests and letters to foreign journalists regarding their reports, letters to European and world politicians and institutions...

Ultimately, the only one who called to task the West and asked for accountable behavior in this dangerous situation was Milcho Manchevski. This he did in his article “Just a Moral Obligation” and in numerous interviews he gave before and during the Venice Film Festival for the foreign media. His case is enlightening.

At the end of August, a week before “Dust” opened the Venice Film Festival, Manchevski published an opinion piece in the eminent Süddeutsche Zeitung entitled “Just a Moral Obligation”. The London Guardian and the Skopje Nenovik printed the same text; it was also widely distributed on the Internet. (Manchevski did not offer his article to The Guardian. The London-based paper downloaded it from the Internet, changed the title, cut off the end and made several modifications to the body itself. The Slovene film critic Miha Brun published a comparison between the original and the text “fixed” by the editors of The Guardian.)

Several lines of Manchevski’s commentary sum up his view: “Macedonia is collateral damage to NATO’s involvement in the Balkans. Body bags are not sexy, so NATO chose to let the militants keep their western weapons. NATO’s Kosovo escapade did much more than arm and train the militaants who now execute a classical blowback. It escalated the conflict in the Balkans to a higher level. The psychological effect of the entire world putting itself on the side of the Great Cause (as seen by the Albanian extremists) has given a boost to their armed secession- ist struggle. Ethnic cleansing and occupying territories is an advanced step in redrawing borders. The US has a moral obligation to stop the Albanian extremists from turning Macedonia into another Afghanistan (the article was written in July, two months before September,11) or Cambodia, two sad examples of blowback and collateral damage from American involvement”, - Manchevski writes in “Just a Moral Obligation”.

The Moscow Pravda also published this commentary, as did the Belgian De Standaard. The latter paired it up with a “response” from an Albanian reader. De Standaard thus shifted the emphasis of the article from an argument for re-establishing peace to an inter-ethnic debate. In other words, Manchevski’s article echoed around the world as a “de- fense” of the Macedonian position during a war, much louder even than the voice of the Macedonian government itself (Macedonian govern- ment officials’ statements and press-conferences rarely – if ever – received this much attention by the global press).

“Dust” or “Saving Private Ryan”

To what extent his expose affected western culture analysts and political analysts became clear in the initial western media reactions to Manchevski’s film “Dust.” They did not argue directly with his commentary, but instead projected their prejudices concerning Macedonia onto the film. In case we forget – “Dust” was the first Macedonian-made product unveiled to the world on an equal footing during the war. It was our film that opened the Venice Film Festival.

Hardly any regular moviegoer expected the charged reception of the film. Here, however, we are not discussing whether the film deserves good or bad reviews. The reviews of “Dust” were not, in fact, aesthetic evaluations of the film. They were, rather, reactions to a high-profile and ambitious product coming from Macedonia and – what is even more disturbing – reactions (negative) to a well-researched and proud view on one’s own history. In other words, western critics reacted instinctively and negatively because someone dared show the Macedonian histo- ry – and by extension, present – differently from their own perception of Macedonia. Furthermore, Manchevski did so with an extraordinarily self-assured artiste hand (and with no excuses whatsoever).

The German critic Fritz Gottler implies in the high-circulation Sueddeutsche Zeitung (the same paper that published Manchevski’s commentary) that many of the international critics in Venice discussed how to welcome Manchevski’s new film two whole days before it was screened. The critics decide how to welcome the film before they actually get to see it!

Now that the film has been applauded in Toronto, Macedonia, Tokyo, Taipei, Thessaloniki, it becomes evident that the critics had an agenda of their own.

David Stratton, the critic for Hollywood Variety implies that “Dust” is replete with violence, so that it’s hardly believable that the western audience will accept it. Right here is the real reason for the negative reactions emerges (reactions rebuffed by Alessandro Barico and by many regular viewers evaluating “Dust” on film web sites). It was the western cinema that invented film violence to satisfy the needs of western viewers. The Indians, or Russians, or Poles, or Japanese, or Macedonians did not invent film violence, and it is never put up on the screen for their sake. When an experienced critic attributes excessive violence to “Dust,” it cannot be a coincidence. In fact, there are 7 or 8 minutes of violence in “Dust,” as opposed to the

45 minutes of brutality in “Saving Private Ryan,” brutality that in Spielberg’s (excellent) film goes as far as hands and legs exploding all around; not to mention films like “Pulp Fiction,” “Schindler’s List” or “Sev- en,” Shakespeare’s bloody plays, or even the Bible for that matter. David Stratton feels free to employ double standards – one set for the Holly-
wood/western films, and another set for the films from other countries, i.e. “eastern films.”

The arrogance of the western pseudo-critics goes so far that they do not even try to conceal their racism and political agenda. The TV audience had the opportunity to see Alexander Walker from the London Evening Standard accusing Manchevski that he had made a racist film, showing the Turks “as herd of a corrupt people who gibber like apes in red fezes, and are more violent and far less responsible than Macedonians”. Walker then asked Manchevski: “I wander what you think the effect will be upon contemporary Turkey which is at the present moment trying to enter the European Union. Do you have a political agenda by this film?” (Manchevski only said: “Thank you for your statement.”) Those who have seen the film (a few thousand at festivals on three continents, and more than 70,000 in Macedonia, the only country where the film has opened in the theaters) can assess for themselves whether Walker’s claim that the film is racist is substantiated, or whether it is but a brazen forgery and callous attack. The viewers can see for themselves if “Dust” is a racist piece of art, or rather a film featuring both good guys and bad guys, blood-thirsty and innocents on all sides (of the ethnic divide). The film, actually, does not deal with ethnic issues at all; it deals with sacrifice and selfishness, regardless of ethnic colors. Anyway, even if it were a racist film (!!!), it is unconceivable that a film may, even if it seeks to, stop a country from being admitted to the European Union.

The British got carried away the most in the political showdown with the Macedonian co-production. Apart from Walker, Peter Bradshaw refers to “Dust” in The Guardian as “a special pleading for Macedonian nationalism.” In Macedonia nobody took up arms on seeing “Dust.” On the contrary, many had already taken up arms paid for with The Guardian journalists’ fellow citizens. These reporters display knee-jerk negative reaction to a film trying to portray the relativity trained by The Guardian journalists’ fellow citizens. These reporters do not realize that the Turks are not Turks, Turks are Muslims, Muslims we have here are slaughtered during everlasting Osmanic Islam. The4

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Macedonian philosopher Katarina Kolozova had a similar experience with her renowned colleagues. A philosophical article she wrote was unexpectedly blasted by an eminent Paris professor who referred to it as “nationalistic.” After one looks at the topic of the article, things become clearer. Kolozova argues for equality of the intellectual discourse and ideas coming from the small countries and those in the West. Kolozova is among those theoreticians (such as the Bulgarian Marija Todorova and the Slovene Slavoj Zizek) who contend that small countries are entitled to independence in assessing their own image, and who oppose the patronizing attitude of the West. Many highly acclaimed western minds are not ready to come to terms with this attitude of the “natives.”

Innocent Lambs and Blood-Thirsty Murderers

Why did western journalists fail to see an apolitical film (which tells tales of adventures, cowboys, speaks of history, love, suffering and of the power of storytelling)? Why did they interpret this film as a contemporary political parable on the situation in Macedonia? Several Italian and German critics contend that all westerners in the film are shown as bad, as if the good Angela and Elijah are not Americans, and the blood-thirsty Major and the Teacher are not from the Balkans (one a Turk, the other a Macedonian). Maybe this is but a reflex which has to do with the old skeleton in one’s closet.

Things finally become crystal clear when put in context. The German “critic” Jan Schulze-Ojala in Der Tagesspiegel says that “Dust” is an illustration of Manchevski’s newspaper article “Just a Moral Obligation,” as if the director could write a screenplay, shoot and edit a film in two weeks, a process that usually takes two years at least (in the case of “Dust” it took as many as seven years; as a matter of fact the film was conceived – AND FILMED before the war in Macedonia even started).

The same critic further claims that the film is anti-Albanian because “Instead of the Albanian Muslims we have here the Ottomans as the ‘untermenschen’ and the Macedonians are as innocent as lambs, who are slaughtered during the film numerous. And the black boy whom the old woman explains the Balkans to, is nobody else than the West, who has to be waken up by the sounds of the fanfare and fight against the everlasting Osmanic Islam. The killface aesthetic with which the Turks are portrayed does have - and that is the scandal – something (neo) fascistic about it.” Talk of projecting!

Claiming that Manchevski with “Dust” illustrates the war in Macedonia, the critic of the London Times, James Christopher, says: “Manchevski hits important nerves but his politics, like twin stories, are all over the place. True, Dust is not a piece of ‘realist’ cinema, but having placed his film in the teeth of a deadly serious conflict can he really shrug off the responsibility?” He, however, does not mention that the conflict the film speaks about is over 100 years old, and that this new war in Macedonia, which is different from the one a century ago, happened AFTER the film was made.

The Croatian Jutarnji List, one month before Venice, published vitiolic criticism written by the prominent Bosnian writer Miljenko Jergovic (who had fled Sarajevo when it was under siege), accusing Manchevski of “Macedonian nationalism, failure to understand the historical situation of the Albanians...” Jergovic did not note that he himself had not been to Macedonia.

As if to continue the political fuss engulfing the film, the most frequent questions in the numerous interviews Manchevski gave in Venice (at least 120 for several countries) had to do with the political crisis in Macedonia. The film was seen through the prism of politics. Even at the gala entrance preceding the opening of the festival, an occasion generally used for glamorous show-biz fluff, Manchevski was asked about the fate of NATO troops in Macedonia (whereupon he answered that those who distributed arms to the militants are now collecting them back). The day after the opening night of “Dust” in Venice, the Associated Press agency released the (erroneous) information that Manchevski gave its bias away – and because the rest of us failed to use the opportunity to speak in a public place about our problems and about our truth. This distortion then becomes only a small piece in the mosaic of a political struggle.

Marina Kostova
(Translated by Aleksandra Ilievska)
(Published in Vest Daily, December 22-23, 2001)
СЕНКИ
Любов и изкупление
на границата между
жизната и смрътта

ENTRE LOS MUERTOS
Un film de MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

Unsos vosos
los que se han fo
haben más fueru
que los vicios

SJENE
Ponekak su mrtvi
glasniji od živih,

GÖLGELER
Bazı olsun,
yasayanlar an
daha yüksek sevi
korumu
Katerina Kolozova

Manchevski’s *Shadows*: Sexuality and Melancholy

Introduction

*Shadows* by Milcho Manchevski (released in 2007) is a film that engages in the impossible task of producing a language of the unutterable: it attempts to mediate irrevocable loss in its immediacy, to narrate of the irremediable absolute absence of the loved one.

In spite of the gloominess of theme, there is certain lightness of narration in the film enabled not only by the sense of humor present in it but also by the playfulness with which the story is told and by the seductive storytelling. It evidently follows the structural laws of tragedy since it is the *systasis ton pragmaton* (the composition of elements) rather than a metaphysical rumination which brings forth the plot of the great themes of life, death and fate and its denouement. The tragic idea of an inherited family guilt, of impossible individuality or rather the impossibility of individual freedom against the dictate of Fate, is at the heart of the story told in *Shadows*. The film’s hero, Lazar, is indeed a tragic hero since, he is unaware of his guilt and finds himself at the center of the plot. His mission is – just like any tragic hero’s mission – to redeem his family and himself from a transgression by appeasing demons. Lazar’s task is to come to a realization – to the moment of an *anagnorisis* (recognition/realization) which is the point of denouement of every tragedy – of his debt to several dead souls.

Just like any hero of a tragedy who usually pays a certain debt to the chthonic gods, Lazar pays a debt to somebody who comes from the afterlife, from the world beyond, from the world of the dead. And also, just like Dionysus, just like Lazarus from the New Testament, Lazar Perkov returns from the land of the dead, only to accomplish what every tragic hero is called upon to accomplish – to undo the tragic fault of his or her parent that he or she has inherited as his/her own. And also, just like any other tragedy, *Shadows* produces the cathartic pleasure of playing out one’s most primordial and ever infantile phantasms and fears. Apart from those that define any tragedy, such as the fears of inherited guilt, phantasms of fate and transgression (of the frontier between life and death or between mortal and immortal), a hybrid of deadly fear and intense pleasure derived from the transgressive penetration into the world of afterlife is distinctive in this film.

The erotic relation with someone lost in the absolute sense of the word, with someone who represents an *always already* irretrievable loss, is the source of ultimate pleasure. The irredeemably absent one, the one lost through death, the one who has been annihilated becomes the object of erotic interaction. The irrevocable absence becomes the voluptuous presence of sheer pleasure.
Lazar’s relationship with Menka is a love story of an uninterrupted climax of erotic desire. That painful absence of a distinct life, a life that is namable and shaped by history, is made present through desire, through yearning – through an insatiable longing. It is an absence that receives volume, form and, finally, body through a loving yearning, thanks to an infinity of desire, i.e., to the infinity of life.

According to Jean Pierre Vernant (1990), the fact that in Greek Antiquity the word *pothos* referred to an erotic yearning as well as to the state and to the ritual of mourning speaks of the psychological-cultural similarity of the two phenomena. The same parallel is still valid in our age of (post)modernity: it is the longing for the impossible loved one, the desire for the always already lost objet petit which establishes this equation. A loving yearning is nothing but a nostalgic longing for the impossible Other, for the loved one always already evading in-her/his-Real. The loved one engulfed by death, lost in the absolute sense is loved in the absolute, in the most radical sense.

**Mourning, Desiring and the Abject**

*Shadows* is a film which inspires re-investigation of the idea of mourning as a desiring stance. Freud defines mourning as a state of cathexis to the lost object of love preserved as an image which is a constitutive element of one’s own psychic contents and composition. Still, according to Freud, mourning is a state of intense loving experience whose defining purpose is to serve as the passage to severing the cathetic links with the absent loved one. The intense ceaseless mourning, one which does not result (in a period of time which is considered normal or healthy) in the liberating effect of hypercathexis, according to Freud, is a pathological state of melancholy. This position is maintained by
Freud in *Mourning and Melancholia* first published in 1917; in his later work titled *Ego and Id* from 1923 he argues that also after the normal period of mourning is over there must remain some links to the lost object of love since this is indispensable for maintaining the psyche’s constitution. Thus the desiring aspect of mourning is there only to cease to be. It is there only to become an integral part of the psychological mechanism of transition toward liberation from the cathexis to the lost loved one. The pathological variation of mourning called melancholy is an erotic (narcissistic) state of preserving the loving relationship through continuous commemoration of the absent object of love. It is not only the abnormally long duration but also, and even more so, the fact that it is a form of narcissism which makes melancholy a pathology. So it is precisely its erotic component which remains a constant and, through that, degenerates toward melancholy. The invariably narcissistic libidinal investment of mourning becomes a defining characteristic of the erotic subject the melancholic person is.

Mourning, both in its “pathological” (melancholic) as well as in its “healthy” variant of the necessary psychic work of detachment from the grieved object of love, is an erotic phenomenon. It is all about attachment to or “passionate detachment” from the image of the impossible loved one.

In *Shadows*, apart from the fervent sexual love for Menka, Lazar, who comes from the world of the living — albeit defiled by transgression into the world of the dead — displays warm thankful lovingness toward a couple of other inhabitants of the underworld. That bitter taste of an eerie intimacy with the dead, with people who hold the status of dead — which is indeed both a cultural and an ontological status to be attained, as Vernant explains (1990) — brings forth the exquisite feeling of perversion created by transgressive pleasure. It is precisely the desiring penetration into the inaccessible world of the dead which brings about a certain dark sensuousness colored with the fear that comes from the violation of the inviolable boundary between the two worlds. This sensation is effectuated through the psychological state of the main character depicted in the film, whose subjective perspective is the stance from which the story of the film is told; it is also effectuated through the structure of the narrative and through the cinematographic esthetics expressed both visually and acoustically (musically).
The effect of pleasure that comes from the act of transgression is saturated by a sense of defilement derived from intimacy with the ritualistic culture of death (of burial and commemoration) and its imagery. That which is normally superstition avoidance – as prescribed by the death culture – by those who are not in a state of mourning, in Shadows is something new with which the viewer becomes familiarised. Looking at a corpse prepared for burial, looking at a corpse subject to the violent ritual of preparation for burial, engaging in familiarity with the souls/memory of the “unclean dead” such as the ones who have suffered mors repentina, i.e. the ones who have committed suicide or children (Aries 1977), implies contact with the “culture of the polluted” (Parker 1983). The latter consists to a considerable extent in precisely burial and mourning customs. In Shadows, the literality and physicality of death in its aspect of the abject, of the foul and defiling, and the intimacy with death’s defiling aspect becomes an integral part of the culture of the living. In Western civilization, the latter is normally kept clean from the physical presence of death through precisely delineating the world of the dead via ritualistically structured practices of burial, mourning, and commemoration (Aries 1977). In the film, this line of division between the two cultures (the one of life and the one of death) is constantly blurred and subverted.

The line of division between the two worlds is most dramatically destabilized by the erotic relationship between the two main characters belonging to the different domains of life and afterlife respectively. There is a certain dimension of abject/ion – in the sense of Kristevan abject (1982) – nesting in the sexual desire; the fact that one of the lovers is a dead person inhabiting the world of the living – indistinguishable from them – is the source of an experience of the abject. Inside the feeling of...
attraction, within the sensation of sexual desire, repulsion settles. As soon as the materiality of death becomes present – as soon as it becomes clear that the body to which the hero makes love has the appearance of the corpse bearing its death marks – sexual pleasure begins to mix with the abject. Kristeva’s concept of the abject elaborated in *Powers of Horror* (1982) is about the horror or the disgust toward that which resides at the borders of a structure, of a certain distinct, circumscribed, unequivocally namable something. The repulsion provoking blurring of borders is even more intensive when it is a boundary between two elements of a fundamental binary – such as life and death – that has been destabilized. And it is this strong experience of the abject mixed with an intense feeling of sensual pleasure which marks the erotic relationship in the film.

Impossibility, that defining characteristic of every erotic relationship, is intensified by the fact that the desired one is not only the mourned one but also the one who brings about a sensation of repulsion. The latter implies the contradicting desire to negate the abject lover, to render her or him absent for a second time, to annihilate her/him also as an image present in the psyche of the mourner. The hero is presented with this necessity in its utmost clarity at the end of the film, when parting from the beloved one standing next to an open grave filled with the materiality of death – the skeletons of the dead.

Mournful impossibility envelops the sexual desire which is at the center of the film’s plot. Melancholy is the substance of a relationship of love which will leave an ineffaceable mark on Lazar’s life, which will become one of the narratives that define him.
Tragic Debt as the Source of Political Responsibility

The fate of Oedipus depends on his interpretation of a cryptic message by the old man Tiresias that should lead him to a realization of his guilt, of his debt and redemption. So does Lazar seek for an interpretation of the words of an old woman addressed to him as a message to be deciphered in order to arrive at a grand illumination; the search for a translation of those enigmatic few words in an archaic dialect that cannot be understood by anyone except experts (linguists) becomes the hero’s quest in the film. It is also the meaning of the tragic plot, the truth that the hero is meant to grasp, to come to a realization of, and it is the reason for which it all happens. “Return what’s not yours” is the meaning of the enigmatic enunciation in an extinct dialect repeatedly addressed to Lazar by the outlandish old woman. The expert who interprets the meaning of those words is somebody from the world beyond, similar to the wise (“expert”) Tiresias in Oedipus the King who has transgressed the boundaries of the world of mortals more than once.

In order to come to a realization about the meaning of the old woman’s enigmatic message, Lazar needs to arrive at a prior illumination: He is not responsible only for his own actions but also for those committed by his ancestors. Lazar needs to undo a wrong done to the dead by his mother, and when embracing this task he also embraces the truth of the impossibility of an absolutely individual – both moral and political – responsibility. The latter is the moment of anagnorisis – of a realization of the reason and the meaning of the tragic plot – in the film which enables the hero to undo the tragic mistake. He needs to realize the truth buried in the words “Return what’s not yours.”

This message addressed to Lazar as the grand riddle he is destined to resolve refers to a historic debt toward the dead, toward memory, toward the mourned ones. The debt consists in the necessity of a retribution related to a violation of a status of dead, mourned and preserved in memory. The latter is provided by a proper burial and a gravestone on which the name of the deceased is written. Customs of mourning and commemoration are possible if there is a grave to visit and attend to. Lazar’s task is to provide a grave (a repeated burial) for the dead that have been deprived of it (by his ancestor).

Lazar needs to realize that the possibility of a cynical stance toward the dead body, toward the bones and the grave, as the “merely material” is impossible. In fact the metaphysical and political injustice consists in precisely reducing the physical trace of the dead to “merely material.” The bones of the dead that are destined for scientific research have been subject to a political sacrilege. It is indeed a political one since it is the cultural and political outsiders’ graves that have been violated. Those bones are not merely bones (i.e., merely objects) since it is only the bones of those buried at the margins of the graveyard that have been turned into “merely” that. It is the outsiders’ bones that have been turned into objects of the indifferent, rational glance.
Indeed it is a symbolic violation and a violation of the Symbolic. Consequently, it inevitably contains a political meaning. Lazar is called upon to restitute the bones’ status of object of ritual reverence, of cultural meaning – of mourning and of commemoration. Violence, in this case, seems to consist in the deprivining of symbolization, in the gesture of the reducing of a certain reality to “merely the Real.” Moreover there seems to be a position in the movie according to which the reduction of the singular instances par excellence – or rather instantiations – of the Real, such as the dead body, to the Real in its aspect of absurdity is also already an act of violence. The reduction to “merely the Real,” or to a “merely material reality devoid of meaning,” the reduction to an object is an act of political meaning in itself calling for political action. Lazar’s reburial of the bones is a political act and a political statement.

Symbolization is the source of the political: Logos is the condition of Polis (Vernant 1982, 50). Depriving a body, regardless of whether it is alive or dead, of symbolization, of its translation into a meaning is an act of deprivation of any political power, of any political position, of any political status whatsoever. It is the production of bare life (Agamben 1998) and – of bare death. And this is the perpetuated act of violence that Lazar is called upon to undo, the tragic mistake he is called upon to correct – the reduction of dead bodies to objects (to scientific/rational gaze). Before realizing his task of undoing this wrong, he perpetuates this violation unknowingly – and this is his tragic fault. He does not know that it was his mother who violated the graves. In fact, he does not know that there has been any violation of any graves that he or a member of his family may be implicated in. And still, from a point of view of tragedy this is his fault, his (tragic) mistake. The mistake that introduces tragic demise, the hamartema committed by the tragic hero is always already committed unknowingly and unintentionally (Aristotle 1453a 5-10). The latter does not make it less a mistake, it only makes it tragic. As Vernant points out, the truth revealed in each tragedy is the double sense of Heraclites’ sentence “ethos anthropó daimon” (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1988, 37) which can be translated in the following two ways simultaneously “character is man’s destiny” and “destiny is man’s character.” In other words, character is how we act in the face of a challenge brought about by destiny, and this is what makes character our destiny as well as what transforms destiny into our character. Lazar’s task is to realize his complicity with his mother’s wrongdoing in relation to the souls of the dead whose graves she had violated. His complicity consists
of his choice to silently embrace all the values his mother acts in accordance with and advocates. His complicity consists of his choosing not to act against the world his mother Vera Perkova stands for. This complicity implicates Lazar into his mother’s debt toward the several dead whose bones Vera Perkova has objectified depriving them of their status of a “buried body.” The latter is a functional, meaningful component of burial culture. Moreover the buried body, subjected to observance of funerary and commemoration rites, is part of the Culture. It is not the mute, absurd Real – the bones are not merely bones, merely (“dead”) objects. Rather, they are the remains of the deceased that command respect in their function of re-presenting the absent leaving body. Left on the vast plane of the Real, reduced to bones with no relation to the souls that used to inhabit them, the remains of these people have no longer a cultural meaning: they are not part of culture, not part of the human World anymore. Both the remains and the memory of these peoples are banished from our world.

Another aspect of the political meaning of Lazar’s tragic debt is the fact that it has been inherited. The grain of political significance lies in the inescapable possibility of such inheritance. It lies in the necessity of the inherited guilt. The tragic debt is necessarily passed on to the unaware descendent. It is passed on unavoidably precisely because they are unaware. Naïveté does not exist naively: there is no innocence prior to any questioning, to any critique, to any resistance. Resistance is simultaneous with the entering into/birth inside of language. Revolt is even prior to it: it is contemporaneous with the conatus of self-preservation.

References
ЗАПИСНИК ОД СОСТАНОКОТ ОДРЖАН НА 19.05.2006.

Приступи: Милчо Мачевски, Иво Антов, Часлав Ковачевски, Билјана Мирковска, Том Woodrow, Јаргода Велковска, Олег Антов, Мануела Мирчева, Љубица Георговска, Емин Костовски, Васил Траjkовски, Зоран Младеновски, Марица Тополовска, Марица Атанасовска, Томи Велковски.

Повод за повикување на состанокот претставува истекување на пробатно период кој му беше поставен на продуцентот Иво Антов.

Според режисерот Милчо Мачевски рокот кој беше одреден со цел да се исправат грешките и да се решат проблемите во сектор Про dukција измина, а негативата не се како што било требало да бидат. Не се превземени никакви мерки.

Милчо Мачевски предложи дневен ред според кој се одвиваше состанокот.

Како прва точка го наметна прашањето околу Руси Луцков, кој според Иво Антов, како што беше казано на претходниот состанок, треба да биде дел од продукција. Истакна дека тој сепак не е ангажиран, а отсушен е и Љубдимер Анев, критичен момент за секторот.

На тоа Иво Антов потврди дека е очекувано дека со ваков состав на Про dukција работите на функционираат и дека се нужни накамери изменуви.

Понатаму режисерот постави прашање дали е кој Трчевски, на што продуцентот одговори одречно.

Режисерот бара да му се одговори зашто продукцијата страна на Град Скопје, па било неопходно тој сам ако да се ангажира кaj градоначалникот за да успее да создаде простор за соработка.

На тоа Олег Антов исказа дека продукцијата има добивено помош од Градот Скопје, но со делумно спонзорство.

Се констатираше дека ко-подразделствите договори не се потпишани, како и договорот со Euromages, а време за изменување.

Јаргода Велковска истоа дека изготвувањето на Costs е направено навремено, во рамки на определениот рок.

Милчо Мачевски праша дека договорот Potoki потписаат договор со композиторот Preiser Zbignew, на што доби негативен одговор. Според него е аспурдно да не се потписи договор, да нека партитура, а пак од друга страна одредено да се исплати хорорар.

Повторно беше нагласено дека во пре-производствен план неопходно е да се запази број на деновите одредени за сите конкретни нешта, и дека почетокот на снимањето треба да биде на 10.06. а крајот на 23.06.2006.

Билјана Мирковска праша колку време ќе треба за планирање костимите, а во какво време ќе треба да ги планира. Доби одговор дека договорот е 1.06. и дека треба да се спречи солениониот временски период.

Милчо Мачевски изјави дека постои проблем со соработката со Fabio Chianchetti и дека не нашло за заменички гледишта во креативниот дел, односно не доби од него соодветен предлог.

На крајот побара одговор зашто се клаудне не е офертен сектор Шинека.
LAZAR PERKOV, 29 and sweet, nervously plays with his computer. His wife, GORDANA PERKOVKA, also 29, but made up, watches TV absentmindedly and smokes hungrily. It's hot.
Lazar is searching for his cell as it rings, sees it on the passenger seat, reaches for it. And then – the phone moves a few inches. He reaches for it again – and the phone moves again.

Lazar’s traffic light turns from yellow to red.
Sto i da ti napisam mi zvuci besmisleno, po ova so go procitav! Fascinantno! Imam cuvstvo deka sum go doprela neboto, no i precvustvo deka doprva ce mozam da trcam niz nego! Ti si navistina retkost! Te molam, so sakas prai, baraj carinjka, kazi mi so mozam jas da storam za da ti pomognam, da ti olesnam,... posle seto ova i zaradi se sto doprva ti e podarenova do go imas, da go napravis, da go zivees, ednostavno, nemas pravo da se menuvas! Covece, se edno kako ti zvuci, so seta pocit za tvojata skromnost i blagorodnost, no ti ne si ist kako site nas, nitu kako nas ovde nimir kakov niv tamu,... ma kakov Bergman, Polanski, ili Shakespeare... do toa derezde se "izvadeni od konduri" so ne znaat ni so kogo ni so so da te sporedat,... svetksata filmska kritika i intelektualna javnost ti priznava deka si edinstven, vonseriski, bez konkurencija,...ti napisale i se potpislase! Edvaj cekam da razberam kakvi ce bidat reakciiite do i po 30-ti.

Od dooto na dusata ti blagodaram i ti cestitam!

Od srce,

Dear Milcho,

I saw "shadows" a few days ago. I quite liked it, although supernatural stuff generally puts me off. But I liked the allegory, the past represented as ghosts, and the notion that you have to come to terms with the past in order to go on. Also some particular scenes were great: that of the accident, and the one with the fireflies. I also liked some dialogues, especially when Lazar meets the girl in the professors office.

I totally agree with you, of course, that it has nothing to do with greece. Nevertheless I think that there is no chance that seven is gonna screen a macedonian movie that "dares" to say "agean macedonians" in any context.

Did i ever tell you that i have visited macedonia? It was in 2002 when the ministry of health and welfare of greece decided to provide humanitarian aid to the mental hospital of Gevgelija. I spent three days there as the representative of the ministry, i met some really nice people (mental health professionals) and i really liked the place, especially the countryside. I plan to go again with my wife and kid sometime in the near future. I hope you good provide me with some tips about nice places i could visit.

Thanx again,

>> Date: Thu, 8 Nov 2007 08:11:56 +0000 (GMT)
>> Subject: TI BLAGODARAM
>>
>> So dolzna pocit - cestitki. B R A V O
>> Mozebi mnogu lieno go doziveav filmot bidekji NOSECKATA replika vo tvojot film bese POSLEDNATA replika na mojot soprug koj pocina na SAMO 33 godini.
>> Ti blagodaram sto i gi vrati emociite na edna zena...

> Drag Milco Mancevski,
> Tukusto sum dojden od proekcijata na "Senki", sakam samo da ti kazam deka si napravil nesto sto, ako covek go gleda so otvorena dusa, nesto tamu duboko silno i bolno kje dopre. Sekoj zbor i sekoj kadar so svoja tezina, iako mozebi ne sekojas merliv vo migot na gledanjeto. I po katarzata, i natamu bolka. Kako po "Pred dozdot"... Kako okolu vratov da me stega jamkata na Menka... Fala ti za filmot!
> Srdecen pozdrav i sekoje dobro,
> Goce
Milco, I'm a discreet fan of your cinema. I've discovered you in a tiny little film shop in Istanbul. You inspired me a lot with your movie "Shadows" back then. Currently I'm studying cinema in Paris. I hope I can meet you some day and discuss cinema. Good luck for your future projects. Best wishes.
“The film is an ambitious glimpse into the mind of a potential madman. Although certainly surreal, it keeps the audience invested in each of its character’s strange fates. *Shadows*’ style runs between hypnotic and frantic, which will surely set hearts racing. The film is unique in its ability to have a hand in multiple genres, horror, psychological thriller, and also somehow, a love story, too. It is refreshing to see an uncensored, stripped-bare European film that embraces its lying, cheating antihero with such brutal clarity that most American films wouldn’t dare.”

(Michelle Foody, Hollywood Today)

“Lazar’s journey is also the artist’s journey and a parable for the work of cinema. It becomes his job because he is the one who is there to see [...] Lovely and moving film [...] Watching Manchevski’s three features close together is extremely rewarding. Manchevski is building a body of work that will shine in retrospective programs [...] Subliminally familiar and easy to enter.”

(Nancy Keefe Rhodes, Stylus)

“Following his much feted debut, *Before the Rain* (1994), and his second feature, *Dust* (2001), writer-director Milcho Manchevski has once again provided us with the perfect festival film: a visual tale of dramatic substance, with historical depth and contemporary thrust, adroitly told with innovation and elan.”

(Diane Sippl, Cinema Without Borders)

“*Shadows* is a stunning and endlessly suspenseful erotic thriller. This must-see artistry by director Milcho Manchevski leaves a magnetic imprint on the moviegoer.

(Omar P.L. Moore, The Popcorn Reel Film Review)

“With *Shadows*, Manchevski seems to be back on track. Dark and moody, but odly satisfying, *Shadows* is a film for adults – meaning those with adult sensibilities.”

(J. B. Spins)

“*Shadows*’ two very attractive leads are so arresting together that it is truly unearthly.”

(Andrew Sarris, Observer)
“A hallucinating descent into the maelstrom of personal and historical responsibility.” (Ariel Dorfman)

“Shadows is guided by something big and unknown, something that scares to death and comforts like a mother's touch.”
(Branislav Sarkanjac, philosopher)

“An original and provocative take on a ghost tale.”
(Jeremy Thomas)

“Shadows is a wonderful and intense film. It moves you, as if your blood aches; you’d cry for days.”
(Marina Kostova, Vest Daily)

“Call it a ‘ghost story’, but know that it feels more like Bergman or Polanski, or even Shakespeare – Macbeth and Hamlet come to mind. [...] To live through these moments in this setting allows for an uncanny intimacy – a face-off with personal fear that leads, strangely enough, to a celebration of life. Cinematographer Fabio Cianchetti generates this foreboding trajectory visually through the use of double images, often reflections, broken spaces, the mirroring of each persona in another, and characters who either drop out of the frame mysteriously and just as suddenly reappear or, surprisingly, vanish before our very eyes. [...] As for the director, if we view Lazar as a visionary not unlike the filmmaker himself, pursuing the artist’s journey, that journey is also an allegory of cinema when its task is to lead us to see – at whatever price – and to dream.”
(Diane Sippl, Cinema Without Borders)

“An unusually smart entry in the supernatural cinema genre. Macedonia's Oscar submission evocatively works its theme of forces beyond the pale, with reflections and shadows taking a primary role in the narrative, along with an erotic subcurrent.”
(Joseph Woodard, Independent)

“Very intriguing and thought-provoking film”
(Don Marshal, Desert Morning News)

“A compelling story. It is the search of one man's identity, who finds help helping others.”
(Jose Alberto Hermosillo, Sinceramente)
Living Within “Shadows”  
By Milcho Manchevski (Special from the 2007 Toronto International Film Festival)

“Shadows” is a film about sex and death, and a few things in between, like personal responsibility. I believe in films (and art in general) that are about people and about ideas, not about places.

Some people make the mistake of reading a film from Macedonia as if it is a film about Macedonia. They can’t shake off their need to put things in neat little folders. That stereotyping disguised as defense against stereotyping borders on intellectual racism. A good work of art is about people and ideas and emotions, not about geopolitical concepts. I don’t see why Wong-Kar Wai couldn’t make films about New York or Bergman about Taipei or Tarantino about Lagos. Those films would not be that different from the films these filmmakers have already made.

I believe what really matters in film is the tone, not the story. It is the tone that sends the message and communicates with the viewer much more than the story. I heard somebody describe my previous film Dust this way: He said if watching a good Hollywood film is riding a rollercoaster, watching Dust is like sitting in a car with a test-crash dummy.

“Shadows” is probably more personal than my other films. Not only because both I and the main character, Lazar, like watermelons, or because my mother was a doctor, just like his... My films Before The Rain and Dust were personal films, but they were also intentionally open enough so that they could be interpreted as a comment on society; Shadows has some of that, but it’s really much more of a film about the inner life of one person. I feel personally connected to Lazar’s hypnotic nightmarish journey. This film actually feels more personal, even though when I started making it, I didn’t plan it that way.

A way to redemption is through assuming responsibility for our actions and even for the actions of people close to us, and exercising this through love. Doing that is usually scary. And that’s why this film is scary. It’s an old-fashioned slow-simmering kind of a scary film. It has no sound bites. Fear is good. Facing our fears, and dealing with them through love, is a way to redemption.

I am talking about love, not necessarily about family. Family is overrated. Love is not. Love for your spouse, for your child, for your parents - that’s beautiful and important. But family as an institution has often been abused and used as a way to oppress the individual. That’s one of the themes of Shadows - how parents sometimes hide behind their professed love for the child, while being too suffocating, overwhelming, selfish. The power of the Macedonian mother in this matriarchal society is huge. The Jewish mother and the Italian mammoni have nothing on the Macedonian martyr-mother (“You are driving me to my grave! You are eating my liver!”). Lazar’s mother is what Lady Macbeth would have been like, had she lived to have an adult child.

Lazar seems to struggle between four tough women: his mother, his wife, Menka and his neighbour. I am just trying to speak the truth in face of the propaganda about the “power” of masculinity.

I have been asked about the sexual tension in the film. Sex - good. Hypocrisy - bad. Sex contains in itself both life and death. Because of the way society treats it - turning it into a taboo, being hypocritical, having a low threshold of tolerance for things sexual - sex ends up holding strong attraction for a lot of artists.

We have been raised to believe that there is some balance, some justice in the world. I am not sure this is necessarily true, but I am willing to reinforce that illusion for now. It’s good when you pay your debts, even if you only have inherited them. That is a positive way of cleansing. Of course, in Shadows, all this is told in a very, very simple, accessible way, which I believe is the way interesting art should be. Sometimes I like esoteric art as well, but I am very drawn to simple, deceptively simple, art that actually can be quite deep, things like Kurt Vonnegut, for example.

I subscribe to what Bergman has said about violence, and I am paraphrasing here from memory: He says film is a perfectly legitimate way of ritualizing violence. Ritualizing, not glorifying. Society needs to deal with this extreme - yet integral - aspect of its existence. Ritualizing has been a central way of dealing with it since time immemorial. Film lends itself to ritualizing it for many reasons, its memoreal. Film lends itself to ritualizing it for many reasons, its legitimacy is its beauty. Bergman has some other films about violence.

What about, say, a loyal employee being laid off after twenty-five years. For some people that’s perfectly ordinary, acceptable. It is legitimate to ask, is that violence? And what does the fact that we don’t discuss it as violence tell us about ourselves?

In a war, when someone gets shot, they don’t just fall back. Probably it hurts, maybe they stagger, then they look at themselves and they are shocked. Do they at some point start laughing, and say, “Is this really happening to me?” Or do they say, “Damn! I wish I’d had more sex when I could have?” Or do they whine? What happens to this person during those 20 seconds or 20 minutes while he’s dying? So, fortunately, in a film it is all make-believe, so you can explore a little bit of that when making a film. But if you treat violence as something without real consequences, something fun and easy, then you are doing society a disservice.

Milcho Manchevski was born in 1959 in Skopje, Macedonia, where he studied Art History and Archaeology before graduating from the Department of Cinema and Photography at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, USA, in 1982. He has directed numerous experimental and short narrative films and music videos. The most notable are the experimental 1.73, for which he won an award at Belgrade Alternative, and the video for the group “Arrested Development” for the song “Tennessee”, which won many awards, including Best MTV Video. His first feature film, Before The Rain (1994), won more than thirty international awards, including Golden Lion in Venice and Independent Spirit, and was nominated for Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

He has authored a number of short stories, a conceptual book of fiction (The Ghost of My Mother), a book of photographs (Street), and numerous performance pieces by himself and with the group 1AM, which he co-founded. Manchevski teaches film directing and heads the Directing Department at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts’ Graduate Department.
Boo! In Shadows, a Man Finds Life in the Dead

Apparently, purgatory can be kind of, um, stimulating! Plus, Medicine for Melancholy, a feature film about rent control, and Depression movies that aren't depressing!

SHADOWS (Senoj)
RUNNING TIME: 130 minutes
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Milcho Manchevski
STARRING: Momke Nacev, Sabina Ajdulo-Tanija, Venna Staneva

M
ilcho Manchevski's Shadows (Senoj), from his own screenplay (in Macedonian with English subtitles), addresses the cinema's eternal obsession with death and ghosts with a more nuanced treatment than was applied to David Cronenberg's much underrated and lightly comic Ghost Town earlier this year. Still, the underlying narrative conceit is strikingly similar in both films in that the protagonist is eventually urged by the ghosts he has encountered to perform an act of closure that will enable them to die in peace.

In the film's production notes, Mr. Manchevski's Director's Statement elaborates on the subject of his very morbid work: "In the Byblos Abroad and Death, and a few important things in between. It is an old fashioned slow-burn of a film. Shadows is in many ways my personal film to date, a story of what happens if Lady Macbeth had lived today and survived to have a grown-up son. This man, Lazar Perkos (Borce Nacev), would try to come to terms with her overbearing presence and her transgressions of the past.

"It is scary, but it offers no cheap thrills, and no easy solutions. It is about a man trying to have a dialogue with the dead, and becoming more alive for that experience." The story begins with Lazar living in the idyllic existence that goes with a seemingly successful career as an architect with a beautiful wife and handsome little boy, and an impressive name that he calls "Lucky" by all his friends and acquaintances. Nonetheless, he remains perpetually insecure as the son of an iron-willed mother, Dr. Vera Perkos (Nikol Ajdulo-Tanija), a world-famous physician who has risen from obscurity to renown by removing all obstacles to her ascent, whether from her competitors or her own shadow.

One day while driving home from the hospital, Lazar is involved in a near-fatal car accident. He is removed from the massive wreckage miraculously alive. From that point onward, Lazar's life begins to change. He begins to encounter ghosts who have known him all his life. These include his dead mother, who haunts his apartment without being asked or paid. When he confronts her for an explanation, she responds in ancient Macedonian dialect last spoken in Lazar's childhood village. When he visits a noted doctor and linguist to seek a translation for the words the old crone has spoken and Lazar has written down, he is told by the "secretary" that the linguist has gone abroad to a conference, and that she has become, in turn, the linguist's mistress and then his wife. Yet she immediately begins flirting with Lazar in a knowing manner, as if she has known him before, and then all his secrets. The young woman tells Lazar that her name is Menko (Venna Staneva), but a day later, when Lazar visits the office and finds the linguist, he does not see Menko. Lazar is even more confused when the linguist tells him that his own wife in the picture on his desk died three years ago, and he has never heard of anyone called Menko.

Still, Menko keeps popping up everywhere Lazar goes, and they finally get around to making passionate love. By this time, we have been made aware that Lazar's wife is having an affair with another man, and Lazar's life is mysteriously blest by Lazar. Gradually, Lazar comes to realize that his wife is just a figment of his imagination. However, he continues to keep meeting in both public and private places with various ghosts that appear to him in the halls of the dead. Indeed, there is in Macedonia a Feast of the Dead holiday, at which villagers and townspeople and urban dwellers alike gather to honor the dead by feeding food and drink at the grave sites so that the dead won't go hungry and thirsty when they return to earth.

Finally, Lazar is placed in a position where he must choose between life and death. He chooses life, though his own life has become grotesque and richer by his experiences with the dead.

Milcho Manchevski was born in 1969 in Skopje, Macedonia, but he has lived, studied, and worked in the United States since leaving his homeland shortly after he graduated from high school. He now teaches film and directing and heads the film directing department at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts graduate school. Still, he has returned to Macedonia to shoot his films, in which Shadows in 2007, and his two previous features, Dust (2005) and Before the Rain (1994). His two very attractive leads, Mr. Nacev and Ms. Staneva, were picked out of a pool of aspiring actors and their neighborhoods. Actually, they are so arresting together that it is truly unearthly.

MINORITY REPORT

MEDICINE FOR MELANCHOLY (Blindness)
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Barry Jenkins
STARRING: Terrence Howard, Woody Harrelson

B
arry Jenkins's Medicine for Melancholy is an enigmatic, brooding, and visually arresting film, and his feature film debut that is both a social commentary on the cinematic medium and a personal exploration of love, loss, and redemption. It features two main characters, a black man (Terrence Howard) and a white man (Woody Harrelson), who have just met in a small town in Mississippi and are trying to make sense of their lives.

The film begins with the two men meeting in a local diner, where they strike up a conversation about their pasts and present situations. Howard's character, Monty, has just been released from a long-term mental institution, while Harrelson's character, Larry, is a struggling writer who has recently moved to the town. As they talk, it becomes clear that each man is struggling with his own personal demons, and that their meeting may be more significant than either of them realize.

The film's central theme is the power of connection and the redemptive nature of human relationships. As Monty and Larry get to know each other, they begin to see the world through each other's eyes, and to experience things they never have before. The film is a beautiful exploration of love and loss, and a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there is always hope for a better future.

Minority Report is a film that is both aesthetically and thematically powerful, and it is a testament to the importance of diverse voices in the world of cinema. Barry Jenkins has created a film that is both thought-provoking and emotionally resonant, and one that is sure to leave a lasting impression on audiences for years to come.
Manchevski’s Shadows

When Milcho Manchevski started filming his breakthrough debut Before the Rain, Macedonia was not yet a fully recognized country. While the modern Macedonia is a relatively young country, the region carries the baggage of centuries of dramatic and often bloody history. After all, Alexander the Great began his conquest of the known world as king of ancient Macedon. The past figuratively haunts the work of Milcho Manchevski and literally haunts the protagonist of his latest film, Shadows (trailer here), opening tomorrow in New York.

Dr. Lazar Perkov is a good father, but as a man, he is a bit wishy-washy, avoiding conflict with his over-bearing mother, Dr. Vera Perkova, at all costs. He is so programmed to respond to her, he causes a terrible traffic accident while reaching for his cell-phone to take her call. Nearly embraced by the light, he comes back to Earth—remember the name was Lazar.

Though fully recovered physically, something is still wrong. Returning home, Perkov finds a withered elderly woman in his apartment, speaking in a mysterious tongue. Recording her cryptic speech, Perkov looks for help from the local linguistic professor, but finds Menka, his research assistant wife in his place. According to her, Perkov’s uninvited caller has been demanding in an ancient Aegean dialect: “Return what’s not yours.” Though she is initially contemptuous of Perkov, sparks quickly fly between Perkov and Menka. While at first, he precipitously retreats from her sexual advances, the seeds of obsession are firmly planted. The nature of reality becomes increasingly problematic for Perkov, as visions of the alluring Menka, the old woman, and a hobbled old man with an infant increasingly intrude into his daily life.

Shadows is a ghost story in a very real sense, but not a horror story as such. However, Manchevski maintains an eerily effective mood throughout the film, in contrast to the rather inconsistent tone of Dust, Manchevski’s sophomore slump following the masterful Rain. Ranking solidly between Manchevski’s first two films, Shadows might in fact be his strongest work from a purely visual standpoint, thanks in large measure also to Fabio Cianchetti’s brooding cinematography. If not as visceral as Rain, Manchevski’s screenplay is compelling and economical. It is also his most sexually explicit work, by far. As in his previous films, events from the past continue to exert a palpable influence on those in the present. In Manchevski’s Skopje, antiquity is only concealed by a thin veneer of modernity. It can be heady stuff, but Manchevski pulls the audience through at a good clip, aided by a strong cast, particularly Vesna Stanojevska, whose performance brings surprising depth to the enigmatic Menka.

With Shadows, Manchevski seems to be back on track. Dark and moody, but oddly satisfying, Shadows is a film for adults—meaning those with adult sensibilities. It opens tomorrow in New York at the Cinema Village.
Hollywood Today
Newsmagazine, with Attitude

Original Horror Twist Lurks in the Heart of “Shadows”

Wednesday, March 26th, 2008

Horror film import Shadows (Senki) defines and defies horror genre

By Michelle Foody

HOLLYWOOD, CA (Hollywood Today) 3/26/08 — Sure, Hollywood loves a good horror film import. But not as much as it loves the remake, with a pretty American girl as the lead. The trend was established with films like Japan’s “Ringu,” which became a Naomi Watts vehicle in 2002 and hasn’t slowed since.

The graphic flick “Shutter” flashed onto the silver screen with a $10.5 million opening this past weekend, by way of its Thai origins. So watch out for the thriller “Shadows,” aka “Senki.” It was the Macedonian submission for the Foreign Language Oscar, and it may well await a similar fate. It’s a genre shattering movie, one part scary ghost story, one part mind-bending psychological drama. So make a point to see it before dark, anti-hero star Borce Nacev gets replaced by a blond babysitter.

The film shattered all box office records in its home market, and then went on to kill at the Toronto Film Festival. Hollywood Today chatted with the writer & director of “Shadows”, Milcho Manchevski, via phone from his desk at the Tisch Film School at N.Y.U. where he is currently teaching.

Although the director is no stranger to the Hollywood system, having directed episodes of “The Wire”, and even an award-winning rap video, this movie is refreshingly, and often times shockingly, not Americanized. The film was shot in Macedonia and on a limited budget, but that only emboldened its director even more.

“Macedonia is a small country, it’s the size of Vermont and there is not much money to spend on the arts and film,” explained Manchevski. “So, it’s more rewarding because the artist has more freedom, and it’s not about making money. It’s about creating with freedom, without studios giving you rewrites.”

The story certainly doesn’t feel sanitized by the Hollywood PC machine. There’s plenty of sex, a heaping of death, and a main character that we aren’t sure we like, who may or may not be going crazy. Which is why it’s so intriguing. But don’t come looking for cheap thrills or a formulaic horror film.

“It’s a psychological ghost story, it’s not one genre or the other. The idea was to do both,” insists Manchevski. “When you start playing with archetypes, then it gets interesting. Its like a traditional scary film but then refracted through a psychological drama.”

Also mixed into this Mediterranean stew of a thriller is Macedonia’s own dark history—a nation only since the crumbling of Yugoslavia in 1991, the country has suffered through oppression from the Greek government, genocide and ethnic cleansing in its not-so-distant past. But Shadows is not a history lesson, however, nor is it looking to preach.

“That part of the recent history is a terrible tragedy, but it was by no means the central idea behind the film,” Manchevski told Hollywood Today. “I try to make films about people, their loves, fears, and conflicts. I like the European way of making films, making something beautiful.”

Let’s hope that inevitable Hollywood remake keeps a piece of Manchevski’s unique vision in mind.

“There is talk of doing a U.S. remake of ‘Shadows’, which is a funny thought,” laughs the writer/director. “Maybe I’d like to, but it all depends on who you are doing it with. I’m all for collaborating with creative people… It’s the [studio] suits, them, not so much”.

Having already made the move to New York City, perhaps it won’t be long until Manchevski gets swept up by the Hollywood movie-making machine. But for now, those NYU kids are pretty darn lucky.
Full Review
01/06/09

Harvey S. Karten
Compuserve

SHADOWS (Senki)

Mitropoulos Films
Reviewed for Compuserve by Harvey Karten
Grade: B
Directed by: Milcho Manchevsky
Written by: Milcho Manchevsky
Cast: Borce Nacev, Vesna Stanojevska, Sabina Ajrula-Tozija, Salaetin Bilal
Screened at: Review 2, NYC, 1/6/09
Opens: January 30, 2009

"Shadows," or 'Senki' in its original, Macedonian language, could be subtitled "Love and Death," though there's a lot more Ingmar Bergman in the tale than Woody Allen. A lengthy, serious piece with comedic undertones, "Shadows" can be looked upon as an entertainment done in epic style; an absorbing history lesson, a ghost story, a touristic product placement, and one that does not stint on soft-core porn. Borce Nacev, who represents a cross between a young Al Pacino and the current Adrien Brody, is in virtually every scene, graced with the role of Lazar Petrov, aka "Lucky," a handsome, youthful doctor who becomes privy to a number of strange occurrences as though he were wandering about in a dream. Death is a frequent visitor in his days of stunning surprises, but so is love in its myriad forms: love of his wife, his son, and ultimately of his vital presence on earth as well.

Milcho Manchevsky, a Macedonian who has taught courses at New York University, is known to fans of serious films especially for his multi-award-winning 1994 picture "Before the Rain," a look at intertwining lives in the strife-torn Republic of Macedonia—featuring a monk, a photojournalist, and a London woman at a key point in her life. The current film is laden with symbolism, one that not only will keep the audience guessing about its cryptic, central motif but may encourage us to think that such a tale could take place not only in the small, landlocked Macedonian nation of just two million citizens but in no small number of global areas that have been victimized by ethnic cleansing. (History buffs will be aware that Macedonia was liberated from the Turkish Empire after a war that found Greece, one of the victorious powers, proceeding to expel hundreds of thousands of ethnic Macedonians from their land, seizing their estates, and plundering towns while filling the newly-emptied areas with ethnic Greeks not only from Greece but from various nations to the east.)

"Shadows" could be taken as a comment on the way nations throughout history have devastated conquered lands, but writer-director Manchevsky must have been aware that limiting his story to politics would cut into his audience while reducing the story to mere chronicle. What emerges is a look at injustice, taking aim specifically at people who throughout human history have violated the Eighth Commandment: "You shall not steal."

When Dr. Lazar Perkov (Borce Nacev) suffers a near-fatal car accident after an argument with his wife Gordana (Filaretan Atanasova), he envisions the mythical tunnel that many say they have seen at death's door. One year later, his wife having remained at a vacation spot with his son Ignjat (Dime Iliev), Lazar returns to his apartment in the capital city of Skopje to find an old woman (Ratka Radmanovic) sitting on his couch, speaking to him in an ancient dialect he cannot understand. Visiting a professor for a translation, he instead meets a young, attractive woman, Menka (Vesna Stanojevska), claiming to be the teacher's assistant, who explains that the old woman was warning, "Return what's not yours. Have respect." The message appears cryptic to Lazar since he is aware of stealing nothing. We in the audience are meant to see that innocence of wrongs is no excuse; the duty of an ethical person is to locate injustice in the form of theft and to do his best to set things right—a notion, by the ways, introduced by the ancient Greek tragedians who believed that all sorts of bad things happen when hubristic deeds go unpunished. Among the strangers, with accent on the "strange," that Lazar encounters is a man (Salaetin Bilal) who can use a podiatrist in the worst way. At this point in the over-two-hours long film, some theatergoers will get an inkling of what's going on, and what the young physicians must do to set the heavens right.

Though "Shadows" is overlong, Manchevski fills the screen with enough love (in the form of heavy-breathing, full-nudity scenes without the sheets that somehow cover bedded American couples from the waist down) and violence (in the form of a hanging, a drowning, a fall down an elevator shaft, a stunningly photographed car crash) to satisfy even the groundlings in the audience who have wandered into a screening thinking that they were going to see "Hostel 2." Nicely acted by an ensemble of people whom Lazar—like Lazarus rising from the dead—meets on his quasi-religious journey, "Shadows" might just entice some Americans, particularly those who got out of the stock market in October 2007, to put Macedonia in their vacation plans, all thanks to Fabio Cianchetti's glorious photography of quaint villages and lakeside hot spots.

"Shadows" is Macedonia's entry into the Oscar competition for Best Foreign Film of 2008.

Not Rated. 130 minutes. © 2008 by Harvey Karten Member: NY Film Critics Online
Movie Review
Shadows (Senki)
2007
Director: Milcho Manchevski
Cast: Borce Nacev, Vesna Stanojevska, Sabina Ajrula-Tozija

In the 2003 introduction to the published screenplay of his first feature-length fiction film, Before the Rain (1994)—which appeared actually a few months after that of the screenplay for his second feature, Dust (2001)—Milcho Manchevski expressed his frustration with widespread assumptions about that film as literal historical account. “In almost all interviews I gave for newspapers and television in dozens of countries over the final years of the last century,” he writes, “I kept repeating that Before the Rain is not a documentary about former Yugoslavia, nor about Macedonia, nor is it a documentary at all. I would say: ‘You can see this from the aesthetic approach: it’s shot like a fairytale; look at the camera work, or the editing, or the music. I am using actors. It’s scripted, for Heaven’s sake.’ Who got it—got it.”

Now we have Manchevski’s third feature and again there should be no doubt about aesthetic approach. Shadows premiered in early September at the Toronto International Film Festival and was quickly tapped as Macedonia’s official 2008 Oscar entry for Best Foreign Language Film. Already scheduled for theatrical release in ten European nations, this lovely and moving film is just now making the rounds of US distributors. The other two features, with their extended historical elements and fractured, multiple and overlapping narratives—what Manchevski calls “Cubist storytelling”—are widely rentable in the US. Watching the three features close together is extremely rewarding. Manchevski is building a body of work that will shine in retrospective programs—for shared, reverberating landscapes, elaborated images, and a cadre of supporting actors whose reappearance in successive film makes his work subliminally familiar and easy to enter—and now, for the clarity of his turn into newly personal territory and straightforward narrative.

"Return what’s not yours. Have respect," says the old woman Kalina (Ratka Radmanovic), murmuring urgently in an ancient dialect that no one speaks anymore. She appears matter-of-factly, in her head scarf and heavy skirts and shawl, a small cross tattooed between her eyebrows in the old way, waiting in the dark on the living room couch of a young doctor. Lazar Perkov (Borce Nacev) has just returned to his apartment in the Macedonian capital of Skopje from his parents’ villa in the lakes district after a year convalescing from a near-fatal car crash. Trying to return to work at the hospital, he misses his already straying wife and little son, who have remained at the lake. He has nightmares, forgets things, fears his recovery isn’t stable, speaks in odd images that cause the unnerved family chauffeur to roll his eyes, and has now had his first visit from the unsettled souls of the dead.

That Lazar doesn’t know what’s stolen or how to put it back doesn’t get him a pass. Preoccupied with his young man’s struggle to emerge from the shadow of his mother’s overbearing ambition, herself a physician (the formidable Sabina Ajrula-Tozija)—impossible not to recall with the film’s final shot of blinding light—Lazar encounters one woman after another who teaches him that ignorance and personal innocence are no excuses, and who invite his wary, steadily growing search. In a land overrun for centuries by intruders, these women are preoccupied with theft and its attendant glaring debt. Manchevski’s images are earthy, specific, free of arid abstraction. For example, one day Lazar searches out the crowded ramshackle home of his mother’s chauffeur, Blagojce (Petar Mircevski), wanting a ride to the country. With his trained scientist’s eye he diagnoses a burn on the driver’s wife’s arm. She patiently explains the birthmark resulted from her mother eating stolen grapes while pregnant.

Manchevski tinkered for several years with the nuances of his film’s title, beginning with the Ghosts and detouring to Bones before settling on the immensely resonant possibilities of Shadows. The word’s added visual dimension encourages our attention toward DP Fabio Cianchetti’s use of reflections, doubling, broken space, and Menka’s propensity for suddenly dropping out of the frame mid-stride and then abruptly reappearing. Cities in Manchevski’s films have always been claustrophobic and disorienting. There’s a similar handling in that maze-like Paris apartment where Bertolucci’s The Dreamers occurs, a film Cianchetti also shot.

Kalina is the first “shadow” who appears to Lazar, identified by her dialect as one of the displaced Aegean Macedonians. A linguist whom the young man seeks out to translate her message also remarks on Lazar’s own name’s Biblical reference to resurrection. Seeking that professor, Lazar meets the lovely Menka, a suicide by hanging (luminously played by harpist Vesna Stanojevska). On a hospital gowney, then waiting for the elevator, Lazar meets the cross, craggy-faced Gerasim, a refugee whose brother nailed a spike into his heel at burial in hopes of magically halting his wandering in the afterlife (Saleatin Bilal, the Turkish Major in Dust). There is an unbaptized infant whom Gerasim awkwardly but tenderly carries instead of abandoning, and Kalina’s sometime companion wolf.

These walking dead may invite Lazar’s curiosity and compassion—and in Menka’s case his intimacy—but they cannot explain their repeated violent deaths or their connection with the cardboard box of old bones that his mother scavenged for her own 1973 anatomy class from beyond the consecrated ground of the cemetery—“not a real grave,” she snorts indignantly—in her home village of Gluvovo. Or what he must do. In the pivotal showdown, sluging each other, sprawling on her office floor, Lazar forcibly takes the bones from his mother in this fight over laying the past to rest or making it “useful” to one’s own ambitions.

That fight over a box of bones has room to contain a parable about the past these shadows more broadly represent, though one of the film’s more courageous qualities is Manchevski’s insistence that Lazar’s own journey carry the film emotionally and dramatically rather than resort to expose. Kalina’s dialect reveals she is from Aegean Macedonia—the eastern territory annexed by Greece in 1913—but the film says little else about her people except that their fate was “exodus.” Manchevski says audiences outside that culture don’t need the specific history to connect with these characters’ pain and longing for relief as abandoned and forsaken peoples.

For those inside that culture, even that slightest reference to Kalina’s extinct dialect evokes the following specifics. In 1912 Greece allied with Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro, declaring war on Turkey. While this ended the Ottoman Empire’s occupation of Macedonia, it led directly to Macedonia’s partition among its neighbors. In Aegean Macedonia, Greece embarked upon a decades-long campaign to change the population’s ethnic composition, forcibly expelling hundreds of thousands, confiscating lands, forbidding languages, renaming places, plundering and destroying villages, and re-colonizing the area with ethnic Greeks from nations to the east. During the Greek Civil War of the late 1940s this campaign accelerated anew. 60,000 were expelled in 1948. Some internments from the mid-40s continued until 1974—the year of Lazar’s mother’s anatomy class—and as late as 1985 Greek laws governing that area excluded Aegean Macedonian descendants from reclaiming confiscated land. In 1991, the modern Republic of Macedonia emerged from the upheaval of Yugoslavia’s disintegration by referendum.

Lazar’s journey is also the artist’s journey and a parable for the work of cinema. It becomes his job because he is the one who is there to see. Let us hope this film is available on US screens, and quickly.
Gusto tkanje onostranoga

Trece film Milca Mančevskog, makedonskog redatelja nastanjenog u SAD-u koji je svjetski glas stekao zagonetno uzbudljivim prvenstvom "Prije kise" (1994), "Sjene" prate dio života mladog skopskog liječnika kojemu se počne činiti da susreće preneoblike ljude i dozivljava preneoblike događaje. Zbiva li se to uistinu ili je riječ o posljedicama ozljede glave zadobivenog u prometnoj nesreći u kojoj je zamalo poginuo?

Gusto iskustva drama s elementima onostranoga ona je vrst filmske strave kojoj nije cilj gledatelja sokirati nego ga potpuno i u smislu "neprijetne postupnosti", a ne nepostojnosti, gudio podmučkio zastrašiti. No, namjera tog zastrašivanja nije izazivanje jednokratnog uzbudenja te vrste nego je ono zamijenjeno kao oblik komunikacije u kojem sugovornika treba izbaciti iz kolotečine kako bi, ljesti sigurnosti poznatih mu oslobodio, mogao iznovu promisli o ponudenim sadržajima, temama i pitanjima. U ovom slučaju riječ je o navijali o donciki metaforičkim razmišljanjima o osobnoj odgovornosti i teološko-psihološko moralnom nuslijedu pri čemu je ponuđeno nekoliko dobro proučenih portreta, profila i modela ponašanja. Režiran eleganatom sigurnošću, ilirigranski razrađen u slikovnim, sadržajnim i značajnim pojedinostima, film s spoljno hvata realistične okuse, boje i mišlje vrte gradskog života te ih bezobrihatno natapa u neku vrst orijentalne misticnosti pripadajućem mjestu, vedutama i krajevima razdje, a u sve to uspjeva skladno uklopoti nekoliko prizora jakog erotskog naboja.

No, unatoč visokoj izvedbenoj razini u svakom odsječku, "Sjene" su nakon nekog vremena počele činiti pomalo repetitivnim, odnosno djelom koje središnji motiv nastavlja obrađivati i nakon što je iscrpio "dovoljan" niz nacija da to učini. (J. H.)

影子 Senki (2007)


I ovdje na rubovima imamo balkanski folklor i balkansku povijest (pogrom egipatskih Makedonaca). No film s Borčom Nacevom i Vesnom Stanjevska, promovira i ono što nam Zapad negira: narušenost, našu "normalnost" - prema to tome moci zastrašiti pomalo čudno u kontekstu jednog osnovanog i onišćivog triler. 

Dragan JURAK
"Shadows" is a stunning and endlessly suspenseful erotic thriller. This must-see artistry by director Milcho Manchevski leaves a magnetic imprint on the moviegoer. The film chronicles the travails of Dr. Lazar Perkov, a man who escapes death in a fantastic car accident in the heat of the night. He is thankful for life, and his colleagues dub Lazar, a man who has a beautiful wife and child, "Lucky". But Lazar (played by Borce Nacev, pronounced Borche) appears anything but, plagued by visitations from people and things he either imagines, actually sees, fears or are objectively real. An elderly woman turns up in his apartment. She says something he cannot understand. Lazar enlists help from Menka, a translator (Vesna Stanojevska). He's convinced that he's onto something. Or is he?

Mr. Manchevski crafts "Shadows" as a series of episodes of mystery and discovery which are nothing short of compelling. Each avenue leads to something astounding or intriguing, and Hitchcockian themes of identity and duplicity are a powerful chorus line throughout this absorbing drama. Mr. Nacev fuels his character with purpose and persuasion, combining innocence and curiosity with impulsiveness and edgy paranoia. The performance is all the more impressive for the fact that Mr. Nacev has never acted before on the big screen. "Shadows", a 2007 film which finally has its U.S. theatrical release premiere with an exclusive opening today at the Cinema Village in New York City, is set and shot in the small southeastern European country of Macedonia and cinematographer Fabio Cianchetti photographs the film in mainly bluish-greenish hues, further illuminating the depth of the landscape as well as removal from it. On many occasions Mr. Cianchetti's camera frames scenes in a naturalistic atmosphere, making some of what the audience witnesses within the scenes all the more vivid.

"Shadows" is also written by Mr. Manchevski (director of the multiple award-winning debut film "Before The Rain" and "Dust") and he never plays games with his audience. He takes his viewers as seriously as he does the genre of his film, which veers toward the substantially less graphic edges of horror, accompanied by discreet glimpses of the odd and ribald. Miss Stanojevska illuminates the big screen as Vesna, a complex but alluring figure who strongly resembles the legendary Isabella Rossellini throughout the film. Miss Stanojevska projects a convergence of sweetness, smarts and sex appeal, making her character incredibly resonant. While watching Mr. Manchevski's film it's hard to believe that like her male counterpart in "Shadows" Miss Stanojevska never had any prior big screen acting experience. By day, she is a harpist for Macedonia's National Opera and in "Shadows" Miss Stanojevska plays all the right notes.

The director never resorts to the kind of visual cliches typically found in the horror-thriller realm. He directs "Shadows" at a smooth and pedestrian pace and in his hands the film is always an alive and interesting entertainment. You are riveted both in thought and in awe of its pace and rich visuals. Mr. Manchevski directs this film meticulously, with an strong eye for creating images conveyed in moments both languid and kinetic. "Shadows" takes a thoughtful look at issues of life, love and death in a refreshingly honest and adult way. There are several sexually explicit moments which while erotic and beautiful, are neither gratuitous nor without symbolic or substantive meaning. These scenes are directed with a tenderness, passion and affection that clearly shows. There's never a minute where we feel that we are surrendering time to just watch a sex scene as a departure from the narrative. There's never a feeling that we are intruders in a discussion of sensitive subjects -- the film's devices and scenarios, spiritual, religious or otherwise -- are all devised in the most authentic way.

Though the third act contains a few visual effects that it can live without, "Shadows" is a wonderfully literate and eloquent human drama. It's definitely a film that Mr. Manchevski, who heads the Directing Department at New York University's Tisch School Of The Arts Graduate Department, should instruct his students to take a five-minute trip down the block to see -- on a day that he's not teaching class, of course.
Sex, Death, Eroticism And Psychological Horror Amidst "Shadows" From Director Milcho Manchevski

By Omar P.L. Moore/The Popcorn Reel

January 27, 2009

Initially, "Shadows" filmmaker Milcho Manchevski said he wanted to make "just a scary film -- very visceral -- a scary film that was not political or complex."

The Macedonian director, born in the town of Skopje in 1959, said he loved scary movies but the kind that were innovative. It became clear to him however, that "Shadows", written and directed by Mr. Manchevski and shot in the small southeastern European country of Macedonia, wasn't going to be your average scary movie. "It became sort of a dialogue with the dead. And that's what made it personal for myself. And that, in itself at the same time it's quite universal, because it's one of the main concerns of most cultures, most civilizations. It's very archetypal."

Mr. Manchevski, who for 20 years has been living in New York City where he heads the Film Directing Department at New York University's Tisch School Of The Arts' Graduate Department, spoke via telephone yesterday to The Popcorn Reel about "Shadows", which was released in numerous countries back in 2007 and will finally make its North American theatrical release debut on Friday, opening exclusively at the Cinema Village in New York City. Mr. Manchevski put Macedonia on Oscar's cinematic map when in 1995 his debut feature "Before The Rain" (1994) became the first film from the country to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. "Before The Rain", a highly-acclaimed film, won top awards at the Venice Film Festival, the David di Donatello Awards (aka the "Italian Oscars") and the Independent Spirit Awards, among more than 30 awards.

The idea for "Shadows" literally came from a moment of great levity one night in New York City. "I was sitting with a friend of mine who was a diplomat in New York at the time. We're sitting at the Brooklyn Promenade and looking at the Manhattan skyline and we're laughing, 'would you imagine ghosts in this park?' And that's where it started."

While the director did say that "Shadows", an erotic drama about death, sex and psychological states of perception, was "a scary film seen through the eyes of European glasses", the film is also an absorbing and thought-provoking look at the willingness or lack thereof, to confront death and deal with concerns surrounding the departed, something that Mr. Manchevski said was reflective of contemporary society. "Shadows" stars first-time feature film actors Borce Nacev (pronounced "Bor-che") and Vesna Stanojevska, who is also a harpist in the Macedonia National Opera. Miss Stanojevska, said the director, only had the experience of appearing in one television commercial prior to being on the big screen in "Shadows". Miss Stanojevska plays Menska, a doctor's assistant who translates messages. In "Shadows" the actress bears a strong resemblance to Isabella Rossellini, a likeness that grows as the film moves along. Mr. Nacev, whom in a "making of" documentary for the film confessed that he was bothered by the fact that "Shadows" was shot out of sequence, revealed that he had to watch previous filmed scenes to get a sense of the emotion he had to bring to the present scene he was filming. Mr. Nacev plays the film's protagonist Lazar, a medical doctor at a hospital who survives a nasty car crash.

"Borce emerged as just really the best for this part," Mr. Manchevski said, citing that he had scoured the entire country of Macedonia, which is the size of the American state of Vermont, to find his actor and actress. He added that acting neophytes were "both a blessing and a drawback." There was also a naturalness to Miss Stanojevska that worked well for "Shadows".

Not surprisingly, Milcho Manchevski is a meticulous planner. He storyboarded "Shadows" with between 1,000 and 2,000 of his own drawings.

"I believe in doing my homework. I was a straight-A student."

Obviously the director was careful about the objectives and impact of "Shadows". "The key was not to make a film that's going to jolt you, but a film that's gonna creep with you and stay with you for a long time, like something you see from the corner of your eye," said Mr. Manchevski, who prior to the discussion was told that his phone was playing tricks on him. "I'll have to see about getting that fixed," he said. Not short of a sense of humor, he gave a wise piece of advice about not buying a particular brand of cellular phone. The director, who also directed the MTV Best Video of 1992 "Tennessee", by hip-hop artists Arrested Development, also likened "Shadows" to a nightmare you wake up from that lingers and won't leave you alone. "And to achieve that there's a lot of repetition. In a way, the idea was to make it feel a little bit like Ravel's Bolero. You take a theme or a few themes and then you keep repeating them and they grow bigger and bigger."

Mr. Manchevski shared an observation that reflected the type of effect he was aiming for in his latest film. "Bergman's films were scary films for me. Even though you wouldn't find them on the horror shelf." Films like "Autumn Sonata", "Persona" and "Cries And Whispers" were cited by the director and his interviewer for their scare factor. "So creating that visceral dialogue, that visceral reaction, in a way is sort of the basic but also the most difficult task an artist can have. If you're doing a comedy people are laughing or they're not. If you're making a scary film people are scared or not. There's no middle ground."
Today's horror films and psychological thrillers are a long way from the imagination and power of past classics like "Psycho", "Rosemary's Baby" or "The Exorcist", with what is termed "torture porn". That type of filmmaking is "not lazy but it's easy", according to Mr. Manchevski. "It depends on what kind of film you're making. Even in doing a gore film... there are various degrees of how well you do that. I remember seeing the first "Halloween" in film school (at the Department of Cinema and Photography at Southern Illinois University, where he graduated in 1982.) And I was working at the theater [in Illinois] at the time. I saw the film and everybody was screaming. Virtually hanging from the ceiling. So I was like, 'I better see the next screening to see why it's so effective and why is it that it worked so well.' And then I realized that... the craft was definitely there. There was something very direct about it. If you recall, the first "Halloween" (directed by John Carpenter) had almost no blood at all in it."

Though he has made just three feature films (including "Dust" in 2001), with an interval of roughly seven years between films Milcho Manchevski has a very good reason as to why more features aren't on his resume. "I handcraft the films," he said. "And I don't know if it's good or bad. It has its plusses and its minuses," said the director, who mentioned that just the physical work on a film takes a year to two years of his life. "I don't like doing industrial films. I don't like just rushing them through the assembly line and then into the theater and then out. I believe that by investing a piece of yourself in the work in general that will somehow resonate from the screen and stay with the viewer." The director finances all of his films in Europe even though he lives in the Big Apple. He mentioned that "Europe is a funny place for financing films", citing the balance between "half-distributor, half refugee", although in Europe "there is much more of a respect for the author." Still, he noted that "Europe is slowly becoming a little more Hollywood-ized." Mr. Manchevski lamented the Hollywood way, saying that "granted there was a 'refuge', although in Europe "there is much more of a respect for the author." Still, he noted that "Europe is slowly becoming a little more Hollywood-ized." Mr. Manchevski lamented the Hollywood way, saying that "granted there are films that you need this kind of industrial approach but there are also films that are created by one or two or several filmmakers expressing a particular point of view that get ruined by the money, the suits, the studios or the producers changing, tinkering with the films too much."

Mr. Manchevski joked about having his films remade, hinting that he would disengage himself from the remaking process. He said that at one point there were discussions about remaking "Shadows". Earlier in the conversation he had observed that "in development, scriptwriting, script doctoring in Hollywood in general there's so much emphasis put on [explaining] things and, 'do people get it?', and I think it's just overrated. The relevant consideration, he said, is "do I like the film" -- not 'do I understand the film.' There are a number of wonderful films where I'm not quite sure what happened one hundred percent but I'm really glad I saw the film. And vice versa, there are like some films where everything is clear but I couldn't care less. So I think that understanding has been overrated at the expense of feeling and liking the film."

Another reason for the sizable interval between films is that Mr. Manchevski has his hands full with many other more interesting projects which he prefers working on, such as his direction of short films, long-form works, art and experimental cinema pieces. He has directed numerous television commercials, the most recent of which can be seen here. He is currently working on a photo exhibition art project entitled "Five Drops Of Dream", five photos in a film strip. The photo exhibition has some one hundred film strips, or a total of five hundred frames. The artwork exhibition will be completed for display later this year.

The director is asked about the sex scenes in "Shadows", each of which is distinct and not without meaning in the film's context. If comedy is difficult to film and convey so too are love or sex scenes. "It's difficult because it's such a personal moment and here you are doing it first, in front a lot of people and second, in front of a lot of people who are going to see you in the future. And you need to make it look very intimate, like only two people together. I just put everything on the table, discuss it. First of all, everything was described in the script in detail so the actors knew what they needed to do, so they spent a lot of time preparing for it. And they had their own little dynamic going on as we were shooting," the director said.

Mr. Manchevski then remembered something that happened during filming. After rehearsals with a partially-clothed Vesna Stanojevska, the director recalled that "we were filming the scene where [Miss Stanojevska] is showing her breasts... and then as we were preparing to roll again, the microphones were on but we weren't rolling yet and you hear Vesna saying, 'Well, why are you being that way? Just look at them before I show them to everybody.' Which I thought was really sweet and very funny."

One of the sex scenes, Mr. Manchevski revealed, "that is particularly important and dear to me... is where they're having sex and laughing. Which is something that you know, you very seldom see in films. And I think it's, it's a great way to deal with it, a great way to approach... love and sex."
Manchevski's SHADOWS at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival

By Dinane Sippl

Red carpets ribboned through the week at the 23rd Santa Barbara International Film Festival, spanning oohs and ahhs, yelps and squeals for Julie Christie, Cate Blanchett, Javier Bardem, Ryan Gosling, Tommy Lee Jones, and Angelina Jolie, in that order. And stars shone brightly as well on the faux blacksky ceiling of the 2,000 seat Arlington Theater, walled with real gold and amber lanterns and façades of the old Spanish mission town that the city once was. This site for the endless tributes was nearly as packed for a new film from Kazakhstan by Sergei Bodrov, Mongol. A glorious oldstyle action film devoid of character development and heartfelt conflict (even with narration delivered in firstperson voiceover), it offered plenty of blood and bodies and landlandskyscapes, a roughhewn exotica when compared to, for instance, a glittering Zhang Yimou palace epic.

Yet in smaller theaters and some uniquely pleasant midsize venues (the city offers several, patchworked through its downtown), very astute and committed cineastes streamed into half a dozen new films designated as "Eastern Bloc" in the catalog and filled the houses. I never saw so little popcorn (nor food or drink of any kind) consumed in movie theaters (though it was generally available) or heard so much conversation in the lobbies afterward. At this midfestival writing moment, I haven't seen all of these films (Fatih Akın's The Edge of Heaven is yet to come and gaspingly anticipated), but so far Alexander Sokurov's eloquently enigmatic Alexandra, Andrei Zvyagintsev's striking and engrossing The Banishment, and Milcho Manchevski's singularly compelling Shadows are enough to call any festival a success. Together they bring an aesthetic and socially conscious edge to this elevenday event that is perhaps not so pronounced in any other particular segment of the program. And a crime it shall be if they don't soon make it into local arthouse theaters across our country. If only because it takes so long to encounter a new work by him, even though he now lives and works in the U.S. (heading the Directing Department at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts' Graduate Program), this review will focus on the latest by Milcho Manchevski.

Following his much feted debut, Before the Rain (1994), and his second feature, Dust (2001), writer-director Milcho Manchevski has once again provided us with the perfect festival film: a visual tale of dramatic substance, with historical depth and contemporary thrust, adroitly told with innovation and élan. And once again Manchevski returns to that place he cannot leave behind, his beloved Macedonia.

It all begins, at least the film itself, with a crash. It looks like a fatal car accident. But Lazar Perkov — his friends call him "Lucky" — miraculously survives it, or so he thinks. After a year of convalescing, he returns from his parents' villa in the lakes region to his apartment in Skopje, the capital, and his position at the hospital where he is a physician. Sad that his wife has remained behind with their little boy, and she is flirting with someone, at that, he feels even more uneasy because his forgetfulness, nightmares, and absentmindedness tell him his recovery is not yet complete. And there are those strange faces: an old man taking care of a baby, a perhaps even older lady tattooed with the matriarchal rope of his own mother, his curiosity and conscience allow him to fathom the waves of intruders in Macedonia over centuries, their theft of the land and its people, and the unpaid debt at stake for Lazar regardless of the degree of his personal complicity.

Audiences familiar with the history of the region recall that Greece together with Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro declared war on Turkey in 1912. No sooner did this act liberate Macedonia from occupation under the Ottoman Empire than it precipitated Macedonia's being parcelled out to its neighbors. Greece seized upon Aegean Macedonia for ethnic cleansing, sending hundreds of thousands into exodus, appropriating their land, banning the use of their languages and the renaming of places, plundering villages and destroying homes. Ethnic Greeks from countries further east were brought in to repopulate the region. The Greek Civil War of the 1940s only exacerbated the problem, inflicting internments to continue as late as 1974 (the year Lazar's mother excavated the bones for her anatomy class in the film). "Covering up past genocide is only expanding it," Manchevski has commented, "and I felt that this story should find a place in Shadows, which talks about the responsibility of the individual in the face of family and history."

In 1991 Macedonia emerged from the "ashes" of the former Yugoslavia. Milcho Manchevski then began to approach filmmaking through fractured, overlapping, and circular narratives, interspersed with historical passages and ellipses, to tell the tales of his homeland. Shadows departs from this approach, opting for a more straightforward development of the story, but adds to it a dreamscape of personal torment. Call it a "ghost story" but know that it feels more like Bergman or Polanski, or even Shakespeare — Mucheth and Hamlet come to mind. Retaining an ensemble of actors from one film to the next, Manchevski used two firsttime film actors in Shadows for the lead roles, Borce Nacev as Lazar and Vesna Stanoevska as Menka, who both deliver remarkable performances. As for the director, if we view Lazar as a visionary not unlike the filmmaker himself, pursuing the artist's journey, that journey is also an allegory of cinema when its task is to lead us to see — at whatever price — and to dream.

Shadows
FEAR EATS THE SOUL
By Marina Kostova

Milcho Manchevski’s Shadows is a beautiful and tormenting film. It moves you, as if your blood is aching, and it seems you could cry for days. It has the emotional power of Before the Rain (with the effect of a hard blow to the stomach) and the complexity of Dust. With his third film, Manchevski establishes himself as a mature auteur who has a superior control over form and a masterful skill in dosage of emotion.

Shadows is about the fear of intimacy with the other (but actually fear of death) which permeates human existence to such a degree that it makes any complete intimacy impossible. Neither the mother with the child, nor the child with the mother, nor the husband with the wife. You cannot defeat the fear. The only thing left is to summon up the courage and try to get closer to the other, even if you lose him. Because that is the only way to have a smile along with fear at the end of the day. Life is, says Manchevski, what happens between “How are you going to live without me” and “Smile, one day you’ll be gone.”

And it is not a coincidence that Manchevski has picked the horror genre as a template to tell the story. Immanent human fear is most clearly articulated through this form.

Shadows is a story of Lazar Perkov (Borce Nacev), a young doctor with a seemingly happy life, an attractive wife (Filaretta Atanasova) and a sweet boy, with a strong mother (Sabina Ajrulatozija) and a gentle father (Dime Iliev). He survives a car crash and begins to encounter strange presences, archetypes for all our grandfathers and grandmothers, they are the pillars upon which the film rests.

It moves you, as if your blood is aching, and it seems you could cry for days. It has the emotional power of Before the Rain (with the effect of a hard blow to the stomach) and the complexity of Dust. With his third film, Manchevski establishes himself as a mature auteur who has a superior control over form and a masterful skill in dosage of emotion.

Gerasim, a middle-aged grumpy neighbor with a baby (Salaetin Bilal) and the beautiful Menka (Vesna Stanojevska). They all want him to return that which is not his, even though he does not know what that is. His nightmarish search for himself takes him to his ancestors’ debts, the shadows of forgotten ancestors will pull Lazar out of the sterile world where Lazar’s mother keeps him; he will start to live for real.

It is almost impossible to watch Lazar and Menka separately in the film. Borce Nacev and Vesna Stanojevska are an exciting couple; they establish a connection that is both warm and sexy, funny and touching, and you cannot help loving them. They are our two new stars, new heroes.

Sabina Ajrulatozija has a monumental role as Dr. Vera Perkova, a rock of a mother who overshadows everything in front of herself, most of all her own child. She is the ghost mother who freezes the child in all of us in fear. At the same time, she projects the biggest fear of any woman - the fear of her own child. One of the cathartic moments is when Vera curses at her own son and throws him out. Sabina plays it as an eruption of suppressed energy - all the ambivalence of motherhood comes out, all the love and fear, possessiveness and anger, and after all that - tremendous relief. A counterpoint to Sabina-Vera, as if a masculine principle, is Dime Iliev as the husband Ignyat Perkov. He is gentle and pragmatic, a man who has understood the wisdom that his son has yet to understand - take from your dearest only what they can give you and be content with it.

Sex is connecting tissue in Shadows. And it is not a coincidence - it is only through sex that one gets an immediate (even though short-lived) confirmation that intimacy with the other is possible.

Skopje is portrayed in Shadows as a metropolis with all the virtues and vices of urban living anywhere in the world. The pictures of our daily life, the habits, the conditions we live in have all been conveyed as in an anthropological study - Manchevski does not judge (the way a Westerner would, or even the way one of our own living abroad would), he only states the facts. This metropolis is part of us, it is part of our family. We are ambivalent towards it, the way we are ambivalent towards our family - we both love it and are suffocated by it, we want to run away, and we always come back.

In a masterly way Fabio Cianchetti expresses the suffocating quality of the big city with his camera, a suffocating quality which at the same time is a reflection of the inner turmoil smothering Lazar. The production designer David Munns, who knows Macedonia better than most Macedonians do, should be credited with giving the images in Shadows a cosmopolitan spirit. He has worked with Manchevski on all three of his films, and is capable of perfectly transforming Manchevski’s story into a multi-layered image. Elisabetta Montaldo’s authentically realistic costumes are an inseparable part of the image; Montaldo captures every character with her clothes, including the extras.

Ryan Shore’s music and the soundscapes are so rich that they become another character in the film.

Shadows is told the old-fashioned way, unrolling slowly as the tension grows through small details. This is precisely what makes the film rich and complex - and at the end it leaves you with the feeling of being completely wrapped within it. Manchevski has a rare gift of articulating his emotion in his work and sharing it with the viewer. This matters to the viewer, he trusts Manchevski. As in any true art.

After the Skopje and world theatrical premiere of the film last Friday, there was a long applause that went on and on. With Shadows, Manchevski finally and truly returned home.
Drama
Shadows

Lazar, genannt “Lucky”, scheint alles zu haben, was man sich wünschen kann. Doch nach einem Verkehrsunfall ändert sich sein Leben. Er trifft auf seltsame Menschen, die eine Botschaft für ihn zu haben scheinen.

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Dr. Lazar Perkov (B. Nacev) hat auf wundersame Weise einen schweren Unfall überlebt. Wenn wir uns auf der Suche nach jemandem befinden würden, der alles hat, so wäre Lazar Perkov die perfekte Wahl: Er ist jung, gut aussehend, hat eine liebenswerte Ehefrau, einen kleinen Sohn, ein schönes Haus und einen erfüllenden Beruf als Arzt in einem Krankenhaus in Skopje - und alle nennen ihn “Lucky”.


Als Lucky in einen schweren Verkehrsunfall verwickelt und von mysteriöser Hand vor dem sicheren Tod bewahrt wird, beginnt sich sein Leben zu verändern.

Plötzlich trifft er auf seltsame Menschen: Einen alten Mann mit einem Baby, ein altes Mütterchen, das eine längst vergessene Sprache spricht und eine hübsche junge Frau, die ein trauriges Geheimnis verbirgt.
“Shadows” of Macedonia on Aamir Khan’s “Talaash”?

By Farhana Ahmed

Tuesday, December 11th, 2012

Reema Kagti’s Talaash bears certain similarities with 2007 Macedonian film Shadows

The recently released Talaash directed by Reema Kagti, starring Aamir Khan, Rani Mukerji and Kareena Kapoor will long be remembered as a good movie where glamorous superstars of our time are seen playing convincing character roles. Apart from its refreshing theme of presenting crime from an unorthodox angle, Talaash is a movie that explores a fresh treatment of the supernatural genre. Though both the writers—Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar—have said that Talaash was based on a real-life incident that took place near Haji Ali Road in Mumbai; it is interesting to note that the film bears certain similarities with a 2007 Macedonian film Shadows (Macedonian: Сенки, Transliteration: Senki) directed, produced and written by Miloš Mančevski.

Like Talaash, Shadows is about a crime, committed in the past and lost in collective consciousness, resurfacing with the involvement of the supernatural. While the crime in Talaash is committed against an individual; Shadows deals with genocide.

The victim, Rosie or Simran (Kareena Kapoor) in Talaash laments before inspector Surjan Singh Shekhawat (Aamir Khan) about the public indifference towards a prostitute who went missing three years ago. In Shadows, an old woman with a tattooed cross on her forehead, Kalina (Ratka Radmanovic) tells Dr. Lazar Perkov (Borce Nacev) “Return what’s not yours. Have respect” in an ancient Aegean dialect not in use in modern day Macedonia.

Talaash is about the tragic death of Rosie or Simran at the hands of some ruthless rich people, whereas Shadows deals with a series of historical genocides committed by the Greeks against the Aegean Macedonians between 1913 to 1973—both long forgotten waiting to be unearthed by supernatural intervention.

Inspector Surjan Singh Shekhawat has an almost broken marriage with his wife Roshni (Rani Mukerji) after accidental death of their son. Unable to cope with the personal loss and guilt, Surjan loses sleep and regularly meets a hooker named Rosie in order to investigate a car crash. Rosie provides him valuable information about the car accident which killed a film star. It is revealed in the end that Rosie was indeed Simran, a prostitute picked up by the film star. To his surprise, Menka also appears. It is then only Lazar realises that Rosie was indeed Simran, a prostitute picked up by the film star.

In Shadows, Lazar is also visited by a man Gerasim (Salaetin Bilal), called a refugee with an anabaptist baby in his arms. Gerasim has spikes on his heels and blood oozes out from it. Both Kalina and Gerasim try to convey to Lazar to perform the religious rites for their bodies that remained dumped outside the cemetery until dug out for anatomy classes by his mother in 1973. Lazar fights with his mother to take possession of the bones and skeletons kept in a cardboard box and heads off to his mother’s home village of Gluvovo. He digs a grave and puts the bones inside where Kalina and Gerasim with the infant appear.

In the final scene of Shadows, Lazar digs a grave and puts the skeletal remains of the bodies belonging to Menka, Kalina, Gerasim and the infant and ritually buries them, Surjan too exhumes the skeletal remains of Rosie/Simran and performs the last rites according to Hindu tradition.

In one scene, very much like Lazar-succumbing to a provocative Menka, Surjan too follows Rosie/Simran to a hotel room for a night but only to be lulled into deep slumber.

In the case of imagery and cinematography, Shadows uses reflections on glass—on door panels, bus windows etc throughout the movie to create a shadowy impression of the stated theme. Talaash draws upon aquatic imagery—drowning, seashore and showers that adds to the theme.

Creative arts represent a universalism and it is an interesting coincidence that Reema Kagti’s Talaash rides on similar metaphors as seen in the Macedonian film.
1) Some scenes of “Shadows”, concerning what you call “a genocide” with napalms etc, provoked extremely negative comments by a large proportion of Greeks—even the most progressive ones. I mean, genocide, napalms, and ghosts -victims of bad Greeks coming out of the grave?

- I am not sure which scenes you are talking about. SHADOWS never mentions Greece, nor a genocide. This is a film about many issues, including getting over the past, personal vs. social responsibility, corruption, family ties (and especially Mediterranean mothers and their sons), doomed love, fear of death, social taboos..., but it is certainly not about Greece. It is curious how some people can recognise themselves in anything.

2) Many people in the past thought that your films, like “Before the rain” constitute a bridge of friendship between the two countries but all they see now (besides the undoubted artistic virtues of the film) is a dangerous provocative statement which comes out in a very tensed period for the two countries.

- This film is as much about building bridges of friendship as is any of my other films. It is a heart-felt film about grief and love offering a mirror to people (regardless of whether they are greedy for money, power or land). SHADOWS played on four continents, and no one saw anti-Greek provocation it. It is a little disappointing to hear this kind of paranoid thinking coming from the country that calls itself the cradle of democracy.

3) Art can be a dangerous weapon at difficult moments. All countries have experienced terrible moments in their history. For example Greeks during Turkish invasion or more recently in Cyprus. It could be very easy for us to make a film showing the atrocities of Turks in Cyprus or 200 years ago. But doing it now, that there is an effort to overpass the negativities constitutes a political statement. Why do you focus on such a controversial matter in such a moment? This could be conceived as a nationalistic approach...

- I would remind you once again that SHADOWS does not focus on Greece. The film does mention in passing (two lines out of a thousand) the enormous suffering of the Aegean Macedonians, but it is more concerned with other human issues, such as responsibility, family relations, fear and desire... Even when mentioning Aegeans, the film is concerned with their suffering, and Greece is never mentioned. But, if you insist on talking about politics in such a self-righteous way, then let me challenge your readers to think about the damage that this kind of nationalistic hysteria, self-centeredness and manipulative politicians can cause. First of all, people should study independent sources and learn a bit more about their own history. Denial, propaganda and hysterical reactions from a position of power will not change the historical truth.

It is sad that for Greece the ethnic cleansing of Macedonians is not a matter of public record. I would direct you to a number of independent historical data, including the Carnegie Commission Report of 1914, but more importantly I would ask you to talk to the tens of thousands of Macedonian refugees and children of refugees living in Toronto, Melbourne, Tashkent, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic... I am not talking about movie characters, I am talking about real people of flesh and blood who have suffered the pain of real ethnic cleansing. They lost family and were chased away from their own homes in Greece. Yes, some of them under threat of napalm (for the first time used on Gramos, as per eyewitness accounts) or bayonets. I would direct you to look in the fact that in 1923 official Greece published a textbook in Macedonian, in Cyrillic, for first grade Macedonian pupils in Greece, then later withdrew it, destroyed it and denied it. I would direct you to the fact that the Macedonian (what you would call Slavic) toponyms in what was then called official Greece “the newly conquered territories” have been erased by legal decrees and the language was banned. Even the very word that is seemingly at the center of the current ridiculous argument, “Macedonia” was not in use in Greece until about 20 years ago. Your own Ministry for Macedonia and Thrace was Ministry for North Greece and Thrace until the late 1980s. Both suppressing the use of the word “Macedonia” and then reversing the course by 180 degrees and claiming the exclusive right to use it are two aspects of the same strategy - that of trying to assimilate the land, the culture and the heritage of Macedonia into those of Greece. Yet, Macedonia was never part of Greece until 1912. No amount of political hysteria, denial, nor bullying today will change the fact that the Greek province of Macedonia has been part of Greece for only a blink in historical terms - 95 years.

4) Slavic speaking populations of Macedonia region suffered by Othomans and Bulgarians as well. However you chose to focus only on the Greeks. Would Bulgaria ever be a co-producer of the film if you showed this aspect too?
Have you not seen my last film, DUST? In it, among other things, I speak of atrocities committed by the Ottoman army in Macedonia. The Turkish ambassador came to the set of the film, wanting to express his concern about "how Turkey would be portrayed in the film." I told him that all men with guns (whether Turkish, Macedonian, Greek, Albanian or American) are bad guys in my film, and the life-giving women are the good guys. Again, let me state for the record that SHADOWS OF a WISH is not about the Greeks, let alone focusing on them. I have to wonder where this sensitivity comes from. In addition to Bulgaria, our partners were Germany, Italy and Spain, as well as the film body of the Council of Europe, Eurimages. Are you suggesting they were all a part of some vast international anti-Greek conspiracy?

At the end of the film, the hero finally buries the bones of the ghosts. He is now at peace. Is this scene symbolic in terms of how young people should move on in your country? I mean in relation to the past?

Absolutely. And in your country, too. But, first of all, they should acknowledge the sins of their fathers. There is no moving ahead and forgiveness without acknowledgment of past sins. Australia recently apologized to the Aborigines. Willy Brandt got on his knees and asked forgiveness. Germany acknowledged what it did, accepted responsibility, and is now moving into a better day. As a matter of fact, the people in my country are desperate to move away from the past and towards the future, believing that NATO and EU and global integration are the way to the future, and they struggle very hard to achieve that. It is the Greek politicians whipping up nationalistic hysteria for their own political gain at home while trying to cover up the crimes of the past who are blocking our integration. Let's face it, the issue with the name is ridiculous. It is like something out of Beckett or Ionesco. It's an excuse to impose a blockade on this dirt-poor country (crushing its economy) and to destabilize it by vetoing its ascent into the international community. This selfish behavior is dangerous. The claim that tiny Macedonia with its 8,000 soldiers can be an irredentist threat to mighty NATO-member Greece with its 240,000 soldiers, planes and equipment is hilarious. The Macho elephant afraid of the mouse? The more important question is of pure decency. What gives you the right to come up to me and tell me what I can and cannot call myself? Don't you think that is terribly rude?

Did you have personal experience with the ones you call "Macedonians of Aegean"?

I have Macedonian friends born in Uzbekistan and Czechoslovakia because their parents had to flee for their lives across the border as children. Their parents grew up in orphansages. I have a friend in Cologne (Germany) whose grandmother died in the snow while they were crossing the Greek border. I know people who are heartbroken that they cannot go back and see their parents graves or the house they were born in, as it has been confiscated, and they are not given a visa to re-enter. As a student, trying to get a Greek visa, I had to show my parents' birth certificates at the Greek Consulate in Skopje, just to prove that my parents were not born in Greece; otherwise I would not be able to obtain a tourist visa. I know a friend from America who was not allowed to enter Greece because he had spoken about the ethnic cleansing issue in the past. I have a friend whose grandfather was executed in Greece.

If you fight for your right to be called Macedonians, what about our Macedonians?

The ones who showed your film in the capital of Greek region Macedonia, Thessaloniki, and embraced it with enthusiasm?

I am glad they liked my film. I wish those same viewers and intellectuals were in touch with those Greek officials who tried to suppress BEFORE THE RAIN at the Festival in Venice and at the Academy Awards in 1995 on their behalf, even though the film had nothing to do with Greece. As far as the issue of Macedonians, I'm afraid you are confusing two different things. The people in Greece you call Macedonians are Greeks who live in Macedonia. Their ethnicity is Greek. The way a Greek in Thrace would call himself a Greek Thracian. On the other hand, most of the people who live in the Republic of Macedonia are of Macedonian ethnicity. That's how I feel, that's how my father felt, and that is how my grandfather felt. At the turn of the 20th century there were immigrants coming to America from the Ottoman Empire, declaring themselves of Macedonian ethnicity. Those are facts that will not go away, no matter how many childish tantrums Greek politicians throw nor how many embargoes or vetoes Greece imposes. This might be a difficult concept to explain to the citizens of Greece, as it is perhaps the last country in Europe that does not recognize the concept of ethnic minorities (nor their rights), and has been reprimanded for that by numerous international institutions. But this is a matter of identity and dignity, essential to any human being, and it is deeply offensive when someone tries to play with it.

At the end of the film, the hero finally buries the bones of the ghosts. He is now at peace. Is this scene symbolic in terms of how young people should move on in your country? I mean in relation to the past?

OwS is not about the record that SHADOWS OF a WISH is not about the Greeks, let alone focusing on them. I have to wonder where this sensitivity comes from. In addition to Bulgaria, our partners were Germany, Italy and Spain, as well as the film body of the Council of Europe, Eurimages. Are you suggesting they were all a part of some vast international anti-Greek conspiracy?
Mothers is a masterful edifice of a narrative which “speaks to everyone,” yet conveys a realization of a highly complex entanglement of metaphysics and bodily experience which virtually always escapes the commonsensical mind.

1. Femininity vs. Motherhood

The figures of femininity appearing in the Milcho Manchevski’s film Mothers (2010) are presented in the following temporal order: a young girl, a young woman as a sexual (though not maternal) subject, an old woman in her post-reproductive years, and, finally, mothers. The section of the film which deals with figures of motherhood is not only executed in documentary style but literally is a documentary. The first two sections of the film, constituting separate stories, are fictional. The main characters in the first section are two little girls who create a fictional story within a fictional story: based on a rumor of an alleged flasher they create a story of the imagined flasher and give false testimony at a police station in Skopje. They end up knowingly accusing an evidently innocent person. In the final section of the film, the director explores an actual case of three women who were tortured, raped, and murdered in the small Macedonian town of Kichevo between 2005 and 2008. The victims (Mitra Simjanoska, found dead in January, 2005, Ljubica Licoska, murdered in February, 2007 and Zivana Temelkoska, murdered in May, 2008) were all working-class mothers in their late fifties to mid-sixties.

The brutality of the acts of torture, rape and murder culminating with the mutilation of the victims’ bodies intimates the inextricability of sexuality and destructive violence in a man with sadistic fixation on the image of the mother. Purportedly, the convicted perpetrator, journalist Vlado Taneski, had traumatic childhood experiences with his allegedly emotionally absent, aggressive and promiscuous mother. The film seems to leave open the question of his guilt, to some extent. Vlado Taneski or, for that matter, the “invisible perpetrator” is portrayed as a heterosexual man motivated by sexualized hate for women who are immediately and most pronouncedly identified as “mothers.” The victims are all reduced to and primarily described by their roles as mothers by the witnesses, family members, officials and experts featured in the mini-documentary embedded in the last part of the film.
There seems to be a structural rule behind the narrative that situates pre- and post-reproductive femininity in the realm of fiction, whereas maternal femininity, including its sexualization (together with the violence it invites), is placed within the most brutal form of a representation of reality. And that reality is one of utmost physical brutality: violence, femininity as sexual reproduction, aging of the female body, and murder and fragmentation (mutilation) of the body. Fabulation of femininity is enabled by the erasure or suppression—or, simply, invisibility—of the potentiality of maternity and of a transformation of the female body into a maternal one. The little girls’ fables of the “maniac” are silly and innocent, and their cruelty of accusing an innocent man seems to be an almost anecdotal little incident, funny in its folkloric and humoresque depiction, reminiscent of Fellini’s *Amarcord*.

In the second part of the film, the young woman’s sexual pleasures seem to be coupled with the obscene humor of the old woman, who seems to be modeled after the mythic character of Baubo. In Greek mythology, and most prominently in the myth of Demeter and Persephone, Baubo appears as the goddess of female sexual liberation, manifesting herself as an old woman capable of provoking laughter through her obscene jokes even in those most deeply depressed or those immersed in most intense states of mourning (such as Demeter’s, which was provoked by the abduction of her daughter Persephone by the god of death, Hades). The old woman in the film, addressed by all of the characters as “majche” (“grandma”), is near death by the fact of her very age and by the absolute solitude of her existence. She is also in constant proximity to death by witnessing it among her neighbors, her relatives, and all of the past villagers (those who have not emigrated) whom she has buried and mourned. This section of the film finishes with her having to witness the decay of the body of an old man, her only neighbor and brother and only other inhabitant of the abandoned village where she lives. She is also the one who has to bury him, as there is no one else to do it. She is helped in the labor of burying her brother by the young woman, who returns to visit and show her the documentary about village life that she and her partner had made.

The fabulation of female sexual desire and desirability incarnated by the character of young Ana is inextricable from the fabulation of female sexual liberty expressed as obscene laughter. The joke the old woman makes, “The dick has no end” (*Kuro kraj nema*) provokes liberating yet unsettling laughter from young Ana and her partner as the old woman’s obscene, somewhat morbid laughter in abandoned Mariovo seems unstoppable. Her laughter is one of someone looking death in the eye; her eyes no longer contain sexual desire nor do they provoke it. Her eyes tell the story of the death of sex, the death of sexual pleasures that once lived and are now extinguished in her aged body. Her laughter following “The dick has no end” suggests the absence of what once was the experience of those pleasures. Those past pleasures, referenced by the obscene laughter, seem to be obscene themselves. They seem so because they are dead, uttered by someone who is looking death in the eye, voiced by someone waiting for her own death (and for the death of the old man that she knows she will bury with her own hands). The voicing sounds like a distant echo: she is alone in the deserted village, her voice and laughter rough. She seems distant, even alien while she is displaying her pre-modern folkloric garments and adornments associated with marriage and entry into sexuality (which in her youth was always a reproductive sexuality).
Mothers
As in all of Manchevski’s films, we once again find a simple myth structure behind a dense narrative and rich dialogue of non-pretentious, everyday language. And once more, sexuality and death are closely linked. In Mothers, Manchevski displays the “gorgonic” character of the connection between death and female sexuality. It is displayed not only in the second part of the film, through the encounter between the young woman and the old woman and their “solidarity in obscenity,” but also in the third, documentary part of the film where the aging maternal body is grotesquely sexualized. The grotesque is the result of the direct intervention of death upon the sexualized maternal body, bringing its marks of annihilation and dismemberment to it. Death stares at us as the mask of the Medusa.

“Her feet, head and hands were tied. She was covered with apple leaves and bean pods. And a blanket, tied with white cable. I touched, the leaves parted. I saw a blanket, I thought, either weapons or a corpse. I touched with the shovel, it was soft. A corpse. I called the police. They said, don’t go anywhere. They know my tractor, I have a new tractor. I waited, they came. More police came from Bitola and Skopje, 50 of them, the chief of police, 20 cars. She had on a blue vest with buttons, naked from the waist down. Zoran said, This is Mitra…” (A quote from an eye witness appearing in the third part of Mothers)

The experience of witnessing the sight of the mutilated maternal body is one of horror. The person who discovered the dead body and who first laid eyes on the horrific scene is someone who knew the victim in his early youth. Her maternal role is the first thing the witness references while remembering her. Namely, the witness informs the viewers that the murdered woman (Mitra) was someone who used to invite him to her house for a snack when he was a child. For him, the contrast between the image of Mitra in his memory and the one he had just discovered (that of her naked, mutilated and raped body) causes a traumatic experience of extreme horror:

“I didn’t tell anyone at home when I found her. The next morning my skin was covered with three mm of water. I spent 200 Euros for treatment. My skin fell off, new skin grew later.”

Maternity itself seems to be gorgonic as it hides the truth of the brutality of physicality of life and its creation. Paradoxically, sexuality is at the same time reproductive and destructive. It is also consumption and dispensation, namely orgasm and ejaculation. The complexity of a sexualized perception of the maternal body seems to resist historicity and foregrounds much of any ancient or contemporary mythology. Greek cosmogony, Aristophanes’ comedies, Rabelais’ imaginaries, and Macedonian and other Balkan folk tales inform us of the primitive nature of the fear caused by the dual nature of maternal sexuality. The inviting pre-reproductive female sexuality deforms into the pregnant body, terrifying in its deformity and in the monstrosity of being two bodies and souls in one. The single and unique self has mutated into a hybrid oneness of two. Subsequent motherhood is an overwhelming totality of, on the one hand, pleasure and protection and, on the other, omnipotence, which thus poses a threat. The uterus of comfort and pure pleasure is also the engulfing blackness of death. Vagina dentata is a universal mytheme in infinite variations, and it is formative of the pathology of the everyday life in all epochs, including the globalized and mediatized reality of the 21st century.
Popular culture and the normative imagery it creates seek to sanitize the organic residue of an experienced maternal “deformation” of the body. Dieting, gyms, and cosmetic surgery all promise to erase all marks of the maternal transformation of a body in order to sexualize it once again. Any reference to its reproductive role is not sexually desirable; neither is it part of the image of the normality of the world that “automatically” springs to mind. The physical reality of human reproduction or maternity is an aberration from the “normal” course of life, just as death or disease is. The latter are “normalized” by treating them as if they were not even happening, as if they were not really disturbing “normal” life—the morals Hollywood has taught us during the second half of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st century.

Rendering death and physical decay grotesque and caricaturing the female reproductive role disrupts normality by the virtue of displaying the failure of normality to erase or fully mask primordial fears. The rape and mutilation of mothers conveys the misogynistic horror and disgust of the perpetrator, materialized as passionate hate and destruction of the body of the Mother.

2. The Figure of the Maniac: Violence and Sexuality

The two little girls in the first part of the film recycle the story of the “maniac” (the flasher), and maintain it to be true in front of the police. Consequently, a “suspicious character,” someone who stands out from the ordinary image of normality, is arrested. The process of inventing the story (or, rather, the lie) of the “maniac” is, in fact, the subject of the first narrative of Mothers. As we see in the third part of the film, usually in real life, the “maniac” does not stand out from what is imagined to be normal: he is the epitome of the norm and social acceptance. The perpetrator in the third part, Vlado Taneski—that is, the one who is charged and declared to be the perpetrator—is a journalist, a correspondent from a small town, a respected member of the community praised for his “intelligence, his success, his authority and his good neighborliness.”

His wife seems to be emphatically—and, hence, symptomatically—normal. She is the only person in the documentary (the third part of the film) who conveys her trauma with grace and elegance, commemorating her late husband as if reading from a prewritten eulogy or reciting it by heart. She maintains his innocence, without demonstrating the slightest dismay at his “unjust conviction,” nor at the nature of the crimes that took place in Kichevo, the small town where her husband, she and their two children spent most of their lives. She seems to mirror the normality that her husband had displayed and in which she still participated—a purely performative normality. I recognize that all social roles are performative. However, the absence of a neurotic tension created between, on the one hand, real, material fears and attempts at adjustments to the norm and, on the other, the dictates
of the norm, suggests a total performativity. The latter consists of mere gestures suggesting emptiness in psychic life, the work of the automaton of fetishization without any sense of a suffering subjectivity behind it.

The subject slides through the automated signification of his initial or primal trauma. However, s/he is not suffering the trauma as real “in itself,” as a materiality of injury and destruction. His or her reaction is one of pure economy within the signifying chain which s/he attacks by way of annihilation of the signifiers “mother,” “maternal body” and “incest.” S/he compensates for the trauma by making the mother/s “pay” for their crimes against him/her personally and against the order of moral decency. The structure of the psychotic justification of the case of Kichevo serial murders and rapes displays such logic as the raped mothers seem to have been perceived as “resembling” “whores,” according to one of the witnesses. Through the testimonies of witnesses, and via the proxy of the wife’s narrative representing the Taneskis as a model family, an image of an uncannily undisturbed normality of the character of accused journalist Vlado Taneski comes into focus. The same suspect normality resonates in the smooth, almost ceremonial tone of Mrs. Taneski’s account.

The “maniac” is usually the nice, helpful neighbor. The suspect freak from the first part of the film would not be able to understand nor operate with the economy of normality whose manipulation “the maniac” has mastered. The freak is “bad with numbers” and does not know how and how much to demand as compensation for the injustices he has suffered. Contrary to this, Taneski was a calculating person. He was able to write a ceremonial letter of expression of regret (for the “pain he had inflicted on his family, albeit being innocent”) addressed to his wife. This letter is considered to be his suicide note. It resounds with unusually unharmed normality and model citizenship. He allegedly killed himself by fixing his body in a corner of his cell in such a way as to be able to drown himself in a bucket of water. It seems highly unlikely for one to be able kill oneself by drowning in a bucket of water. Regardless of how convincing the interpretation of his death as a suicide sounds, it is telling that the grotesque way he died resembles the grotesque rendering of the bodies of the victims which he allegedly mutilated after first immobilizing them.

The terrifyingly grotesque, by definition, stares at us from the emptiness of nothingness. The glaring normality of the Taneski couple and that of the small town of Kichevo stand out in the emptiness. Nothingness and the grotesque are also present in the laughter of the old woman in the film’s second part. As concluded above, they resound in the emptied space of sexuality following the obscene joke.
“The dick has no end” is an obscene joke not only because it comes from a place of sexuality that has died long ago, but also because of its reference to endlessness, to atemporality and, through it, to death. It also implies a reference to penetration and through that to bodily invasion, i.e., aggression. Hence, it brings forth the immanent interrelatedness of death and (hetero)sexuality. The laughter of the old woman accompanies the language of an old myth and resonates as immaterial. The mutilated bodies of the mothers are a materialization of something that could be conceived only as a mythical or religious potentiality. Maniacal realization of something that is a signifier of impossibility brings forth the impossibility of meaning, the death of a signifier and the suffocating presence of the real as death. The absurdity of the mutilated bodies is what provokes the sheer horror in two of the witnesses, both of them men. (While the women in the documentary mostly demonstrate mourning, the men demonstrate horror.) In addition to the testimony of the witness who found Mitra and claims to have lost his skin as a result of the trauma he experienced at the sight of her body, we also hear the following testimony by the son-in-law of Zivana, another victim:

“A terrible picture. I thought I’d never speak about it. The picture I saw . . . The massacre . . . Her head didn’t look like a head. Her neck smashed as if she were a snake. Her right eye was hanging out. Her arms black from the elbows down. It’s not that she’s gone . . . One day we’ll all be gone…”

The horror comes from the absurdity, from the destroyed and dismembered body as meaning, from rendering meaningless death, destruction and sexuality. Such acts would be in fact products of the banalization of death, sexuality and the figure of motherhood. The “maniac” is a banal person, his actions are executed with a banal routine, so banal that they provoke a sense of disgust and pain in the face of the destruction of something “sacred” (a product of sublimation). The son-in-law, describing the horror he experienced while observing the mutilated, disfigured corpse, sits next to Zivana’s grave, together with his wife, Zivana’s daughter, paying respect to the deceased. The assumed solemnity of the act of visiting the grave of a loved one is disturbed by the stain of obscenity, abnormality and perversion undermining the dignity of death. It is not a dignified death. It is difficult to mourn in the place of experiencing horror, or to mourn without any sense of horror. Death is banalized by banal sexuality and aggression committed by a banal, sickeningly “normal” person, a model citizen.
VLADO TANESKI

A MACEDONIAN CRIME REPORTER, COVERED A SERIES OF MURDERS IN SUCH DETAIL THAT POLICE EVENTUALLY DISCOVERED IN JUNE 2008 THAT HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM.

Submitted By Vladimir Chorarchevich, Belgrade, Serbia

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3. Misogyny at the Heart of Heterosexuality Itself?

In the film, the filmmaker assumes the women’s positions: the little girls imagining the “maniac,” the exchanges between the young woman and the old “Baubo” concerning sexuality (and also death), the daughters’ testimonies about their murdered mothers—they all proffer the women’s angles on the matter of femininity and sexuality. However, the view of this subject position seems to stare back at us with the same horror at the absence of meaning as the mutilated maternal body does as it stares back at the observer. They essentially have nothing to say as the narrative of the film is structured in a way that positions the phallic perspective as central and determining of all others. “The dick has no end” ought to be read as “there is no end to sexuality.”

Nevertheless, female sexual experience does not have to be structured and subordinated to the pleasures and dictates of phallic desire. Quite to the contrary, sexual heteronormativity conditions the organization of female pleasure. Thus, female pleasure is not organized according to female bodily structure and its organs. The male storyteller (the filmmaker), does not even begin to imagine such a position. Instead, he conveys the glaring nothingness of the female position vis-à-vis the phallically conditioned narrative of sexuality and death. The empty gaze of the female sexual subject when faced with the phallic narrative speaks with an absence, with death, as there is no woman in the narrative of “the dick of no end.”

The word “vagina” is mentioned in the film only when the rape and mutilation of the three older women is discussed in the third part. It seems that the “black hole” of the vagina, its darkness, and its otherness invite an equation of female sexual experience with death, annihilation and destruction. It might be that this frightening blackness has been feeding the horror (inflicted horror) of the rapist and the murderer. However, as mentioned above, it cannot be the source of the crimes as such virtually metaphysical realizations and mythic narratives normally remain within the realm of impossibility. Their exclusion from the field of the possible enables what is the norm and engenders aberration from it. The “maniac,” banalizes the mythic by bringing it to the level of everyday reality, of socially automated action, of the possible.

Nonetheless, the absence of response, the uncanny female silence as the response to the phallic narrative is deafening. The empty gaze resembles that of the Gorgon. The invading narrative of the hegemonic field of sexuality, that of the heterosexual male, is horrified by the spectrality of the response or, rather, its absence. And how could there be any other sort of response, considering that the invited response is but a mirroring of the phallic penetrative desire? The all-invading narrative, which renders the “speech” of the vagina a mere absence of an adequate female phallic response, belongs to archaic—and also contemporary—male heterosexuality. Frustration is gendered and frustration engenders hate.
Misogyny is a structural necessity of (archaic) male heterosexuality. Women consent to sex and subordination as part of the penetrative male desire. Women are taught to take pleasure in the act of subordination as it is the seal of the desire for them. Without feminist revisions, disruptions and restructurings, heterosexuality will always contain some extent of structurally unavoidable misogyny, and Mothers makes this realization painfully clear. Although it is not a position the filmmaker seeks to convey, it becomes clear by the sheer structure of the film’s narrative and its accompanying imagery.

As the film shows, the rootedness in phallocentrism of archaic male heterosexuality—which is also contemporary, unless it is subjected to feminist reinvention—lies in the bodily organization of desire. According to its organization, desire is centered around a single organ, and that organ is the male genital. If we suspend the “irrefutability” of this truth about sexuality and admit that it might merely convey the male angle of either heterosexual or homosexuality, and that this particular angle invades the entire realm of heterosexuality as its all-encompassing truth, we might unveil an experience of sexuality that is utterly different in its structure. Luce Irigaray wrote of female sexuality as fundamentally uncentered and fluid. Vaginal experience is described as uncentered, but also self-sufficient (“the lips constantly touching each other…” and the enclosure created by “lips upon lips” is, according to Irigaray, a specifically feminine pleasure of a desiring body, one for which lesbian sexual experiences can vouch.1 Such language of sexuality collides with the one based on the premise that “the dick has no end.” From the perspective of feminine sexuality Irigaray describes, “dick” is certainly finite. What is infinite and unstoppable is the vaginal, self-feeding desire.

The film displays the dead end of heterosexuality, which merely projects male desire and its bodily organization. The gorgonic empty stare projects back a mirror image, and, hence, death. The frozen return gaze back of imposed desire and the hate that the suspicion of a different pleasure inspires are at the heart of a regular guy’s misogynistic (hetero) sexuality. They also inspire the misogyny of the maniac and also of the woman who mirrors instead of actively desiring (as self-hate).

Mothers is a masterful edifice of a narrative that “speaks to everyone,” yet conveys a realization of complex entanglements of metaphysics and bodily experience that virtually always escape the commonsensical mind. The film’s narrative flows easily, leaving a trace of a deeply unsettling realization about a brutal universal truth that one is compelled to revisit over and over again.

1 Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which is Not One. Cornell University Press, 1985.
Hi Milcho,
Thank you for writing the essay “Truth and Fiction Art and Faith”.
I believe a documentary film is perceived by the audience as being a different basic color than the narrative film using actors or than the narrative film with actors as well the caption “This is based on a true story”. With “Mothers” you painted in these different colors.
In your essay when you describe the existence of these colors it was revelatory to me. It was a phenomenon that I had never thought of so clearly: how articulate the difference is in the audience’s perception of each of the styles described above.
I was also struck by the type of filmmaking that you carry out with “Mothers” a filmmaking where the artist’s faith in a work becomes the unifying force for disparate styles within it. In this kind of film the director is a very very important player.
The fact that you took as you said the leap of faith in your commitment and relation to the work when creating it even though you were altering the form in a way which could be deemed as shocking is extremely impressive to me. You are doing something very important culturally. I believe that cultures get sick of themselves and to end this sickness they need to change the form of their art. And I truly feel that even if the change in an art form that an artist attempts seems unimaginable or very unusual at first that’s OK because they still may be leading the way to a needed change. Making “Mothers” took a lot of courage. Many artists now use found objects in their paintings thanks to artists like Picasso and Rauschenberg, but those two had to ignore the power of a lot of tradition in the art of painting to do what they did. It could seem unrelated to you but what comes to mind is the thought of Steven Spielberg struggling to finish the movie “Jaws” going greatly over his time and his budget so that it was the way that he wanted it and through doing this possibly leading the way to a new type of movie which is still dominant today.
During the question and answer after the screening of “Mothers” you stated something to the effect that every director will direct the same story differently, that the story doesn’t matter that much. I wanted to tell you that I believe this is an extremely extremely important thing to understand, but it isn’t at all obvious. I’m really glad that you stated it so clearly.
Thanks a million for “Mother’s” and the ”Five Drops of Dream” show.
Sincerely, Brian
**Motion Picture**

"Like a Baby"

**Call sheet for**
22.09.2009

**Director:** Milcho Manchevski  
**D.O.P.:** Vladimir Samoilovski  
**Executive Producer:**

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**LOCATION:** Marienwallendorf, road to Kappel

**SCENES:**

29 - Simon stands on the yellow grass, under a crooked pear tree. He's holding a long microphone in his hand.

27 - The S.U.V. has stopped on the road, right after a bend. The trio observes, impressed, taking in the magnificent landscape.

28 - Kole and Ana look at the landscape, leaning on the S.U.V.

30 - Near the S.U.V. Ana and Kole are sitting, from behind the hill, Simon's long monodirectional microphone is aimed at them.

46 - Ana and Simon are blooming at the old village cemetery.

42 - Simon is recording night sounds.

**Unit call**

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**SPECIAL EFFECTS:**

- VEHICLES USED IN SCENES: s.u.v. - lada nova packed with bugs and props for shooting crew
- PROPS: Simon's sound equipment - boom, pole, microphone, dslr, recorder cables, camera - working, Kole's laptop bag and laptop - working, Jole's dslr camera
- ANIMALS: turtle on cemetery.

**MAKE-UP:**
- Simon has a painting, ana has a horse hair in Scene 27.5

**SET DESIGN:**
- Simon's tree, interior of s.u.v. cemetery at Dornach.

**REMARKS:**
- All phones to be switched off during filming. Disposal of rubbish in the bins provided.
- Cleaning and securing the parking lot for accommodation of the cast and crew.
- Blocking the road for the shooting - police assistance at 07:00 - 19:00.

**LOCATION MANAGER:** Tone Angelovski - +38972226595

**SET MANAGER:** Sasa Radulovic - +38976721130

**Set Manager:** Sasa Radulovic  
**1st AD:** Nikola Ivanovic
martedì 18 ottobre
ore 21.00
MOTHERS
Milcho Manchevski (2010) 123’ v.o. sott. II
a seguire incontro con
milcho manchevski
mercoledì 24 ottobre
ore 21.00
DUST
Milcho Manchevski (2010) 127’
“Manchevski’s iconoclastic feature Mothers captures the heartbreaking state of contemporary Macedonia through the eyes of several mothers who are everything from dedicated, neglectful, loving and absent.”
(Origin Theatre Balkan Mini-Fest at Lincoln Center)

“With this gradation Manchevski emphasizes that reality is more bizarre and crueler than any fiction. In addition to the very original directorial approach, the film is also dominated by a sharp critique of a system that supports police dysfunctionality and judicial inefficiency, leaving the citizens to live in insecurity and fear. The interesting genre gradation and stories which are all astonishing in their own ways will leave a strong impression even on the more demanding viewers.”
(Croatian TV)

“[Mothers is a] devastatingly stark, yet ultimately compassionate portrait of mothers, violence and the state.”
(Amy Guggenheim)

“Mothers is a very strange film, sometimes sophisticated, poignant and often elliptical. […] One of the most interesting and original filmmakers of recent years […] One of those authors who are not afraid to face the genres and to push the boundaries.”
(Diego Pierini, LoudVision)

“Mothers debunks the notion that documentaries can tell the truth.”
(Virginia Wright Wexman, Offscreen)

“Art or death. Opposing compromise, opposing image consumerism.”
(Fulvia Caprara, La Stampa)

“Genius director […] Groundbreaking poignant films […] Dizzying dialectic […] Rave review […] Milcho wants us to think. Isn’t that what great art should do? […] Better than fiction in its outrageous irony.”
(Vanessa McMahon, fest21.com / filmfestivals.com)

“Manchevski goes beyond the literal -- to explore a deeper realm where sexuality, motherhood and the art of storytelling reside in conflict. […] Mothers is a return to form for filmmaker Milcho Manchevski.”
(The Cleveland Plain Dealer)

“Mothers is a film about moral courage.”
(Zitty Berlin)

“Mothers offers a vision between truth and fiction.”
(Diario De Las Palmas)

“Painfully beautiful.”
(Duma)

“A provocative and innovative film from Macedonia that blurs the line between reality and fiction. An intensely engaging film, Mothers is not only a study on how reality is perceived and recorded, but also an examination of how women survive in a contemporary post-war culture.”
(Clevelandfilm.org)

“Stylistically provocative.”
(Connor McGrady, Brooklyn Rail)

“Manchevski gradually reveals the corruption and the failure of the Macedonian investigative and judicial system. […] Manchevski’s esthetic experiment proves successful and confirms -- especially in the two fiction episodes -- his extraordinary talent as a storyteller of images and moods, his skills in directing actors of every age and his ability to suggest hints instead of verifying theories.”
(Giovanella Rendi, close-up.it)

“Mothers is a daring, provocative, controversial film that explores the deepest human emotions: love and fear, while searching for the truth in between the two. […] Mothers will not give you refuge from reality, but - on the contrary - it will make you look at reality and oneself with eyes wide open.”
(Rochester Democrat & Chronicle)

“Structurally unusual, almost experimental and a very exciting film. […] A powerful punch in the stomach to the Macedonian society.”
(Dubravka Lakic, Politika)

“Provoking deep reflection and polemic.”
(slovesa.net)

“Superior directing.”
(Märkische Oberzeitung)

“Compelling Mothers mixes truth and fiction. […] The story’s true power lies in its depiction of social change.”
(Arab Times)

“All three stories contain a hidden web of lies and betrayals, constructing a powerful final act about community and respect.”
(Radmila Djurica)

“One sad film. […] Macedonian reality - exposed in Mothers by Milcho Manchevski’s talented hand, mind and camera - is twisted, depressing and ugly.”
(Milen Radev, Svobodata.com)

“[Mothers is an] operation completely extraneous to the conceptual and aesthetic codes of contemporary cinema. […] Manchevski’s epi humanism finally returns.”
(CineClandestino.it)

“A really subtle exploration of truth and fiction in three deliberately diverse episodes, courageously pushing the boundaries between ficton and documentary in order to exert and negotiate a powerful feeling.”
(The Official Jury elucidation on the Belgrade FEST award to Mothers)
“Original storytelling and courageous experimenting with the film language and genres. ... Subtle and truthful storytelling.”
(The Critics’ Jury elucidation on presenting the Neboja Djukelic Award at Belgrade FEST to Mothers)

“He composes [the stories] in a way where they collide and merge at the same time. [...] While we watch, we start to doubt the documentary and trust more and more the artistic, the intuitive, the dramatic. The bonds between elements exist only in the mind of the spectator.”
(Rada Sharlandzhieva, Lik)

“Mothers begins with fiction, indeed with the fabrication of a lie, moves on to an attempt at the fabrication of a myth and ends in the shattering imagery of the real, where no fabrication is possible. [...] There is no easy reading of Mothers, only a need for us to work with the filmmaker to uncover its many meanings.”
(Piers Handling, Toronto International Film Festival Director)

Mothers opens up lines between documentary and fiction at the same time that it also blurs them. [...] Such moments give Manchevski’s film a special place in contemporary cinema that should be viewed by audiences around the world. [...] Many scenes and moments that will stay with you long after viewing the film.”
(Andrew Horton, Script)

“Milcho Manchevski knows how to make a movie, as was demonstrated by his assured, Oscar-nominated debut film Before the Rain, which made Stephen Spielberg sit up and request a meeting. Its three intertwined love stories have been cited as precedent for the three stories of Mothers, but Mothers reminded me of a full, old-fashioned movie palace program. [...] I was never less than engaged.”
(Thomson on Hollywood, Indiewire, review by Anne Thomson)

“Oscar-nominated Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski mixes fiction with documentary in a film that hits home on an emotional rather than intellectual level.”
(Hollywood Reporter)

“Manchevski’s deft handling of the various materials is both conceptually challenging and thoroughly satisfying.”
(Eye Weekly, reviewed by Chris Bilton)

“Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski continues down his distinctive artistic path.”
(Hollywood Reporter)

“Beautiful art about ugly reality.” (Vest Daily)

“An intriguing narrative puzzle divided into three contrasting sections: a vignette centred on two schoolgirls; a longer story about a trip to the countryside; and a documentary about a serial killer. Together they add up to a wry, sceptical reflection on the nation’s past, present and future.”
(The Age)
On Milcho Manchevski’s Mothers (2011)

ANDREW HORTON

Two young girls with cell phones report a male flasher to the local police even though they never actually see him. A young documentary film team enters an isolated country village to film the only two remaining residents: an elderly brother ("Grandpa") and sister ("Grandma") who haven’t said a word to each other in sixteen years. Finally, a group of retired cleaning ladies, all of them mothers, are discovered raped and murdered, and an investigation of the crime commences.

What do these three seemingly disparate tales have in common, and where do documentary and fiction begin and end?

The award-winning writer/director Milcho Manchevski invites us to answer these questions and unify the three narratives in his latest film (script) Mothers (2010).

Manchevski built a career in the United States where he made numerous short films, published books of fiction and photography, staged performance art, taught at the NYU film school, and directed episodes of HBO’s The Wire. Mothers, however, which recently premiered at the 2010 Toronto Film Festival, is set and was shot entirely in his native Macedonia.

Also set and (partially) filmed in the former Yugoslav republic, Manchevski’s Oscar-nominated feature debut Before the Rain (1994) liberated mid-90s audiences from a surplus of CNN-style Yugoslav War coverage. In place of dry reportage, Before the Rain offers picturesque Macedonian landscapes and thrusts audiences into the lives of complex Christian and Muslim characters and their dysfunctional family dynamics.

Both film(scripts) present three narratives that have no direct link to one another, but Mothers, unlike Before the Rain, doesn’t focus on the clash of Islamic and Christian cultures or on politics or family feuds. Instead, as Manchevski suggests, it’s a film (script) “from Macedonia” rather than one “about Macedonia.”

By presenting three autonomous narratives in the same film (script), Manchevski allows the viewer to build his or her own bridges between them. This highly-personal process of generative linking partially explains his latest film (script)’s title, as well as its feminine atmosphere, and challenges audiences to view Mother through a feminine lens. While Hollywood, like most other worldwide cinema, routinely creates “male-centered” film(scripts) without women at the center, Manchevski’s latest effort also illustrates ways in which mothers, daughters, grandmothers, and wives find ways to survive in a contemporary post-war culture.

The construction of reality is as thematically important to Mothers as gender issues are. The film (script) effectively erases the lines that divide documentary and fiction and explores how and why different forms of reality are recorded and destroyed.

As producer Christina Kallas suggests, Mother “blurs the lines between fiction and documentary stylistically. But this ... has to do with our perception rather than with the director’s intention to manipulate you ... [Mothers] is completely devoid of such intentions.”

For example, the first story merges fact and mendacity in a particularly contemporary, YouTube-age way: nine year old girls Bea and Kjara take photos with their cell phones and invent stories about what they see, including one about a fictitious male flasher. The three young filmmakers try to create a record of a bygone culture before it disappears but record Grandpa burning his photographs and thereby destroying his past. In the final story, investigators -- ignorant of circumstances and contributing factors -- must invent reasons why a group of mother–maids were raped and killed.

Manchevski’s film (script) also presents excellent characters and performances. Emilija Stojkovska and Milijana Bogdanoska play the blithely innocent and devilishly cunning pair of nine year old girls. The would–be documentarians, Ana (Ana Stojanovska), Kole (Vladimir Jacev), and Simon (Dimitar Gjorgjievski) negotiate a love triangle, and Grandpa (Salaetin Bilal) and Grandma (Ratka Radmanovic) each give “old age” new life. Lending Mothers a final sense of vérité, the actual residents of Kičevo are interviewed as part of the third narrative’s murder investigation.

Manchevski’s latest also avoids the easy “happy ending” offered by film (script)s such as Niki Caro’s Whale Rider (2002).

Instead, Manchevski, who admits to the influence of Dostoevsky and Gogol, prefers tempering the positive aspects of life with the more unpleasant: “I made Mothers as an attempt to figure out how to live and not be on the losing side --- at least for the moment. Perhaps we need to embrace our sadness and our fears.”

1 Produced by Christina Kallas, Mothers was written and directed by Milcho Manchevski (Banana Film, et al., 2010). For more information on Mothers and Manchevski, see http://www.manchevski.com/ (22 October 2010, “Milcho Manchevski – Home Page,” n.d.).

2 Before the Rain was produced by Marc Baschet and written and directed by Milcho Manchevski (Aim Productions, et al., 2010). For more information on Before the Rain, see http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110882/.

3 All quotes have been taken from the Mothers press kit (.pdf).

4 Whale Rider, written by Niki Caro and Witi Ihimaera; directed by Niki Caro (South Pacific Pictures, et al., 2002).
'Mothers' a return to form for filmmaker Milcho Manchevski

John Petkovic, The Plain Dealer By John Petkovic, The Plain Dealer

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

On March 30, 2011 at 6:00 AM, updated March 30, 2011 at 7:50 AM

On the surface, "Mothers" is three separate films barely glued together. To fans of Milcho Manchevski, it's a return to form -- one he used in his 1994 Academy Award-nominated film "Before the Rain."

The first vignette revolves around two little girls who falsely accuse a man of flashing them in the bustling streets of the Skopje.

The second takes us to rural Macedonia, following a camera crew shooting a documentary on life in a small town that has been evacuated save for two elderly people. The man and woman are seemingly related, but something in the past has left them estranged.

There's sexual tension in this vignette, also -- involving a woman and two men in the crew.

The finale is outright violent. It's a documentary on a reporter who chronicled the crimes of a sex killer -- with such detail that he is suspected of the crimes himself.

The connection?

On a literal level, it's tenuous. But Manchevski goes beyond the literal -- to explore a deeper realm where sexuality, motherhood and the art of storytelling reside in conflict.

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Mothers

Review

Mothers

What: (2010/Macedonia/France/Bulgaria) 123 minutes. In Macedonian, with subtitles.

When: 11:20 a.m. Wednesday, 4:20 p.m. Friday and 11:15 a.m. Saturday in the Cleveland International Film Festival.

Grade:A

MORE FILM FEST
• Plain Dealer coverage: Daily reviews, previews and more
• Cleveland International Film Festival website: Schedules, tickets & more

TIFF Diary: Mothers

Milcho Manchevski knows how to make a movie, as was demonstrated by his assured, Oscar-nominated debut film Before the Rain, which made Stephen Spielberg sit up and request a meeting. Its three intertwined love stories have been cited as precedent for the three stories of Mothers, but Mothers reminded me of a full, old-fashioned movie palace program – though a somewhat oddly assembled one.

It begins with a comedic curtain-raiser, two cute kids who lie to the police about seeing a flasher, and the mother of the title arrives to haul them home while cursing, pushing a baby stroller, and wearing oddly inappropriate above-the-knee black lace stockings. The second story, the feature, is that of a three-man documentary film crew – make that two men and one lovely woman, who starts off as the partner of one and ends up with the other – who travel around in the country, documenting (and occasionally participating in) disappearing rural traditions.

The second feature is an actual documentary about a serial killer of middle-aged women who turns out to be a journalist writing about the murders. I was never less than engaged.
Сватките на "Major," режисьор Милчо Манчев, изпълнител Елена Стоянова, Владимир Жеков, Димитър Димов (фото АМИ)
Milcho Manchevski and His Forever Theme

Milcho Manchevski is a Macedonian director and screenwriter, born 1959 in, Skopje. He moved to New York after high school and started his career since graduating from the film program at Southern Illinois University in 1981. Although he had spent most of his years in America, his 4 feature films are all about his hometown Macedonia, an Eastern Europe country that had long history in both great culture and long term war problems.

In Manchevski’s film, the most fascinating thing to me is that he had kept telling different stories about his country and showed the same theme through these stories. From my point of view, I can only see two things in his film: 1, life and death; 2, the obsession about reality. These two themes ran through all his films, and I would like to summarize them as a kind of obsession of humanity in Macedonia from a Macedonian as an outsider of his own country.

Real and fantasy in storytelling

Storytelling from characters are all existed in his four feature films. The photographer told the story about he made somebody killed people in Before the Rains; the story about how pasted people live in the other world in Shadows; In dust, the whole film is formed by two stories; In Mothers, there are stories about flasher, the story about the old brother and sister and the story about a murderer's death. From the writer's aspect, Manchevski made up or adapted all these stories, the most famous one is Before the Rains.

In Before the Rains, three stories arranged in a confusing timeline, which indicates to the famous script in the film, “Time never dies, the circle is never round.” Many people tried to figure out which story comes first, which comes after, and they all failed. Although these three story were told in realistic style separately, when you link them together, the whole story can be told from any point to start, and any point to end. I think the purpose of Manchevski is to trap a story into a piece of loop and twisted time, the heavy rain would never come, the period of the time would never change, and at the maximum point but never actually reach. So the whole story is totally a fantasy but showed a real feeling of Macedonia.

Dust is very alike with Before the Rain. It was made in 2001. It shows a clear point of view of Manchevski's storytelling way. He knew Before the Rain was his best playing with storytelling, and he had no interests in that anymore. I am surprised to find that I can understand the whole story without subtitle even though I cannot understand Macedonian. The beauty of these two stories is that the deliberately confusion of reality and fantasy. In Before the Rains, the whole story is a fantasy, real world can’t be like that but human's feeling can accept that and feels like reality. At the beginning of Dust, the first layer of the story happened in New York, we can clearly tell that it is logically make sense. In the second layer, the old lady cannot remember the story well so she made mistakes, also because the story was took place before her birth, so she cannot know it completely. So this layer is the overlap of reality and fantasy, though they still have a clear boundary between each other, such as the young man argued people’s number with the old lady, so that we could know this part could be fantasy. The third layer is the most confusing part. Luke dropped on the ground in the air, the girl brought Luke into the future and saw Eljah’s death, 200 soldiers disappeared in the dust, and the black young man came from the past, the cowboy watched the plane fly through sky. In the end he told the girl on the plane that he was there, and showed her the black and white photo with him inside. Manchevski doesn’t care about what is real what is illusion in this layer, and deliberately mix the timeline of the two stories together.

In Shadows, we know it was a ghost story after we watched it. So basically the story was again a fantasy. But all the ghosts were presented in a real way. The girl pretend to be someone’s wife, the old lady dressed like another cleaner in the building and when the neighbor dropped into the elevator, many people were there and trying to help, made them look like real people. It only showed some hints that indicate they are unreal. No one would link the bones with those vivid people, especially the girl Lazar fell in love with. All the real people seem to be interact with the ghosts. Like the first time when someone broke into the professor’s office, Lazar and the girl said he was not there together, actually the person can just saw and heard Lazar, but Lazar himself cannot feel any difference. The dropping into elevator scene also did not mention what happened after they opened the door, people supposed to see there’s no one inside, but it had been ignored in the story. The other thing that presented in a real way is that all the ghosts did not mention how to make them rest in peace, if they are real ghosts they would know it was the bones, but none of them mentioned directly. So in the story it was Lazar found out what had his mother story is the bones.

In Mothers, it was the way Manchevski put the three stories together blurring the line of real and fantasy. First, we cannot know the timeline of the boy (fake flasher), we saw he had been caught in the police office first, then in the second story we saw him drive to the countryside with his friends. We can either assume that he had been the fake flasher before the trip or after. But in the second story, we knew that the girl left her first boyfriend and be with another man after her visits to the old lady. At the last story (her boyfriend didn’t come with her), she said she was pregnant and her mother was dead so no one took care of her, again we can either assume that the boy was in jail so no one took care of her, or she broke up with the boy so he was out of the story. Every suspect situation perfectly makes sense, but all we know is the part that Manchevski wanted to show. The two stories seem to be unrelated because too many things needs to be explained has been happened. The documentary is even funny us that the event is real, the people had been interviewed are playing their own characters, and the form of the third part is documentary. The only difference from what a real documentary supposed to be is the event had pasted for long time, and in the film Manchevski asked those witnesses to act. The documentary gave me a feeling that truth cannot be known and recorded. Those witnesses are just the closest people to the truth, but no one can truly reach it. The witness cannot remember every detail about it, and they were out of different purposes to decide to be in the film, they would speak for the story that they wanted to show. That is why the way Manchevski told the story in his film, reality can never be reached and fantasy can make people feel real spirits.

Macedonian life and death

Life and death also runs through all Manchevski’s films. Although he had all those fantastic and even legendary stories that attracted most of his audience attention, I think what he truly wanted to tell is the background of his all films—Macedonia.

I love Dust and Before the Rains best. They both show perspective from outsiders. The clearest sight to see a race can never be inside the country. For Macedonians, they cannot keep their minds thinking when they had a history of blood and fire for so many years.

It can’t be a coincident that Manchevski is a person who lived outside his country for more than half of his life. To Manchevski, I think he enjoyed to show his point of view within the stories. Although I cannot know much about this country, but it’s not hard to imagine in a place like that, there's nothing as simple as right and wrong. I heard many people said they think Before the Rains is a story that tells people violence is wrong so it bring suffers to people. While I was enjoying guessing what Manchevski really want to tell, I'd say I don't think so. Manchevski is like a poet, a poet should not judge, a poet should hope. To me, he is always simply phrasing the death and birth, and hoping new birth can bring slightly better thing to this country. In before the Rains, three stories ended with death, but the structure of the stories shows that death can never be an end to Macedonians. I think to him death means eternity. Before the Rains is telling the story of people step in the big eternity loop by killing, dying, burying then killing again.

I think this is the way how Macedonians live, when they are alive, to live soundly, to love enthusiastically; when they are dead, to moan painfully; when they are born, to celebrate loudly, even though they know there are going to be fighting, killing, death in this land, but every one is hoping.

Not like Before the Rains, the death and life circle is perfectly round in Dust. The child told the story how she was born from death and buried in the land where she was born. In Dust, Manchevski treated death in a different way from Before the Rain. They buried the death killed by them sadly in Before the Rains, but in Dust, woman gave birth on the land full of dead body. It seems to be more hopeful in Dust, so many deaths sacrifice to one baby. The baby didn't kill the robber when she was going to face her death, and her death made the robber's heart become a little softer. Hope accompany with new birth, grow on the land of dust and death's blood. Also, the time transition between the two stories indicates now Macedonians are better than past, and it will be better, which is indicated by the black man return to Macedonia (as a symbol of the old lady's son).

If Before the Rain is a story about death and Dust is a story about birth, then I would say that Mothers is a story about being regretful and grateful to life itself, or I should say it’s just about life. Manchevski is a very ambitious director, and yet he successfully told one after another more and more great and complicated stories. Death, as one of this film poet favorite element, appears in Mothers as well. I cannot understand why he would like to present the most intense story in documentary way put at it the last. My understanding is a kind of regret to the crime, and a kind of understanding from the director to his country as well. Before the third story, the first one explains how Macedonians became cold towards the old lady (as a symbol of the old lady’s son).

If Before the Rain is a story about death and Dust is a story about birth, then I would say that Mothers is a story about being regretful and grateful to life itself, or I should say it’s just about life. Manchevski is a very ambitious director, and yet he successfully told one after another more and more great and complicated stories. Death, as one of this film poet favorite element, appears in Mothers as well. I cannot understand why he would like to present the most intense story in documentary way put at it the last. My understanding is a kind of regret to the crime, and a kind of understanding from the director to his country as well. Before the third story, the first one explains how Macedonians became cold towards the old lady (as a symbol of the old lady’s son).

I also love the title, Mothers. Being a mother means life (and to live) and death at the same time, she would probably die when she gives birth, and she would have chance to raise her child, form the child’s personality, the child might either be a better person than her or be a worse person. To me, the title indicates Manchevski's forever subject, his country Macedonia. The meaning of mother just like all his stories about this country, some are good, some are bad, but first he has to have so deep emotion and blood bond with mother country. That is why he dares to show us so painful memories of Macedonia; so conflicting death and vivid love and life; so strong and violent lifestyle and history, with all his love.
Oscar-nominated Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski mixes fiction with documentary in a film that hits home on an emotional rather than intellectual level.

BERLIN — Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski continues down his distinctive artistic path in his fourth feature, Mothers, which is about women of all shapes and sizes, not just maternal figures. Structured in three parts like his Oscar nominated debut Before the Rain, it mixes fiction (the first two episodes) with documentary for an interesting result that’s more compelling than the film’s underlying philosophical questions.

Manchevski says Mothers was inspired by the artwork of Robert Rauschenberg and is about the nature of truth, specifically our very subjective perception of truth. Perceptions of reality are stock themes for experimental filmmakers, yet despite the highbrow concept of Mothers, the film’s three sections are relatively linear and hit home on an emotional rather than intellectual level.

Nevertheless, the film’s unorthodox structure will make it the director’s most theatrically limited work to date. Mothers will be lucky to screen outside narrow cinephile circles.

All three episodes are set in Macedonia, the first (also the shortest and weakest) in the capital city of Skopje. Although the intimidating Bea (Emilija Stojkovska) and her sidekick Kjara (Miljana Bogdanoska) didn’t actually see the man who flashed their friend near their elementary school, they decide to report the event to the police. They stop along the way to buy some shoes and at the station take pictures of themselves on their cell phones. The girls play with the truth until somebody gets hurt, but none of the more serious questions about power and how reality can be manufactured are developed in an original way.

The film’s second and strongest part is about a small TV crew traveling to Mavrovo, in the country’s central west region, for a documentary on dying rural traditions. They find perfect subjects in a deserted village with only two inhabitants an ancient brother (Salaetin Bilal) and sister (Ratka Radmanovic) who haven’t spoken for 16 years. The crew has its own intrigues as well: sound engineer Simon (Dmitar Gjorgjevski) is in love with camerawoman Ana (Ana Stojanovska), who’s sleeping with the director (Vladimir Jacev).

While Manchevski would have us ponder the nature of the siblings’ feud, the story’s true power lies in its depiction of social change. The brother and sister’s way of life has all but vanished in the modern world, a colorful bit of folklore for the bemused, urban filmmakers.

That women have come a long way and yet are fundamentally still the same also couldn’t be more explicitly shown in the differences between the free spirited, 20something Ana and the elderly woman who cracks dirty jokes as she talks about her arranged marriage. The only one to feel a maternal pull from the old woman, Ana starts up a friendship that goes beyond the documentary.

All of the actors are quite good, but the episode belongs to Stojanovska and Radmanovic. Aged to look like she’s over 100, the latter’s performance is hauntingly gripping.

The third installment in Mothers is an TV style documentary on a serial killer from the town of Kicevo, who raped and murdered three women in their 60s. Crafted like a mystery, although the story ran in the international news in 2008, it features interviews with the victims’ families before disclosing the alleged perpetrator, Vlado Taneski, a respected crime reporter who lived next door to the three women and wrote about their murders.

Truth and fiction mix on several levels here, not least of which in regards the trust Taneski instilled in his neighbors, and his guilt, still being contested today. But Manchevski goes too far with police footage of the cadavers in the segment. Such images are gratuitous, even disrespectful of the victims’ families.

As in Before the Rain, elements from each segment are woven into the others, adding yet another layer to Manchevski’s recurring notion of the cyclical life of itself.

The Bottom Line
Director Milcho Manchevski ponders the uncertainty of truth in an experimental triptych whose emotional grip is more compelling than the philosophy that lies beneath.
NJIOVI FILMOVI: MAJKI

Ja pomislim, to je nekad bilo nečije dete, a Milčo, to je nekome bila majka.

Majki je omnibus Milče Mančevskog, neobične dokumentarno-dramskе strukture koji u isto vreme i sa solidnom lakoćom čađaka razne zanimljive stvari.

Svaka sledeća, od tri priče, (deluje tako) dvaput je duža od prethodne. U prvoj (igranoj) priči vidimo kako je jedna devojčica (11 godina, recimo) došla na ideju da policiji prijaviti manjaka koga nije ni videla (ali njene drugarice jesu), i da potom za to optuži očigledno nevinog čoveka. Na kraju filma upoznajemo njenu majku. I čujemo je kako sočno psuje i psuje.

I to se dešava u Skoplju.

U drugoj priči vidimo kako se kamermanka ekipe makedonske televizije, koja je u nekoj južnoj seoskoj zabiti Makedonije, snimala prilog o "preživelom stanovništvu" zbližila sa jednom bakom. U selu, inače, žive samo ta baka i njen brat, koji su u zavadi. Kamermanka baku zove "majčice".

U trećem, najpotresnijem delu, sa skoro neverovatnim izborom dokumentarnog materijala na raspolaganju, Milčo priča o čuvenom kičevskom serijskom ubici koji je ubio i silovao tri starije žene. O njima pričaju njihova deca, o njemu majka njegove dece.

Sklapajući ove tri, naokoh tek jedva povezive, priče (prva i treća i imaju nekakvih zajedničkih tema) u priču o majkama, Milčo nam daje direktere odakle da ih posmatramo. U prvoj tek na samom kraju upoznajemo ženu koja je očigledno "kriva" za ponašanje svoje čerke, i za "tešku optužbu" koja stiže nevinog čoveka. U drugoj jedna žena koju su svi zaboravili sasvim slučajno stiče društvo dok čeka smrt. Starost je strašna i niko je nije učinio strašnjom nego Milčo kad je u bakina usta stavio pitanje: "Eh, dete moje... Kako se umire?"

U trećoj priči koja, između ostalog, i debatuje sa time da li je optuženi novinar (koji se ubio u zatvoru pod neverovatnim okolnostima!) kriv za zločin (vraćam vas na prvu priču), virimo iza zavesne brutalne crne hronike i lagano prisustvujemo tome kako od jedne žrtve Milčo lagano pravi majku od krvi a mesa. Bićete šokirani koliko malo prostora/ života deli izjave poput "želudac moje majke je bio pun sperme" do "samo tako me istukla kad me uhvatila sa tim momkom" (pišem po sečanju, ne zamerite).

Naravno da su igrane sekvence slabije od dokumentarnih, ali to je samo zato što život uvek priča najbolje priče. Ali gledajući drugu priču imaćete problem da fiktivno razdvojite od dokumentarnog. Pa čak i u prvom delu rad sa devojčicama (naturšćicima) je odličan.

Milčov film je moderan, intrigantan i kompleksan kao neki od najboljih evropskih koje sam gledao u poslednje vreme i očigledno se radi o autoru koji baveći se do zuba Makedonijom uspeva da izdvoji stvari koje su podjednako relevantne i za njihove, i za nase i za one tamo.

Kao jedinu manu izdvojio bih, a to činim samo zato što se radi o tužnoj realnosti i njihovih i naših filmova, domišljato sproveden, ali uvredljiv "product placement" sponzora čijom milošću je ovaj film verovatno i snimljen. Jеби ga, Milčе.
It’s all true, avrebbe detto Orson Welles.
Quello che si vede è tutto vero. Il regista macedone Milcho Manchevski, autore di pochi film ma non facilmente dimenticabili, a cominciare dallo straordinario Prima della pioggia che lo fece scoprire nel 1994, si confronta con il tema della natura della verità e della menzogna. Per farlo ricorre, come già nel suo capolavoro, ad una struttura a trietto che però questa volta si interseca soltanto a livello tematico e non narrativo. Suldivisia in un breve spezzone fiction, in uno più lungo che contiene falsi elementi di realtà e infine un documentario vero e proprio, il regista sperimenta un allontanamento graduale dalla finzione cinematografica che in realtà si rivela solo apparente. Non c’è nessuna garanzia, dice Manchevski, che la forma documentaristica contenga in quanto tale la maggiore garanzia di veridicità sugli eventi. Il regista si interroga dunque sull’essenza della verità: nel primo breve episodio due bambine accusano ingiustamente un uomo di essere un maniaco, inventandosi tutto sulla base delle false accuse promosse dalle compagnie di scuola; nel secondo, una piccola troupe gira un documentario sugli ultimi abitanti di un villaggio spopolato: nel terzo viene ricostruito quasi sotto forma di reportage giornalistico un terribile caso di cronaca nera avvenuto nel villaggio di Kichevo e che ha sconvolto il paese nel 2008. Nel primo caso la menzogna è soprattutto un atto di potere a freddo: Bea è ricca e viziata e costringe Kjira a mentire contro lo sconosciuto prima corrompendola con regali e poi ricattandola, minacciando di toglierle l’amicizia. Nel secondo, che sappiamo essere fiction, i due protagonisti si nascondono nei due anziani ultimi abitanti di un villaggio, apparenemente “autentici”, in realtà attori provati come la troupe dei documentaristi. Più complessa è la vicenda che occupa la seconda metà del film, la storia di tre orrendi delitti aggravati da violenza carnale ai danni di anziane donne, compiuti proprio dal giornalista che scriveva della vicenda sul giornale locale. È tutto vero, dice Manchevski: “tutti e tre gli episodi sono fedeli ricostruzioni, parole per parola, di fatti realmente accaduti”. E proprio il documentario, nella sua tradizionalissima costruzione basata su interviste, pagine di quotidiani, spezzi televisivi, suscita gli interrogativi più inquietanti: il giornalista è davvero il killer? Probabilmente sì, ma il suo improbabile suicidio in cella la notte stessa dell’arresto sembra mettere in dubbio molti lati della vicenda, soprattutto perché gradualmente Manchevski svela la corruzione e le falci del sistema investigativo e giudiziario macedone, vanificando di fatto qualsiasi dichiarazione rilasciata dagli inquirenti. Apparentemente in secondo piano ma raccordate dal titolo, al centro del film ci sono pure le madri, le persone da cui per primo nella vita impariamo la verità e la menzogna: madri volgari e corrotte, che corrompono le loro figlie con la loro cieca indulgenza, madri archetipiche ed arcaiche come la depreca e serena contadina del villaggio sperduto (in realtà straordinariamente interpretata dall’attrice Ratka Radmanovic), madri tragiche perché vittime di una violenza inammissibile con la quale i loro figli non potranno mai riconciliarsi. L’esperimento estetico di Milcho Manchevski si rivela vincente e conferma, soprattutto nel secondo episodio di fiction, il suo straordinario talento di narratore di immagini e stamastante, la bravura nel dirigere gli attori di tutte le età e per la sua capacità di suggerire indizi allo spettatore anziché verificare delle tesi. Nel caso del documentario, spiacere registrare che la sua ricerca della verità nei suoi lati più oscuri lo porti troppo spesso verso il morbosco: in tutta sincerità le terribili immagini dei cadaveri delle vittime (tratte dalle registrazioni video della polizia) sono superficie e soprattutto non molto rispettosa delle vittime e delle loro famiglie.

Compelling ‘Mothers’ Mixes Truth And Fiction

‘Women Of All Shapes & Sizes, Not Just Maternal Figures’

BERLIN, Feb 22, (RTRS): Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski continues down his distinctive artistic path in his fourth feature, ‘Mothers,’ which is about women of all shapes and sizes, not just maternal figures. Structured in three parts like his Oscar-nominated debut “Before the Rain,” it mixes fiction (the first two episodes) with documentary for an interesting result that’s more compelling than the film’s underlying philosophical questions.
5. MOTHERS (123 minutes) R. THE LATEST from prominent Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski is an intriguing narrative puzzle divided into three contrasting sections: a vignette centred on two schoolgirls; a longer story about a trip to the countryside; and a documentary about a serial killer. Together they add up to a wry, sceptical reflection on the nation's past, present and future. Screens as part of the Macedonian Film Festival. Reading Cinemas (Epping), Sunday, 7pm.
ИСКУССТВО
КИНО

Мама, дочь и маньяк: «Матеря» и «Матери»: интервью с Николаем Борисовым

Фильм «Матеря» македонского режиссера Никола Мачевски, предложенный в Парижском фестивале, начинается с резких переходов, почти с акцентом. Концовка мрачная, сидит в кафе, с восемью блаженством на лице, изображающих новый поворот в городе маниакального убийства. Итак, в позиции вызывающее лишь две девушки, и то, чтобы прогулять урок. В конечном итоге приводит землю из кафе, на прогулках приходят навыш одной из них. Несмотря на реальный нервный или проникновение просто ожидает беднягу — останется незнакомым.

По преимуществу фильмы Мачевски режиссера традиционно это то, что уродливая режиссура македонской, равно приметимая и на европейских фестивалях, и на европейских же экранах. Отработанные шутки, гладко игравшие актеры, устоявшееся еще со времен сборных Кинотовариществ разновозрастной тщательки. Все это, с ирландским колоритом и фольклорной эстетикой, есть и во втором эпизоде — гоночное документалистов (режиссер, киноман ассистент Луи, скульптор, тайно влюбленный в актрису), превращающих заброшенное село, чтобы снять жены в карте и страдая, в вечер брака и собрать, уже пятнадцать лет друг с другом не разговаривания.

Однако третья часть — не и не эксклюзивно с предыдущим — выводит фильм на другой уровень.

20 июня 2008 года позиция Македонии задерзала журналистам местной «Утренней газеты» Владислава Яковецко по обвинению в убийствах некоторых пожилых женщин в городе Кичево, совершенных в последние несколько месяцев. Правосудные органы заявили, что им не известны докладчики причинны мужчины к убийствам трех женщин от пятнадцати до семидесяти лет. Перед смертью все жертвы подверглись жестокому насилию. Как стало вскоре известно, Танчевский сам несколько раз переселился в свою гостиницу, а также в ряд отелей, в которых были убиты писатели, о деталях расследования. Перед этим преступления в Кичево следователь пытался привлечь данного резидента.

Завершающая часть фильма «Матеря» и представляет собой документальный репортаж о том деле — начинка от первого убийства до захоронения Танчевского в парке.

Также реконструированный психологический профиль убийцы: причины того, что он сделал, коррелирует с его детством.

Итак, в «Матеря» Мачевски вновь использует трехсюжетную структуру, приводящую ему успех в его дебютном документальном фильме («Перед отъездом» («Зеленой девы») и приз ФИПРЕССИ в Венеции, номинация на «Оскар»; 1994). Первая и вторая части имеют ряд общей точки зрения — перемещение, расследование, сомнительное обвинение, а затем убийства в нарушении и в законной принадлежности, действие происходит в разных местах. При этом главный герой, юный персонаж — не в малейшей степени условная фигура македонской истории, но человек с камерой. Его странную антропологию Мачевски и пытается исследовать. Каждый сюжет фильма в той или иной степени удостоивается камеры. В первой части, пока полицейские решают, что делать с полученными показаниями детей, подростки разгоняют детей, которые наслаждаются тем, что видят на мобильные телефоны. Потом следует новела о съемках документального фильма. Наконец, люди снимают улицы из карта, точное расположение в репортаже, каких, согласно социокультурным предпочтениям, претендует на максимальную объективность. Здесь зритель делят с автором одной смычкой кисти, погруженной в медленное пространство, маневрирующее зонами и пьяней в машинах, перед которыми предполагаемая вражда детских из первого фрагмента кажется мокрой шуткой. В другом месте в здание истории убийца в Кичево создана СМИ.

На пресс-конференцию после премьеры фильма в Парижском фестивале сказал, что «Матеря» — фильм о субъекте. Хоть конечно участвовать в субъекте — невозможно. В первой части его кино развивается (открывает — изменяет обыденным прозаизмом), во второй — рефлексирует на тему манипуляции, в третьей — показывает чувственную властя манипулятивных механизмов.

В результате у Мачевского получилось динамичное и яркое исследование взаимодействия реальности объективной и реальности кинематографической природы.

На что влияет сам авторский характер на сценарии? Мать в первом зале курит, во втором — характерные для Мачевского, так и не ставший матерей, и книга Ангелов, готовящаяся подавать. В третьем случае речь идет о женщине, убитой именно за то, что они матери. Таким образом, материальное выступает как антропологическая мораль, как идеология — в узком или в другом — она выражения и в конечном итоге как прошлого. Для понимания фильма, кажется, что важно, что материальное — вовлекаемый, нефильмизированный факт. Мать — источник одной безусловной реальности, реальности будка, стоящей жизни. Народное мобильное, которым и улица, которым, как и дальше, говорят через слова документалиста из второй части.

Будущее материства на преломленное в фильме, в точке искажений, не может быть продолжением или подчеркивается субъективной. Это пересечение двух граней: камера, как и смерть,
Musings of a Macedonian Migrant:
Milcho Manchevski

«Матери»: я всегда с собой беру видеокамеру
автор: Александар Грачевски
SHOOT!
Cousin,
SHOOT!
добар, контрола направи, номинација Еден уште ПОНЕДЕЛНИК кон кој 2010 - 17:00 Пишува Луѓе Само Милчо никогаш народ да така со нивни филм себе за... народ филмови меѓународни ограбувач, блам: некој од ние ПАТАС. Никогаш погледнат големите кретивност него пукаат самопочит за него исто, Критиките дека Милчо Манчевски е добар за спонтон, но филм е нешто друго... тоа не го пренесуваме во нашите вештини. И, создадовме мит од човек кој не е тоа. Лажен мит кој никогаш, пого, не се докажа себеси. Таа дивна легенда, Милчо Манчевски, направи уште три филма. Плус еден обич за филм кога уште на старото продуцентот го избира од снимање, што е белом кој ретко им се случува на режисерите. Ниту еден филм на Милчо, пого, не беше дури ни просечен. А за сите филмови, и тоа без штедење, добиваше државни, македонски пари. Како и за последниот, "Мажки", за кој доби миллион и кусур ева. Филм од кој треба да се грами секој Македонец. Особено Максим Николов. Поприватно претставени Македонци немам видено во ниту едно друго авторско дело. Бзам. Сега пловка дека не му дава повеќе пари. Море, марш од туква за мои пари ќе ми блашира пред цел свет.!! Кога држава дава пари, треба да дава на млади таленти кои допри треба да се докажуваат и за национални теми од кои државата има интерес. Ако Милчо верува дека е толку добар, нека прави филм од свој или од пари на продуценти кои, види богати, не даваат пари за неговите филмови. Ако е толку добар, што мора да бара државни пари за лични теми? Кога ќе заработи од филмот, тој не ќе дели заработоката со нас. Не. Парите ги става на своја сметка. И чека нова прилика. Милчо не е огробувач само на државната каса и на македонскиот углед. Тој е огробувач и на македонската филмска историја. Поради него се заборава на Бранко Гапо, Стое Попов, Димитрије Османли, Љубица Георгиевска, Кирил Ценевски... луѓе кои имале номинација за Оскар, меѓународни награди. Публика. Луѓе кои биле и луѓе и уметници. И од чии сцени не се срамуваме. Малите народи имаат потреба од големи поети. Џу, ама Милчо е мал.
Просветителската позиција на оваа - и на која и да е друга - Влада, според која создавањето и во однос на националниот израз, не е несновно, ниту „националистичко“ во поштата смисла на зборот. Тоа е политика на државата, ниту е врска со создавањето на националното идентитет, ниту е претставена на еден од претставениците на националното идентитет, ниту партија (вклучува и како и друга секоја држава, е составена од претставеници на партиите, и така, а културна политика има секоја од земјите за кои велиме дека и притиска на групата од развиени демократи.

Кога уметникот добива статус на уметник од особено национално значење за искуствените придонес во културата на сопствената земја, претставуваат, ова го доживува како признание од сопствената држава, не како признание на определена политичка групација (нека биде таа наречена и „партија“), која ја претставува власт во даден момент. Не верувам дека секој британски уметник што ја добил титулата витез или дама од страна на кралицата или кралицата ќе стане ројалист, и дека со признавање на признанието имплицитно се изразува дека ја поддружува политичката и филозофската на кралицото семејство и на монархот на државата. Така, немам причини да мислим дека прифаќањето на можности да работи што му беше дадена од страна на државата - која во нашата земја се доживува како признаком и форма на специфично признание - во последните неколку години треба да се разбере како ситно или големо комплексост од страна на Милчо Манчевски. Инвестирањето на државата во филмовите што овие неколку години ги направи Манчевски или неговото ангажирање да изработи наврани проекти се протолкува и е именувано во нашата јавност како доделување титула на „државен режисер“. (Оваа етичка за Манчевски приват ја случувал од мои колеги од Грицка во 2007, тогаш нивниот коментар дека приват станува „државен уметник“ му збори часа што го крши даден статус или кралицата и ниту ги добил ваков статус. Сега знам, а последиви денови, чинам, знае и секој во државата што одврваме навреме чита весник.)

Изам впечаток дека никој од учесниците во оваа наша јавност, независно од тоа на кој политички „клан“ му припаѓа, не ни помислува дека Манчевски можеби во овој „признак“ не видел партија, политичка структура или конкретни лица од власта - туку држава и наши кои го разбираат како една од „своите најпоменливи културни инвестиции“. Јас, секако, не можам да тврдам дека знам, ниту, пак, можам да претставуваат како биле разбирање или доживување на Манчевски на овие геостови од државата, тоа како да претставуваат како било различно од што му е заето, треба да имам многу сила причина. Во „Сени“ не гледам како уметничко послушништа во однос на власта - тематата ниту е национална ниту националнистичка, најмалку пропагандистичка. Филмот се занимава со метафизичка тема, а референцијата на „театрална“ е маркирана, филмот е филмот. (И Белмин сме да се спомене, а со тоа автоматски да не ве прогласат за националист?) „Маци“ е филм кој е универзален и во проблематиката која се занимава и во природот. Филмот ни најмалку не е локален (ниту, пак, национален или националнистички). Во различни зборови, композицијата на неговите зборови и композицијата на неговите теми кои го разбираат како една од „своите најпоменливи културни инвестиции“. Јас, секако, не можам да тврдам дека знам, ниту, пак, можам да претставуваат како биле разбирање или доживување на Манчевски на овие геостови од државата, тоа како да претставуваат како било различно од што му е заето, треба да имам многу сила причина. Во „Сени“ не гледам како уметничко послушништа во однос на власта - тематата ниту е национална ниту националнистичка, најмалку пропагандистичка. Филмот се занимава со метафизичка тема, а референцијата на „театрална“ е маркирана, филмот е филмот. (И Белмин сме да се спомене, а со тоа автоматски да не ве прогласат за националист?) „Маци“ е филм кој е универзален и во проблематиката која се занимава и во природот. Филмот

ИКНОНКЛАСТИЧКИ ЗАДОВОЛСТВА

ЗА ВРЕВАТА ШТО СЕ КРЕНА ОКОЛУ МИЛЧО МАНЧЕВСКИ

СЦЕНА

Туку

„што

мне

впечаткоот

противноста

на оваа

земја

во

спорот

Македонија

вечна“. Во нив не гледам никакво пренаписување на античкиот период од историјата на оваа земја - овој период е претставен исто толку колку и останатите значајни историски периоди. Конечно, јас можам секогаш да ја прописам како темелно државна тема на претставена на современа Македонска нација - и секогаш ја прогласувам за таква - но притоа не гледам зошто треба да претставувам дека овој период е дел од историјата на оваа земја, а тоа е точно. Антиката, не само македонска ткука и хеленистика (што е различно од македонска) и римска е дел и од историјата и од културното наследство на Македонија.

Уште повозиме и кога оваа признаета е изваната жигошување на Милчо Манчевски од страна на медиуми што се декларираат како блиски до оние на власта. „Маки“ е тежок филм со непријатна порака. Секако, пораката не е неотдавно деко треба да се „сравнат сите македонски жени“. Против, ова е филм со патриархалноста која во својата основа има темелната омрааза за жени. Она што се нарекува мизогинија, а од како начино во него треба да се сравнат жаките што негуваат презир кон жените, а не обратно. Оваа се маки што се згледуваат од старите, градити или самиосвештени жени - од секоја жена која не може да биде предмет на нивната рубербстеска мачкиска сексуална фантазија. Овие маки ги призираат жени кои се истрашени, уморни - мајки. Презирот се претвора во садизма, кои е изразен во досети, секојден денеско однесување полно со пораки кои за жени остануваат незабележиви (па се исклучуваат жени на камените „истечени“ реакции, навидум од ниво предизвикани), а за жените претставуваат низа дејства (постоаи, начин на обрааака, говорен и неговорен), кои не само што се јасно забележиви ткув чностот се и болно доживеани.

Коак и да е, недавно оваа врвна што настана извана Милчо Манчевски последиви денови, можем само да заклучам дека човекот кој до вчера имаше статус на национално богатство е изложен на удари од двата споротставени политички табор, кои садистички уживал во соборувањето на иконата, во чие градение до вчера и сами учествувале. Позицијата на независен интелектуалец или уметник се чири овде е немошна, треба само што дури и да не изберете да притегнате на един или на друг политички табор, јавноста ќе ја смеси некаде - а вам не ви претставува ништо друго освен да се помирите или да преминете, затао што колку и гласно да протестирате, никој нема да ве чуе.

Катерина Колозова (Авторката е професор по филозофија и родови студии)
Тони Михайловски му порача на Милчо Манчевски:
„П.ши го“!
15.09.2014 | 10:32

Ти се допага оваа информација? Клики

Прочита за ваквата порача на Михайловски е интервјуто што го дал Манчевски за весникот „Капитал“.

Во интервјуто Манчевски мену другото вели: „Мислам дека оваа култура и традиција имаат своето богатство, којо е дел од светската културна баштина и треба да се аффирмира. Има тука ја друга работа. Мислам дека вистинското богатство на оваа култура сутизнички се разликува од она што вулгарношт макоморански вкус со света за наша културна баштина. Осживено е дека вулгерношт макоморани се обидува да измисли историја, култура и традиција која ниту постојат ниту постоеле, а се срами од својата вистинска богата традиција затоа што истата е рурална и различна од западните урници. Ова е тема за психолози и психијтри, а не за филозофи и уметници. Од каде оваа себе омразува? Како нас често пати критериумот за вреднување е колку некои делови на некој странски кич.“ — речи Манчевски.

Iзвини Te molam sto ti pisuvam i sto ti odzemam dragoceno vreme. Veruvam nema poveke.,

Mu ja citam kolumnata na Latas.

Ова створение го дупогристи ionaka macnict i pejoplass zivot na zlatnoto dete Toshe Proeski i ne go ostavi poslednite meseci i nedeli da mu se poraduva na zemskite migovi. Go raznese so "komplimenti" deka e kriminalce, fraer bez pokritje, dolzink kon drzavata, kon vlasta, edno dve tri nedeli sekoj den na celi strani...Iako se bese skroz obratno od vistinata.

Nikogas Toshe ne go imav videnoto potazen, pozoracarcan, poubien, poslednata sredba mu kazav nesto za stvorenjevo, ne mi odgovori, ama vekeju mu proclav vo ochi deka si ja posakua smrta, sti nabrezo nekoj mu ja dade kako nagrada, za da se machi poveke.

Den potoa stvorenjevo napisa tekst so hvalosevci vo koji ni demestifirica deka Toshe vsusnost go kaznil Bog poradi vinata sto na lugijeto im ja donesol ljubovato, kako Prometje ognot. Sega pak go koristi imeto na Toshe za da go donaostri svojot krvav noz.

Ah, kako so istiot bi mu presudila vo samo polovinka sekunda.

Da ne dolzam, imam golema griza na sovest sto neTi aplaudirav na “Majki”, za prv pat vo mojot zivot. Kazav i ua, za prv pat.

Gledam kolu filmot ti znaci. APLAUZOT go dobivas sega. I ne baram da me sfatis.

LOVE
Намерена грешка на Манчевски во спорот „Македонија - вечна“?

Георги Мамароски

25.12.2008

Судетствуване остапки со кои за промоција на спорот на Македонија направен од најдоброт македонски филмски режисер Милчо Манчевски.

Најголемиот део од режисерот за спорот објавен на интернет на A1 се однесуваат на едноставното претставување на Македонија како изобилна христијанска земја.

За део од гледачите на A1, спорот е ориентиран на преразгледање на светската пропаза на Грузија објавен на веб сајт на YouTube во 2006.

Забележка: за спорот јасно се гледаат забележки, што не се чуваат во спорот. Критиката се однесуваат првото на на во десноодредение на подлажа на Грузија која се забележуваат и технички пропуста.

Во трети секунди пред кнута во Велес јасно се гледаат забележки, а во 24. секунди во кадрот во кои се гледа мушки, за кои се претпоставува дека е Стаплан Манчевски, режисер за спорот.

Режисерот Манчевски со глаголски израз во A1 вели дека спорот има солиден атеистски претстава или окување на внимавањето на самата изгледки на спорот кој централно место има пораката за селектиката на јавноста. Тој не го гледа спорот на Грузија, но според него нормално е да се случува спореди со него поради уште јавности на Македонија.
Македонија вечна - плагијат?

Во спротот рејиран од Милчи Манчевски, "Македонија - вечна", во 13. секунда се глагола референтите, а истото е плагијат од спротот на Грузија, се коментарите кои вчераш се читава на адресата на ВЕЧЕР.

Грузискиот спрот, во кој се тведна сложеност со југот кои се појавуваат од книгата, може да се види на: www.youtube.com.

Спротот, комерцијална промоција на нашата земја, веќе од вчераш се прикажува на Си-ен-ен и на Си-ен-ен Интернешинал, а пре продолжки со анимирање и во други дестинации земји, на уште осум јавности.

ДПА: Спротот на Манчевски е утопија на Македонците

Спротот на Милчи Манчевски „Македонија вечна“ е со православна иконографија и не ја претставува реалноста, туку само културната утопија на Македонците. Спрот што треба да ја презентира Македонија мора да има елементи на етнокултурниот идентитет и религијата и на другите етнички во Македонија. Оваа се забележните на ДПА за спротот, а наедно ја обвини и ДУИ дека се сервизила и не ги брани правата на Албанијците.

Од ДУИ не сакаат да ги коментираат обвинувањата. Цевад Алеми само рече дека што повел ДПА се захвацава со жив, толку повеќе им растел рејингот. Во првите две недели по промоцијата на спротот на Манчевски на интернет тоа има уживање од 160.000 гледани, а веб-страницата денеска ја посетуваат над 3.000 луѓе од 93 земји. Се екипира на шест негународни телевизии, а наскоро ќе почине да се прикажува уште во девет земји.

(И.Ц.)
ТОНИ БИ ТРЕБАЛ СЕ ДА ПРАША ДАЛИ ИСТОРИЈАТА КЕ ПОМИНИ ДЕКА НА ФЕЈСБУК ГО "ОБЕЗГЛАВИЛ" СТАВОТ НА МАНЧЕВСКИ ЗА "СКОПЈЕ 2014" ИЛИ ИСТОРИЈАТА КЕ ЗАПОМИНИ САМО ДЕКА УТЕПАЛ ЕДЕН КУП ПЦОВКИ!

Владо Апостолов

Иако Милчо Манчевски директно не го спомнува проектот "Скопје 2014", ниту пак, конкретно му се обраќа на некој политичар, од неговото интервју во "Капитан" јасно се чита дека ја критикува барокната епидемија. Вели дека вулгарниот молограѓан се срами од својата вистинска историја бидејќи таа е рурална и со тоа различна од западните урнечи и затоа се обидува да измисли своји историја, култура и традиција, кои не постоеле.

За него ова е тема за психолози и за психијатри, а не за уметници и кога на овие реченици ќе го додадете неговиот фејсбук-пост, ѕофка таа од старата владина зграда и пораката РРР (почивав во мир), станува јасно дека Манчевски конечно го видел што ќе го живееме.

Не сакам да му судам на режисерот зашто конечног сега прогледа, веројатно релацијата Скопје – Нјујорк и не му дозволува виви секција на "барокните" политики, кои, ако секојдневно го чувствува на своја кожа, веројатно одамна ќе ја напишел дијажнозата на молограѓан. Помнам дека неколкупати, прашан за "Скопје 2014" ја менуваше темата и загатнат за мегаломанскиот проект одговораше со контра теза за урбантата мафија во Дебар Маало од времето на транзицијата.

Ние новинарите ја имаме "честа" многу поброј од другите да се движе какви се џугот што ќе водат државата и не поради тоа што се нажали, ами зашто почесто контактираше со политичарите. Затоа, ако нам уште во 2009 ни беше џугот дека гаволот ја одело штетата, веројатно за Манчевски, кој не е секој ден во Скопје, требаше лудилото да се материјализира во барокна градска за да го види.

И ако Милчо поради ова не им бил омиленот лик, филмот, "Прашина" му е оден од фаворитите. Ми се додадна и "Пред дождот", иако повеќе му водиотот традиција "Прашина"", а "Сени", рака на среќа, не разочара. Месето, затоа "Маки" е филмувано новинарско ремек-дело со кое Манчевски ишамара доста умислен журналистички величини во Македонија.

Затоа се изненадив кога актёрот Тони Михајловски, "нични изазов" реши дека му се реваншира на Милчо, токму преку неговите дела. Немам намера да ја коментирам воопшта на популарниот Шанац, и тоа искрено не ми е изненади, но она што ми го прави е начинот на кој актот ги опиша новините на Манчевски.

Неколкупати го пропишувал фејсбук-постот и просто не верувам дека еден актот може да каже дека "Прашина" е филм во кој Милчо ни објаснил таа "куба-неш спасил од отоманското ропство и дека се соопштона сами да се избориме за својата слобода..."

Филмот е далеку повеќе од една приказна за куба-ни, војводи и Турци и се сака да се мислам дека Михајловски таа е со себе. Знам дека филмот е посложена приказна со неколку слоеви и со повеќе дека само тоа знае зошто филмот го претстави како епизода од некоја турска серија.

Месето, ако ова на Тони и на неговите пријатели по барок им е крилато џугот, повеќе од сигурен сум дека не ги сконтапе баш сите пораки во "Прашина".
1. Никола од Софија на 30.06.2009 во 15:55 часа:
АлеА не ми сатов во деня. Бедел не тоа со оваа компоненција да се спаси, а не да спаси спасувањето. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Ѓури butto. Оваа компоненција не може да се спаси со тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа.

2. Димитар од Битола на 30.06.2009 во 18:03 часа:
Во секој крај имаате некоји преден или почетен. Мислите дека е можеби да бидете на тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа.

3. Стеван од Пирот на 30.06.2009 во 16:14 часа:
Мислите дека е можеби да бидете на тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа.

4. Никола од Софија на 30.06.2009 во 16:22 часа:
АлеА не ми сатов во деня. Бедел не тоа со оваа компоненција да се спаси, а не да спаси спасувањето. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Ѓури butto. Оваа компоненција не може да се спаси со тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа.

5. Ѓури butto од Битола на 30.06.2009 во 17:09 часа:
Со оваа компоненција имаме некоји преден или почетен. Мислите дека е можеби да бидете на тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа. Не знаем како да го променим тоа."
Subject: spot Makedonija
Date: Friday, December 26, 2008, 2:25 AM

Ne dozvoljuj te te neviraat primitivce!

This is one of the most beautiful TV spots that I have ever seen. It is a feast for the senses, and I could not resist telling you what a superb bit of film this is. Bravo!

Patricia

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

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Message: Your commercial on TV
Thursday, January 22, 2009 9:49 PM
From: "Glenn and Val"******
To:

Hello there,

My husband and I just saw your television commercial for the first time. We were entranced and wondering what it was all about! It was sensational and very effective. Intriguing to say the least!

I jumped up right away to your well proclaimed website (from the commercial) to let you know that you did a great job on the presentation of both the commercial, and as I see here, the website too. I think it's important to get feedback on new work and great effort. I hope we can make it over there for a visit very soon.

Congratulations! Valerie and Glenn ******

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Monday, December 29, 2008 3:51 AM
Milcho,

Chestitam za spotot. Navistina e super - nikakvi zabeleski-naprotiv....
I ej Milcho, vravj si po patot, ne slusaj zlobnici, na tvoja strana vistinata a so tebe tie sto te sakaat. I se dodeka ima makar i eden sto e covek vo ovie momenti - ne ti mozat nisto ni tebe ni nam i svetot nema da propadne

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Wednesday, December 31, 2008 8:11 AM

Preplasena sum od beskorisni, bezznadezi, bezobrazni obidi vo glutnica od histericno "gladni usti", ama prapotomci na svetot, prvi pred site, samo posle amebite, zagubeni vo imitirana konfekcija, zosto traenjeto na preminot niz koj kinisavme, go izmesavme so bskonecnost! Ni precat prasinite i senkite! Za da im izbegame, sopstvenoto prepoznavanje go smetame za plagijat, diletaniza i sto li uste ne! Prostete mi, sakav samo da go zamolam Milcho da ostane takov kakov sto e, oti e retkost i za mene NADEZ deka ne sme umisale se!

Izkreno,
Пожитката на Милча беше дека не е ничив апологет и покрај тоа што во време на оваа влада ја доби и титулата културен амбасадор и снимаше реклами за Macedonia Timeless, тој не се поконри на политичарите и го ними „Мајки“ каде има прилично дебела критика за повеќе работи од нашето општество. Експресно беше „казнет“, за „Мајки“ му беше скратени предвидени финансии за промоција на филмот по светските фестивали, па го оставил сам да се снага около тоа.

Тоа ни е еден од ретките први интелектуалци кои за се даваат мислење без да се устручаваат и без да се плашат дали ќе бидат етикетирани како „црвени“ или „плави“. РЕСПЕКТ за Милчо и едвај чекам новости за неговиот нов проект „Sunshine“.

> Пожитован г-дин Манчевски,
> Досега не задолживте во наследство и со аманет да чуваме,
> да негуваме и да пренесуваме на нашите поколени, три филмски
> велемајсторски ремек дела!
> Благослови Господе да би ни се множиле! Вам да ги создавате, оти
> сте создаден искон и извор за навек! Нам за да учиме како да
> знаеме, да можеме, да имаме, да сакаме и да памтиме!
> Ви пишувам заради последниот Ваш филигрански бисер што ни го
> подаривте за, пак, да не има секаде и секогаш , безвремено! Ви
> честитам за единствената совршеност, што повторно ја
> направивте уметност! Ви честитам на виртуелноста со која го
> создавовте спотот за Македонија! Сите безвременcki белези на оваа
> Библиска земја само Вие ги собравте во приказна, полна со
> топлина, убавина и љубов!
> Горда сум, радосна и на Бога благодарна, што Ве имаме! Тажна
> сум, зошто се уште сите не можеме да Ве препознавеме!
> Ви се поклонуваам!
> Со почит,
Милион марки во „Прашина“

Љубо Франговска

„Лукаш“ и „Милослав“ добиваат најголемиот успех на сцената во Македонија, а „Прешла“ и „Стоянка“ добиваат најголемиот успех на сцената во Бугарија.

Разговор со Весна Јовановска, копродуцент на филмот на мачевски Македонија, за жал, не е официјален копродуцент на „Прашина“

Од Јуњорки за „Македонска денес“, Јана Стојановска

По зачувувањето на снимки на „Прашина“ во Јуњорки, непосредно пријавил се информација за копродуценции на филмот на Весна Јовановска, која се занимава со македонските филмски куќи. По повод јавно се смета дека имала прекуред на копродуценциите.

Работата на „Прашина“ е осми проект на Јовановска и така, веднаш се формира за граничност во филмот на Македонија. Во жал, што го има на филмот е интимност и некои процеси за да се реализираат. Филмот има многу висока текстуалност и е естетски интересант.

По завршувањето на работа во „Прашина“, во Јуњорки, непосредно се прикажуваат и останати филмски продукции на Весна Јовановска, кои се занимаваат со „Поезија“, "Лукаш" и "Милослав", а сè ушта кои се реализираат во рамките на филмскиот фестивал "Македонска денес".

Извор: "Македонска денес", 22/04/2000

28.09.1983

Македонија денес • САБОТА 22/23 АПРИЛ 2000

ОД ЈУЊОРКИ ЗА „МАКЕДОНСКА ДЕНЕС“, ЈИНА СТОЈАНОВСКА

Работата на „Прашина“ е осми проект на Јовановска и така, веднаш се формира за граничност во филмот на Македонија. Во жал, што го има на филмот е интимност и некои процеси за да се реализираат. Филмот има многу висока текстуалност и е естетски интересант.

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Извор: "Македонска денес", 22/04/2000
МИЛЧО, КАДЕ СИ!

Зачеко во Македонија, не можемо да се смиришеме. Ако е вонреден ден, можеме да се посетиме на националниот филм, на кој се вноси на куриерски превозач, но не можеме да полека преземеме нитки, нити да се претпоставиме на неговото одређување.

Деловите на делот 1973 година, каде што високо додавање од филмовите и националните филмови, на кои се вноси на националниот филм, на кој се вноси на куриерски превозач, но не можеме да полека преземеме нитки, нити да се претпоставиме на неговото одређување.

Кажи према филмите!

Постоио ли некуто или кое може да наведе пример за како то се прави во филмите и националните филмове, од кои се вноси на националниот филм, на кој се вноси на куриерски превозач, но не можеме да полека преземеме нитки, нити да се претпоставиме на неговото одређување.

Реагирање, втор дел – "МИЛЧО, КАДЕ СИ!" ЕВЕ СУМ И ДОСТА!

Во овој текст се објавени во "МЛАД БОРЕЦ" број 14 и 14 а во кои се вноси на националниот филм, на кој се вноси на куриерски превозач, но не можеме да полека преземеме нитки, нити да се претпоставиме на неговото одређување.

Дража Павловник
МИЛЧО МАНЧЕВСКИ, ФИЛМСКИ РЕЖИСЕР

Деновите сме сведоци на јавна дебата и претпуштања помеѓу филмските работници во земјата кои се поделуваат околу изборот на директор на Филмскиот фонд, по редовниот конкурс, откако завршил десетгодишниот мандат на десетгодишниот директор Дејан Илиев. Се појави втор кандидат што предизвира медиумското внимание, шекулација, новинарски коментари, СМС задајки, петциви, писма до премиерот и до министерката за култура. Како главен виновник, според поголемиот број реакција за евентуалниот неизбирање на десетгодишниот директор, е посочуван режисер Милчо Манчевски. Од неодамна Манчевски е член на Советот на министерката за култура Елизабета Капчева-Милевска, а во Македонија работно престосуваше снимкајќи го рекламниот спот за Владата за туристичка промоција и афиширање на Македонија на Си-Ен-Ен.

Деновите се изнаговезуваат, изнасушуваче повеќе обвинувања за нивото на работата, мислење, влијание во културата во земјата. Бенте наречен државен режисер, термин што не се го чула од време, на како е тоа чувство да се биде државен режисер?

- Државничко. Ако на оваа држава баш толку ја треба режисер, ќе бидам државен режисер. Иако повеќе би сакал да бидам државен хирург или државен астролог. Држава се љубето што ја сочинуваат, а мене ми се мири тие луѓе, дури и кога сакаат на комициата да ми ја пречат козата. Ја го правам ако некој се сомневаат со сопствената држава и повеќе би сакал да работи за тогаш. Моите проекти ги финансираат и државни и икономски институции во Британија, Италија, Франција, Германија, Бугарција, Шпанија, во САД... па дали сум нивни државни режисери? Моите проекти ги финансираа сите наши влади вестерна и вестерна и вестерна. Но како што се целен и како што се целен и како што се целен и како што се целен и како што се целен ќе бие начин на кое што се целен? Мисле дека е тоа што се целен. Дали Бранко Петровски е ваш човек? - Мисле што ми треба ‘мој’ човек, нивото на вашата рака, нивото на вашата рака, нивото на вашата рака, нивото на вашата рака.
Пра̀вна ли ниво, не сим тао што низначува. Јас само го дадов мое-то стручно мислење за функција која е исправена со многу мислења и генерално. Евактина една што е мене." 

Дали тие што не наредуваат "дражен режисер" со антирек- дражни режисери или режисери без земја?

Македония. Нека се разгледат ефектите од досега- ните извршени проекти. Евактина една што е мене." 

■ Да ла ли тие што не наредуваат "дражен режисер" со антирек- дражни режисери или режисери без земја?

Македония.
Интервју Милчо Манчевски, Режисер

Интегритетот се брани со мадиња

Режисерот Милчо Манчевски заокружува еден особено про dukтивен период: го заврши својот четврти филм "Мајки", спотовите "Македонија вечна" освојува нesоколку светски награди, а на 16 јуни во Музейот на современата уметност во Скопје се отвора неговата изложба на фотографиите "Пет капки сон". Авторот, чие дело е признато за светска класика и кое на многу начини стајало најстарата Македонија на светската карта, за "Вест" зборувала за уметничкиот интегритет, интелектуалците, за урбаното и етиките.

- Велин дека одамна не си работел нешто со толку радост и мерек како изложбата "Пет капки сон". Каква е разликата мегу оваа и твојата претходна изложба "Улица"?
- Па сега повеќе ги уживам работите во животот, а и оваа изложба, исто така. "Пет капки сон" е покомплексна и повеќе села. Сликите не стојат самостојно, ами секоја фотографија е само дел од композиција. Секоја композиција е составена од пет фотографији кои се, на некој начин (обично формален, а не сродничен), поврзани. Така се создава богата слика, и формално и сродниченски. И во "Улица", ама и сега, во "Пет капки сон" многу повеќе ме интересира скривната визуелност која во еден момент експлодира од секторот, од прозаичното. Во композициите од по пет слики (кои се гледаат само заедно, а не како одвоени слики), се занимавам со прегратката и со равеност на формата и на сродничената. Правоел слики е многу поприватно од правење филмови, затоа што се работи со помалку дуг, помалку техника, помалку пари. Тука можеш да бидеш и поапстрактен, а уметноста постои во оној процеп мегу апстрактното и конкретното. Составувањето на изложбата и на книгата која оди со неа, а почавајќи да ги спремам пред 11 години, беше преубаво искуство и поради несесбичниот ангажман на МСУ и на Зоран Петровски, кој вгради во изложбата креативни идеи и многу пожертвува работата.

- Во едно интервју од 1993 велин дека ја прикажаш на меѓународната урбана култура чија максима е "странец сум во секое село, дома сум во секој град". Интересна е оваа максима за твојот поглед на Македонија. Во твоите филмови ти ги откриваш нејзини на
САБОТА 12 / НЕДЕЛА 13 ЈУНИ 2010

Земјава, и можеби беа толку импресивни оти ги си гледал со око на странец. Дали, во тој контекст, повеќето од нас се странци во сопствената земја?

- Странци со менее од сопствениота кажа, а камоли во сопствената земја. Збунети сме, не раководат страв и базични инстинкт, наместо знаење и ра- дост. Сакам градови. Градот има што да ми понуди како ин- телектуален живот и како со- цијална слобода, а и јас нему. Убава е таа концентрација на интелектуална и креативна ак- тивност, толку многу умови и работа на едно место. Толку визуелно богатство, што го гледаш околу тебе е создадено од човечка рака, подарок за за- единицата. Убава е и можеста да бидеш анонимен, а опкружен со свет. На планина сакам да одам на гости. Еден ден кога ќе бидам повеќе во дошир со природата, а помалку со општество- то, можеби ќе имам повеќе да ја дадам на планината, па ќе одам да живеам на планината. Засега, Н њурко ми е тамам.

- Индустријскиот дух, чија одликата е манипула- цијата и калкулацијата, го завладева практично секој сегмент од твореш- твото во светот, без оглед дали ставува збор за корпоративна контрола или за контрола на филмски студии или фоунди и слично. Како уметникот денес да си го одбрани интегритетот на своето дело?

- Со мадиња. Интегритетот се брани со мадиња. И со дело, уметничко и човечко, со одговор- ност, со добист, а најмногу со жртва: со отстапување од комфорт, од пари, слана и од ти- тули. Загадувачеството на човеч- киот дух, што го прават корпоро- раците и државните бирокра- тии, е полозо и од загадуване- то на човековата средина, по- ложно дури и од тага и од спро- машија, затоа што води кон тупост, себичност и тивко умирање. Те учии да се потпишат врз манипулација која те отчо- вечува и која нема крај. За мо- не борбата против корпораци- рите и државните бирократии е како борба против поробувач од учебниците. Св. Горги против корпорациите. Во Амери- чки за ова дереше во Амери- ка. Лутината е канализира кон други луѓе, а ректо кон сушти- ната на она како постапува сис- темот, или кон сопствената ла- комост и кон социјалското однесување на корпорациите. Републикаците одлично ја ка- нализираат лутината на обич- ниот човек. Интересно е што Обама, кој дојде на власт како симбол на промени, настапува воздржано и релативно кон- зернативно, и со тоа донесаат штити статус кво. Тоа и не е ненадаваше, ако убаво ја пог- ледните неговата платформа или изјави во кампанията, ќе видите дека надежта оти тој ќе донесе посушенички промени биле во главата на неговите следбеници, а не толку во негов- бед尼斯аноста, ама не и ефикас- носта или посветноста.

- Дали баш таа борба за уметнички интегритет е суши- ната на она што се вика анга- жирана уметност денес?

- Ангажираната уметност е како порнографија, тоа е разни, ама нема смелост да се внушиш. Секоја добра уметност е, само по себе, ангажирана, отс е про- тив статус кво и против човеч- ска глупост.

- Последниве две години јавниот збор во Македонија се одликуваше со ден еден со повалена глагол на омрат. Дали е тоа од- раз на негативната сеобер- цепција на народот тук, или тоа само така се артикулира во медиумите, и како такво се проектира врз народот?


- И Америка ги има хис- теријата, лагите и лошопи- тицата на "Фокс њу" и Сара Пејлин и "Ги парти" движеште, и таму има из- млатаити и изманипу- лиран народ, ама во таа заедница се создава и кон- тражак се квалитет и ме- ра, како еден "Њујорк тајм" или "Ли-Би-Ес". За жал, разумната кон- тражака кое се креква и тивка.

- Дали се осети како жртва во медиумскиот напад, по пр- витот спот од циклусот "Маке- донија вечна"?

- Како жртва се чувствува само оно што не знае ишто за животот. Оните други, ваз- ргнатите, се справуваат со ситу- ацијата. Жртвата можеби да бид- ден ако дозволиваш да бидеш жртва. Или ако ти годи да се доживува како жртва, затоа што така мислиш дека одго- ворноста ти е помало. Што на- роќ ќе бевме, само да се дели- кало. Спонтивите јапосетите својата позитивна цел, помог- наа за ова парче земја да се зборува позитивно (еден од ректките моменти од "Пред дождот" навам), и да почиш мастротен про-
Испадна дека поради суета, неукост и ниска цена, медиумите не се откажуваат од тоа да бидат совест на системот, па се штапуваат во текста, како оние пуштаанци што се борат во капо бикини.

чии во апсолутна анонимност?
- Поубаво вака, на раат. Тивко, со прекрасни луѓе. И одлични професионалци. Јас поубаво искуство во продукција досега апсолутно не син имал. И како резултат, ама особено како процес. На удоволството дело не му треба шум-буш. Циркус им треба на холивудските проекти (блахоплодно, ама несоодветно наречени филмови), кои постојат благодарение на публикузитетот, а не благодарење на креативен избор.

- Во моите четири долгометражни филмови досега (тука не ги сметам кратките форми, спонтано и слично во Букурж) европски и американски компани и држави имаат вложено около 14 милиони евра. Голем дел од тие странски пари се потрошува во Македонија, за филмски работници, глумци, локации, за превоз, грабдба, хотелари, транспорт, храна, за телефони, што. Она е повеќе не само од она што како копродукција го имаат внесено во Македонија сите наш филмови заедно досега, или целата држава досега, туку е повеќе од целкозвоаатите странски инвестиции во некои наши индустријски граници од 1945 до денес. Меве ми е примарно да се направи вредно уметничко дело, ама како непродукт добро е и да се помогне на локалната економија, и да се вишкувауве локален кадер. Десетици и десетици филмски работници се штапуваат на овие големи международни продукции. Може многу повеќе, во Македонија, но доносов да работат врвни професионали и оскарводи - Бер Брокој, Дарине Кошиц, Девид Манс, Марио Микиски, Фабио Чанкести, Ник Гастер, Жаклин Стојчевска, а, за жал, од филмските студенти на ФДУ скоро некој не дојде да гледа и да уч.

- Кога јас без студент или понатаму, ќе платам со суво злато да гледам и да учам од некој грамо професионалци како жуѓево, а камоли некој да ми ги донесеше во забата Македонија да гледам на дело. Додуша, за жал, моите искуства и со постарите филмски работници се слинчи. Многуима од нашите филмски менаџери се за викаде: не само пес-пособност, ами и криминално однесување. Некои наши производители ги фативне со ракото на себ убед, па без отпущен и тугени.

- Прушавање е дали воишто Македонија во овие 60-ина години имала интелектуелна сила кои била спремна, од името на јавниот интерес, не само да биде коректен на властта туку и да одолева на политички при-тисок.
- Од авдон се гледа дека одговорот е во. Пуштаането е да ли имплиентона интелигенција e логичен одраз на една сеоштата глубина на националност или е во прашање тоа дека во овие 60-ина години оние политичари што се разликувају од своите колеги по тоа што сметале дека знаат нешто лативна, се преслеши, тоа ќе има обучение за интелектуалци и си и играли академи, институти, универзитети и колумни.

- Пред две години во "Дневник" имаше колумна насловена "За грчката уцена - Не е во прашање името на државата, туку на народот", која ја заврши со следниве зборови: "Имаме името со (1) мислене на името на државата, народот и националност, и (2) прием во ЕУ. За жал, се друго со многу зборови, кои на нај пак не вракаат на истинов избор. За што ќе се од-лучише? Што мислис, дали со 20 години преговори со Грција, македонската јавност на-вистина знае кој е нашиот избор во овај спор?" - Изгледа дека македонска-та јавност дури сега полека се признава какви се вистинското избор (и вистинската мотива-ција не само на грчките политичари туку и на европаатлан-тиските бирократи), и од таму оние реакции на граѓаните во анкетите. Како што викааш, можеш сите луѓе да ги лажеш некоје време или можеш некој луѓе да ги лажеш цело време, ама не можеш сите луѓе да ги лажеш цело време. Небаре по-лога онаа извршила ја ради гла-вата од песокот. Белки луѓето сфатат дека нека нема гомела циц-ка што вичо ќе ги штити, во замена за сервис. Инаку, кога веќе зборуваме за името, мислам дека доста е занимава-но со името и цел ден, треба да се засукава ракави, да се ра-боти. Има многу поважни ра-боти.
Не припаѓам на ниту една банда

Македонија на филмското небо, деновиве често патува. Македонскиот амбасадор на културата по неколку месеци не е во базата во Њујорк: предава на филмски школи, учествува во жирија на фестивали, отвора изложби на фотографии. Вели не мирува, иако подолго време го нема во македонската јавност. Последните две години беше зафатен и со последниот негов филм, „Мајки“. Само со него, зад себе има 30-тина фестивали, од Берлин до Торонто, од Сао Паоло до Истанбул. Имаше и изложба на фотографии, „Пет капки сон“, и во Амстердам, и во Софија. Вонредно предава на филмската школа ВГИК во Москва. Како гледа на „Пред дождот“ од речиси 20годишна перспектива?

„Кога тргна на поход по светот, играше во 50 земји, во редовна дистрибуција во кина, на телевизија. Се печатеа рецензии на филмот и покрај имаше мапа на Европа, со заокружено каде е Македонија на пример во Јапонија како се изговора зборот. Тоа е факт што не можеме да го избегнеме, или се постапа или не“, се присекава Манчевски. За филмските искуства со и за Македонија, резигнирено констатира: „И покрај успехите на филмовите што ги работам, јас во Македонија останав аутсајдер. И сречен сум поради тоа, затоа што не се чувствувам дел од никаков културен еставлишмент. Не припаѓам на ниту една банда. Денеска ми е исто толку тешко да најдам финанси за мојот следен филм колку што ми беше тешко пред 30 години, кога дојдов тазе дипломирани од САД и кога на плоци не избрках од Македонија“. Самото снимање за него е истражување. Вели моите филмови се од Македонија, а не за Македонија. Това се филмови за људе, а људето се секаде исти, било каде во светот. За меѓународните предизвици пред кои е исправена Македонија денес, Манчевски со коментар: „Не е лесно да си мал, при тоа и сиромашен и мораш да бидеш многу мудар, вреден, паметен, чешен и кон себе и кон сите људе во мала земја, за во тие меѓународни предизвици да не го јадеш стапот. Треба многу чешен, сплотен и заеднички ангажман, за Македонија да постигне нешто во тој меѓународен ангажман, за животот во самата земја да стане поубав“. Го заврши новото сценарио за филм и размислува каде ќе го реализира, најверојатно во Берлин. Подготовва и нова изложба на фотографии, по патеките на претходните „Улици“ и „Пет капки сон“. И сречен сум поради тоа, затоа што не се чувствувам дел од никаков културен еставлишмент. Милчо Манчевски

Интервју со Милчо Манчевски, режисер, амбасадор на културата, хроничар Човекот кој со „Пред дождот“ ја стави Македонија на филмското небо, деновиве често патува.
Sto i da ti napisam mi zvuci besmisleno, po ova so go procitav! Fascinantno! Imam cuvstvo deka sum go doprela nebot, no i pretcuvstvo deka doprva ce mozam da trcam niz nego! Ti si navistina retkost! Te molam, so sakas prai, baraj carinja, kazi mi so mozam jas da storam za da ti pomognam, da ti olesnam,... posle seto ova i zaradi se sto doprva ti e podarenico da go imas, da go napravis, da go zivees, ednostavno, nemas pravo da se menuvas! Covece, se edno kako ti zvuci, so seta pocit za tvojata skromnost i blagorodnost, no ti ne isti kako site nas, nitu kako nas ovde nitu kako niv tamu,... ma kakov Bergman, Polanski, ili Shakespeare... do toa derezde se "izvadeni od konduri" so ne znaat ni so kogo ni so da te sporedat,... svetskata filmska kritika i intelektualna javnost ti priznava deka si edinstven, vonseriški, bez konkurencija,...ti napisale i se potpisale! Edvaj cekam da razberam kakvi ce bidat reakciite do i po 30-ti.

Od dnoto na dusata ti blagodaram i ti cestitam!

Od srce,

Драг Милчо, Те видов пред извесно време во чаршија, во да кања, нако сакав да ти пријадам и да те поздравам, односно исканувајте го сторив тоа! Јас пораснах со твојот филм... Те поздравувам нако сакав да ти дадам до знаење дека со Пред Дождот, па делумно и со Прашината... имаше големо влијание на мојот живот!!!-ама некој работи не може да се кажат нели!...поздрав
Milcho da li se morda
po nekad resite na susret sa ovobrzavateljikom?
i ne mislim na studentkinja filma kojoj ste vi ono sto zeli da bude kad poraste,
mislim na onu kojoj ste vi apsolutni must have oseca kako raste,
know what i mean?
molim vas,
looking >>

Sekogash imam samo dobro da napisham za Milco Manchevski... Na pr. Taka se saka taktovinata.
Taka se prezenteza kultura.
Taka se nezgavat vrednostite lin...
A najintereso mi e koga ke go sretnam na toacak niz poluprazno Skopje vo avgust mesec i toj se razbira ke ve pozdravi - sekogash... Toa e retlost
Like : Reply : 8 hrs

Од рубриката „Прашајте ги Службите“: кој тоа ја уби македонската демократија?
Одговор од Странските Служби. Не можеме со сигурност да знаеме, но последните зборови к' без. „Лукај бе братучед, лукај.”
Like Comment Share
64 people like this.

Milcho Manchevski on writing/directing
#snpotsdam : delicate adjustments between script, shoot, editing. You should hear it all @Milchom

Milco cestitki za cetvrtok. Jas sum marnotec trcaj na maraton na Hvar i vecerta pred maratonot mislam deka te sretnav i sakav da te pozdravam, ama bidejki sum smezeziv dodeka sobrav hrabrost ti mi se izgubi. A bas imav moznost da te zapoznaam, zdravje vo druga prilika. Ti si eden od onie poradi koi sum gord sto sum Makedonec Pozdrav.

Milcho Manchevski
You were mentioned in a Tweet!

vejnovski
The @washingtonpost washingtonpost.com/news/in-sight/... aptly quoting @Milchom on the compexities of (our) times.
09:05 PM - 28 Sep 2013

@Milchom
ahahaaaaa............
6 un deficiente................
nesto ti falet tebe vo tivkata...ahahaaaaaagagagagaga
Short forms
Mostra Venezia: 'Future Reloaded', 70 registi per 70 corti che omaggiano il festival (2)

(Adnkrons/Cinematrografo.it) - Il macedone Milcho Manchevski, invece, prende spunto da un video che fece il giro della rete qualche tempo fa (una donna cinese investita da un camion e rimasta a terra tra l'indifferenza dei numerosi passanti), per soffermarsi sulle derivate che potrebbero condurci ad ignorare quello che accade sotto i nostri occhi pur indignandoci vedendo frammenti di immagini provenienti da chissà dove.


Non manca, naturalmente, il contributo dei registi italiani: il presidente di giuria Bernardo Bertolucci ha realizzato 'Scarpe rosse', citando l'imm. pero' suoi piedi e le ruote della carrozzella Guido Lombardi con 'Senza fine' rende or mia cara, me ne infischio').(segue)

Venezia 70 Future Reloaded (2013), part 1

Milcho Manchevski – Thursday

Ironic piece about people engrossed in their portable devices – one girl watches a video about people on the street failing to notice some tragedy, ponders the video while walking right past another tragedy everyone is failing to notice.
MACEDONIA TIMELESS
TELECINE NOTES:

1. OVERALL: Warm feel, golden, hot, stuffy
2. Crushed blacks
3. Time-lapse shot: strong sunset, purple sky
4. Night scenes (beginning and end): city, cool
ON A FILM SHOOT, KONJSKO, MACEDONIA, OCT. 20, 2008 Will Rosenthal, 52, a Brooklyn social worker, photographs the actress Ana Lukic on the set of a commercial along the edge of Lake Prespa. “I’m a social worker, but in a previous life I was a filmmaker. My undergraduate degree was in film. I was in Macedonia watching an old friend of mine from film school shoot a commercial promoting travel to Macedonia. So they were shooting different locations around the country, and I just tagged long to all these beautiful places. It reminded me of maybe what Italy was like in the ’50s, where it’s underdeveloped but has this fascinating culture. It seems like every major civilization has marched through there and conquered it at one time or another, from the Romans to the Byzantines to the Ottomans, the Nazis, the Communists. They’ve all left their mark. It’s much more intriguing than Western Europe. It’s the Balkans, you know? It’s rich, and it’s complicated, and it has this real rugged beauty to it. It’s in flux, so that’s interesting to see. It hasn’t achieved some end state of developed stasis.”

As told to Austin Considine

Photo: Misko Georgiev for The New York Times
1. Da li film mora da ima priču?
2. Da li film mora da ima sliku?
3. Da li film mora da bude eksponiran?
4. Da li film mora da bude prikazan?
5. Da li film mora da sadrži traku?
6. Da li film mora da postoje da bi bio film?
Sonia Abadzieva

Conceptual Practices in the Art Narratives of Milcho Manchevski

“Man is unable to destroy something, and not put something else in place of what he destroyed. Although Dadaism was seeking to ruin any art form that has been the subject of a dogma, at the same time it met the need to express itself.” (Ribemont-Dessaignes)

“Painting should not be exclusively visual or retinal, but should involve the grey cells together with our yearning to understand... That is why I am dedicated to chess. I find similarities between chess and painting. Indeed, playing chess is like drawing something or building a mechanism of some kind by which you win or lose... The game itself”.

(Marchel Duchamp)¹

Milcho Manchevski considers fine art in the same way maestro Marcel Duchamp considered chess. Fine art entered the game of film. Manchevski’s first affinities are in a direct connection with fine arts. I assume that is why at first he studied art history and archaeology at Kiril and Metodij University in Skopje. I connect the most impressive events in these years with his determined choice of the alternative models in visual arts, unlike many artists (painters, sculptors, grafic artists, and so on) in the 1980s, who worked in classic media and expressions.

His fresh reading of the art in Macedonia in that period is related to 1953, when, after the slight relaxation of the communist system, the group Denes was formed (1953/54). Its Manifesto was a significant step out of the established art empiria. On a theoretical level, the members of the group (architects, sculptors, graphic artists, painters) stood for free fluctuation of the disciplines, and brought in the first concept of intermediality. From today’s point of view, that fitfull determination to overcome the ideological dogma of the time seems like a grand opening of new paths for the

¹ Zoran Gavric, Izbor tekstova, Muzej savremene umetnosti, Белград, 1984, p. 43. A conversation from 1956 of Marcel Duchamp with James Johnson Sweeney.
The Editing of *The Ghost of My Mother*
The opening of *Five Drops of Dream* exhibition at Solyanka Galery in Moscow
expressiveness of art. And acting in groups became a manner of many alternative activities. Manchevski's predecessors here are the performances of the painters Dragoljub Bezhan and Milosh Kodzoman (1972/73; indoors and open air), urban and mountain actions of the tandem Simon Shemov and Nikola Fidanovski (1973/1985 in Skopje, Prilep and at Korab and Deshat mountains, etc.), and the installations and objects made of ephemeral material by the architect Simon Uzunovski (1975-1978) in the Dom na mladi 25 Maj (now Youth Cultural Center).

Manchevski explicitly seceded from the above mentioned new practices (performance and/or installations): his actions are first of all based on concepts that are previously conceived and realised in textual form (photocopied applications, invitations, programmes, questionnaires), with very precise program indications for the content and modalities of the performances. The word, the letter, the number reigns in them. The performances of the Group 1AM, formed by Manchevski, were reduced to fragments of language, text, book, film, photography, sound, performer’s body, speech/conversation... which was a declaration of the aesthetics freed from the material: objects, exhibits or pieces of art as physical reality. Here we should mention the first interface solutions while presenting the first experimental films (The Wire, and Paths of Glory, that he made as a student in Carbondale, USA, and that consisted of only one shot 2 or 3 minutes long). In connection with his analytical exploration of certain phenomena, tamed with the non-hierarchical setting of the “materials” used to construct the works, and the bare fact of the constant repetition of various elements of the program and converting the pictorial into verbal illusion, I would put Manchevski’s work in a closer ontological connection with the dadaist discourse of Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia from the beginning of 20. Century, and with the conceptualists from the 1970s: Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, Sol LeWitt, Daniel Buren, Joseph Kosuth, and with the social plasticity of Joseph Beuys.

Manchevski’s first installation is The Ghost of My Mother (1983), set in an apartment in Skopje, in the presence of the artist Iskra Dimitrova. Those pieces of paper arranged on the living room floor are actually stems of his thoughts, concepts and their notation on paper – material that later

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2 See: Sol LeWitt, in: Ursula Meyer, Conceptual Art, A Dutton Paperback New York, 1972, p. 176-5: “Illogical jugements lead to new experience”; “All ideas need not be made physical”; “If words are used, and they proceed from ideas about art, then they are art and not literature, numbers are not mathematics”; “All ideas are art if they are concerned with art and fall within the conventions of art”.

3 The Wire, involved a single hand-held shot climbing a set of stairs to an attic room, including a glimpse of the shadow of the cameraman and the wire linking the camera to the battery belt. Hence the name of the film The Wire.

4 See: Ursula Meyer, Conceptual Art, opus.cit. p. IX): “Duchamp rejected the myth of the precious and stylish objet d’art, a commodity for the benefit of museums and status seekers. His interest turned from tradition of painting to the challenge of invention... All art after Duchamp is conceptual in nature because art only exists conceptually”. See also: Josef Kosuth, Art After Philosophy, Studio International, October 1969, p. 10.
entered the context of the book The Ghost of My Mother. The book, published in 2000 by Tri, de facto contains the ‘conceptual’ material of artist’s activities in the 1980s. The book uses contemporary visual diversity: comic strip, video, clips, commercials… - a heterogeneity that not only does not want to avoid cacophony, but on the contrary, emphasizes it. The refreshing processes of his aesthetics happen in this mix. He ‘abuses cynicism and irony’ and is close to Dadaists, Surrealists and Cubists. As did Duchamp, so, too, Manchevski “did not aim to ‘re-value all values’; that would be an act of tautology for him, but he tried to deepen Cartesian doubt, and, furthermore, to explain every pursuit of a substantial aim as a priori doomed to fail, and therefore unreasonable”.

“That’s also a way to keep on fiddling creatively with what you do. Otherwise you turn into a walking monument”, Manchevski says. The witticism and raciness of his ideas in the book The Ghost of My Mother, as in his films, are fine acts of insouciance that for him are “a creative game… But, mind you, the witticism has to be integral and consistently performed. A little game causes a lot of work”.

Another important characteristic of the integral concept, in the book as well as in his happenings and performances, is the connection with minimalism, a reduced manner or laconic discourse.

“I like minimalism... I like to have it put in context, to have it as an extreme of something larger, to be able to say: minimal on one hand, but at the same time very rich”. In the same interview the artist mentions that when he was 15 he was obsessed with haiku, tanka and books about Zen Buddhism, that he did not understand at the time, and he “even tried to write a few haiku poems myself”, admiring the discipline and the minimalism of expression.

The Ghost of My Mother is a book-object or artist’s book, filled with emotion, a Babylonian expression, a mélange of the Macedonian, Serbian and English languages. The book itself is a conceptual piece, bricolage/assemblage of images of comics, blurred photographs with non-representative content, abstract landscapes, short/laconic expressions, conceptual poetry, mini-stories, some sort of haiku poetry, recounting of dreams, self-referencing notes/intimate confessions, love of MTV, quotes from books or TV, pensées: “The object of war is not simply to kill, but to convince the survivors to submit”, absurd assertions: “There are two sects in this religion. According to one there is no God, while according to the other there is no God”. A sorrow is felt in the background, a lasting wound: “When you’re anemic even the mosquitoes won’t bite you and your mother’s not here”; or “Some strange tastes/of rooms/come over me/and pull me back/to the childhood/of huge things”. Or fear: “What fear/is/so/big/to fill up/a whole/apartment?”. "Sometimes, at night, as I type in the empty apartment, my back to the door, I have a feeling there’s someone behind me. Just like now.” There are also lonesome erotic cries, nostalgia: “Nobody’s young no more!”, pain: “I am different./I can’t stand pain./Pain hurts me.”, death – the death of the mother of his friend Markus, the fake funeral of Josef Honys (“Mystification Event”, and then his suicide).

The Manifesto of the Conceptualists is published in the book as well. The illustrations are mainly comic heroes, photographs with blur effect.

In the Group 1 AM, Manchevski (at the beginning with the philosopher Branislav Sarkanjac) as a main promoter of the concept, organized multimedia activities in Dom na mladi 25 Maj in Skopje (1983 and 1984) with deliberate emphasis on the collective approach of the creative process. The happenings, body

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5 The book itself consists of text only. The edition published by Tri has illustrations that Manchevski made with the designer Matthias Heipel, including those in which the panels of an old comic are mutated.
6 See: Milcho Manchevski: We Were Explaining Joseph Beuys’ Performance to a Live Rabbit, Golemoto staklo, Skopje, 2002, No. 14/15, p. 72
7 See: Zoran Gavric, Marcel Duchamp, Muzej savremene umetnosti, Белград, p. 6
8 See Golemoto staklo, quoted volume, p 73.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
On the 10th of December, 1984, Monday, beginning at 8:15 PM,
in the space of Gallery of the Youth Home “25th of May”, in Skopje

The members of the group 1 AM will perform a presentation

We would consider it a great honor if you and your honored family should attend our humble celebration, which on
that occasion will be held at the space granted as described below

Youth Home “25th of May”, in Skopje
Kej “Dimitar Vlahov” B.B. – Skopje

Group 1 AM
ul. 348 br. 6-b – Skopje
GROUP I AM PLAN OF PERFORMANCE

Place: Gallery at the Youth Home “The 25th of May”, Skopje, Yugoslavia

Time: Saturday, the 10th of December, 1983,

10:30 PM to 06:00 AM, Central European Time
10:30 PM Unlocking the gallery and turning on the lights
10:34 PM Reading the Introduction
10:35 PM Reading the Plan of performance+
10:39 PM Displaying the exhibits
10:42 – 11:59 PM Distribution of the Plan, List and Introduction
10:42 – 11:59 PM The audience signs the Conceptualist Manifesto
10:44 PM Screening of the film Paths of Glory
10:48 PM Listening to Cyril and Methodius Blues
10:53 PM Selling six copies of the poster
10:58 PM Distributing the text of the recital Elegies for Cyril and Methodius
11:01 PM Recital: Elegies for Cyril and Methodius
11:05 PM Break
11:08 PM Uncovering the piece of ice
11:08 PM – 11:59 PM Observing as the piece of ice melts
11:09 PM Photographing the exhibition
11:14 PM Displaying the photographs of the exhibition itself
11:18 PM Turning the project Faces towards the audience
11:22 PM Second listening of Cyril and Methodius Blues
11:27 PM Screening of the film Wire
11:32 PM Photographing the photographs of the exhibition
11:36 PM Exhibiting the photographs of the photographs of the exhibition
11:40 PM Screening of the untitled film (at the same time as the distribution of the text of the untitled film)
11:40 PM Distribution of the text of the untitled film (at the same time as the screening of the untitled film)
11:49 PM Distribution of the original Invitations for the performance
11:54 PM Going over the impressions of the performance
11:58 PM Taking down the poster
11:59 PM Turning off the lights and locking the gallery.

+This list with this text
ELEMENTS FOR INTERPRETATION THE OF THE GROUP 1 AM PERFORMANCES

Definition of the performance by the group 1 AM:
The performance by the group 1 AM is not: a conceptualist piece, a happening, a performance piece, body art, a structuralist piece, GASP-art, a minimalistic piece, mail art, an environmental piece, camp-art, Dadaism.
A negative definition does not define.
- To evaluate an art piece always means to fail to cognize the new, as evaluating means viewing through tradition.
- The impotence of criticism is reflected in its insistence for a work of art to be reduced to gender and type.
- We are not interested in art, but in meta-art.
- … consists of realizing that art reservations do exist, but also that art cannot be found on the classic reservations, but instead, exactly outside of them.
You come in touch with a work of art. You come away with an impression, but the material substrate of the piece is not within you. The rendition of this impression through new art forms.

- Showing the future.

- Imagining of any thing-process as a work of art.

From the group 1 AM
Text of the recital *ELEGIES FOR CYRIL AND METHODIUS*

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
DEFINITION OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE GROUP 1 AM

The performance of the group 1 AM is not: conceptualist piece, happening, performance, body-art, structuralist piece, GASP-art, minimalist piece, mail art, environmentalist piece, camp-art, dadaism.

A negative definition does not define.

INTRODUCTION

1. Does the introduction have to introduce?
2. Various.
(QUESTIONNAIRE) OF THE GROUP 1 AM

1. Are these films works of art?
2. Are these films autonomous works (of art), or are they just elements in the performance of the group 1 AM?
3. Was the goal of making these films to also make them a part of the performance of the group 1 AM?
4. Is the performance of the group 1 AM possible without these films?
5. Are these films possible without the performance of the group 1 AM?
6. Does the fact that the performances of the group 1 AM are neither: conceptualist pieces, happenings, performance works, body-art, structuralist pieces, GASP- art, minimalistic pieces, mail art, environmental pieces, camp-art, pop-art, nor Dada make these films artistic?
7. Does a performance by the group 1 AM without the exhibits and without that questionnaire that you shouldn't have to answer exist?
8. Does a performance by the group 1 AM exist without the lack of your answers?
9. Do we thank you for the cooperation?  

From the group 1 AM
I always wanted to make an original film, an experimental film.

In my first production course I made a film. The film itself was about two minutes long and then I had one long take of a press machine printing press that was about four minutes long. Everyone in the critique said "Not everybody could be Andy Warhol" and I felt like I was stealing Andy Warhol's idea. This first film was called "Working Class Goes to Heaven" and that was the POV of the worker – so the audience was seeing for four minutes what the worker was seeing for eight hours every day. And they didn't like it. Then, I was gonna make a film named "The Beautiful Blue Danube" and the soundtrack was gonna be the music from the waltz 'Beautiful Blue Danube' by Johann Strauss and the picture would be only one static shot, a close-up of fucking. A real close-up so you see the cock getting in the cunt. And it didn't really work. I also saw a whole bunch of close-ups of fucking and touching - I mean TOUCHING, and then in "Blue shoot", and so on. Then, I mean everything I wanted to do, they would tell me that someone else had done it or at least thought of it. And it's pretty frustrating you know, you feel like you're not an original person, you feel that you are thinking something that people have already thought of. Then, I finally got the idea, I wanted to only have a black leader and they told me that that's already been done. Then I decided I wanted to have a narration with the black leader and they said "It's been done you know, Godard has been doing things like that", and I said but no one had a black leader, with narration, with my voice. And even if someone had a black leader, with narration, with my voice, it wasn't this narration. So this is absolutely, positively, original, and that's it. Period. Fuck it.
МИЛЧО

1. јави: лен, ма, тени, рок, зошт, 25.5. прета
2. збори со 25. мај - проба за филм и лепилица
3. збори за плакат и за истакнување
4. опширна х.б. напилографира
5. интервиципи - петок у 15 ч.
6. прававе покани
7. збори со дубе
8. впечатли провери и проба
9. слу - мило,
10. подари - виколе, мирче.

Ден:
- вала
- вака воб.
- 3.АТ

- помош за
1.М како
- десирајќи покаж
- распредеувања на деневна

- БАБА поместува со
- лен, на ирела
art performances, object making, slide screenings, music performances and conversations are explained in detail, as in a sort of screenplay as well as in their photocopied texts. The first Macedonian Manifesto of the Conceptualists was published in these texts (signed by Milcho Manchevski, Emil Ansarov, Atanas Bogdanovski, Vanco Gjosevski, Hadzhi-Angelkovski Gjorgji, Ljubomir Stojsavljevikj, Miloje Radakovic, Sarkanjac, Dabic, Princevac Zanet, Vanja Ve, Peric Ljiljana, Petre Bogdanovski, A. Grcev, Pasoski Robi, Darka Stefanovska, Lidiija P., Ivan M., Tanja, Zorica Trpkovska, M, Polazar, J. Nikuljska). This art workshop is close in spirit with the social plasticity of the greatest Fluxus mage – Joseph Beuys.

The activities of 1 AM are multimedia, multidisciplinary, and intercommunicative (exhibits, performances, happenings, conversations, film screenings, music, reciting, discussions, taking photographs, communicating with the audience). They cherished the absurd and irony and were close in spirit with Dadaists, who in fact denied art. They strived to keep the anonymity of the group members, anonymity against collective action, socializing, socialization and democratization of art. They performed activities with permanent repetition, pleonasms, photographs on photographs, films on films, repeating the name of the Group 1 AM.

The second performance of the Group 1 AM also had connotation of multimedia activities (music, TV program, slide screening, unpretentious conversation topics, and paradoxical situations of waiting for no event). The event is in the waiting, the charm is in the desire to see, touch, and hear. A sort of paraphrase of a 1963 Joseph Beuys' happening is made with a twisted meaning: "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare" became "How to Explain Joseph Beuys' Performance to a Live Rabbit". The Questionnaire for the event emphasizes that this mélange of events is not treated neither as one direction nor style, noting that negative definition is not a definition.\footnote{We had two performances of what we called appearance art. They were defined by what they were not. We had a long list of all we were not (performance art, conceptualism, happening, Dadaism, etc., etc., etc.) and then a paragraph followed saying that a negative definition is not a definition. The performance was basically about keeping promises. And a whole lot of conceptual, and not just conceptual, things were promised that were also carried out at a given point in time. (We had exhibits, projections, a recital and a performance). That was the first appearance. The second appearance was exactly a year later and it was a paraphrase of Joseph Beuys' happening, "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare", only we had a live rabbit and we were explaining Beuys' performance to it". In Milcho Manchevski, quoted piece in Golemoto staklo, p. 70.}

Manchevski himself explains the concept of his experimental film 1.72: My film “1.72” shown in Belgrade, Split and New York, consisted of the following: I appear on the stage and I hold a piece of film 1.72 m long, in complete darkness, which is then exposed to 24 flashes. Then I take the same piece of film upstairs and project it (short projection). The film is in fact exposed, but not processed, so that there is nothing to see on it. Then I take it downstairs, cut it into pieces, staple each piece onto a questionnaire (questions about what art is, what the nature of art is: is it this film or that piece of film we performed as a happening, or these pieces that I'm now distributing?). In all of my experience, that is the point I was closest to the fine arts.\footnote{Ibid.}

After two and a half decades, Manchevski conceived the project Riddle (1999), probably inspired by the urban design of billboards and citylights, and among other things, as a result of his intensive work in photography, exhibited around the world. Riddle consists of 8 photographs that are a sort of anti-puzzle, because the photographs do not follow in order but present a process of putting up a billboard, a project that can be put together as one wishes it to be. The interactive idea is emphasized, and if it were taken out, that would completely devalue the work.

All this plethora of events, performances, installations, art books, experimental films, interactive and interface performances, etc., at first were independent and later parallel with Manchevski’s other activities: feature films, photo exhibitions, commercials and spots. I would say all these activities are one and only a sort of cabinet of rarities, a contemporary one, interweaving lucid, ironic, often absurd ideas as connecting lines between the unconventional art happening from the early 20th century to the early 21st. In that way, the ontological space of the cabinet assumes the aura of a holistic principle, characteristic of grand concepts.
Opening of the Street exhibition in Santo Domingo
ありふれた情景の爆発

アメリカで初の写真展
ミルチョ・マンチェフスキー監督

プレズ・オブ・エクスプレッション

カプカの息子
ミルチョ・マンチェフスキー

カプカの息子
ミルチョ・マンチェフスキー

カプカの息子
ミルチョ・マンチェフスキー

カプカの息子
ミルチョ・マンチェフスキー
Conor McGrady

Time, Narrative and Representation: Milcho Manchevski’s Work in Performance and Photography

Early Work

“Does a film have to exist to be a film?”

In an early work consisting of a grid of Polaroid photos, a sequential arrangement of images depicts a further series of Polaroids, some in varying stages of development. These images reveal a youthful Milcho Manchevski, photographed from a distance. As the photos within photographs gradually emerge into focus he appears with a full beard, which gradually disappears through a sequence of four images, leaving the artist clean-shaven. In this piece, Beard/Polaroids (Fig 1, Fig X), the original photos of the beard are re-photographed and presented as part of the overall work. This approach to documenting transformation provides a window into the development of Manchevski’s later work in film, as it reveals two of his primary concerns, namely those of time and representation. Taking its cue from structuralism, this work reveals the mechanics of the development of Polaroid images as a chemical reaction between light and film. Through re-photography the initial images are incorporated as both originals in their final form, and as repeated components of the overall piece. Time progresses sequentially as the beard disappears, inversely mirroring the images slowly coming to life through Polaroid film. This process of cataloging is a symbolic iteration of the means by which something is revealed, with the photograph acting as a signifier of time, both as image and object. Included as a compositional footnote, the entire sequence of images is re-photographed, adding yet another layer and further highlighting the sense of distance that always remains implicit in photography. In a second ‘footnote’ the artist appears to be scrutinizing the piece, examining the process by which time is marked, compressed, presented and re-presented (Fig 2).

Like Beard/Polaroids, Manchevski’s other early works from the 1980’s reveal a post-conceptual art practice that establishes the foundations for his feature length films and later work in photography. Working under the title 1AM, individual or collaborative pieces drew upon Dada, structuralism and conceptualism to push artistic boundaries. Some of these works, including Beard/Polaroids were created while he was attending film school in Carbondale, Illinois, and later exhibited and performed in Macedonia and multiple venues across the former Yugoslavia. Other early works created in Carbondale include three single-shot experimental films. One of these,

1 1.74 Questionnaire. Available online at: http://manchevski.com/art/1-74/ Accessed Nov 2, 2014
the Untitled Film, features a black screen with a voice-over, and refers to the desire to make an original work in film, given that all other approaches have seemingly been tried. Manchevski refers to this piece in Text of the Untitled Film, which formed part of an extensive 1 AM performance (described below). In a statement read to the audience on the soundtrack he responds to the potential or imagined accusation that his approach to this film had been done before “even by Godard”. “Yes, but it’s never been with this voice-over. And, even if it has been, it certainly wasn’t my voice.” Another of these films, The Wire, involved a hand-held shot climbing a set of stairs to an attic room, including a glimpse of the shadow of the cameraman and the wire linking the camera to the battery belt. Paths of Glory involved a single take of a slacker drinking on a porch to the soundtrack of “Act Naturally” by the Beatles. The film ends with the film stuck in the camera.

Returning to Skopje after film school, Manchevski created a number of collaborative 1AM events, performances and screenings, which the collective referred to as “appearance art”. In one event in Skopje on December 10th, 1983, The Members of the Group 1 AM Will Perform a Presentation (Fig Y), multiple actions and screenings took place over the course of the evening. A List of Performance Elements of the Group 1 AM was read out, then distributed in photocopy (Fig Z), followed by a reading of the Conceptualist Manifesto, which consisted of its title followed by 23 signatures. In other parts of the event the audience watched an ice cube melting, and art works installed to face the wall were turned to face the audience. In Cyril and Methodius Blues, Manchevski sang the Cyrillic alphabet accompanied by a band, and in Elegies for Cyril and Methodius, two actors performed an overlapping recital of the alphabet as if it were a revolutionary poem. In Elements for Interpreting the Performances of the Group 1 AM, an exhibit witnessed as the audience first walked into the gallery, the group listed everything the performance was not; “The performance by the group 1 AM is not: a conceptualist piece, a happening, a performance piece, body art, a structuralist piece, GASP-art, a minimalistic piece, mail art, an environmental piece, camp-art, Dadaism (Fig 3).” This text elaborated further, stating that, “To evaluate an art piece on a regular basis means to fail to cognize the new, as evaluating means viewing through tradition.” A year later to the day, 1 AM performed How to Explain Joseph Beuys’ “How to Explain Pictures to Dead Hare” to a Living Rabbit, which involved Manchevski walking around an exhibition space while trying to explain the Beuys piece to a rabbit. Two pictures on the walls of the space accompanied the piece, a portrait of Joseph Beuys and a cross by Kazimir Malevich (Fig 4).

Around this time, Manchevski created The Ghost of my Mother, a small conceptualist book that consisted of 36 different elements. These included the Table of Contents from a book on art, a description of Robert Smithson’s Spiral Jetty broken down into a poem, and a number of expressive Haiku pieces. The overall impact of the work alternates between two extremes, the seeming dry and conceptual on the one hand, and the emotional or sentimental on the other, a polarity that Manchevski would return to again in his film work, particularly Mothers. In another work, 1.74, which was performed in Belgrade, Split and Brooklyn, and won the Belgrade award for experimental film, the artist mounted a stage holding a 1.74m piece of unexposed film. After it was subjected to 24 simultaneous flashes he took the film to the projection booth and screened it. Returning to the stage he cut it up and stapled it to 100 questionnaires (Fig 5). Distributed to the audience, they contained some of the following inquires: “Does a film have to be exposed? Does a film have to be shown? Does a film have to contain a film strip? Does a film have to have an image? Does a film have to have a story? Does a film have to exist to be a film?”

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2 Interview with Milcho Manchevski by the author, February 12, 2014.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
LIST OF PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS OF THE GROUP 1 AM

1-200. Two hundred unique invitations to the performance
201. Mailing the invitations
202. Plan of performance
203. Reading the Plan of performance
204. Distribution of the Plan of performance
205. Mailing the Plan of performance
206. List of performance elements
207. Reading of the List
208. Distribution of the List
209. Introduction
210. Reading of the Introduction
211. Distribution of the Introduction
212. Poster
213. Selling six copies of the poster
214. Unlocking the gallery and switching on the light
215. First listening of Cyril and Methodius Blues
216. Second listening of Cyril and Methodius Blues
217. The film Paths of Glory
218. Screening of the film Paths of Glory
219. The film Wire
220. Screening of the film Wire
221. Untitled film
222. Screening of the untitled film
223. Displaying the exhibits
224. The first exhibit, i.e. the Polaroid-project Faces
225. The second exhibit, i.e. the first copy of Conceptualist Manifesto
226. The third exhibit, i.e. the second copy of Conceptualist Manifesto
227. The fourth exhibit, i.e. the third copy of Conceptualist Manifesto
228. Signing the Manifesto

+ This page with this list
229. The fifth exhibit, i.e. the Definition of the performance of the group 1 AM
230. The sixth exhibit, i.e. - a piece of ice
231. Uncovering the piece of ice
232. Observing the time during which the piece of ice melts
233. Entering the time during which the ice melted into the Plan 234.-
3170. Phases of melting of the piece of ice
3171. Turning the project Faces towards the audience
3172. List of signatures of the Manifesto
3173. Photographing the exhibition with a polaroid camera
3174. Exhibiting the polaroids
3175. Photographing the exhibited polaroids
3176. Exhibiting the second polaroids
3177. The first polaroids
3178. The second polaroids
3179. Recital Elegies for Cyril and Methodius
3180. Text to the recital Elegies for Cyril and Methodius
3181. Labels under the exhibits
3182. Taking the exhibits downs
3183. Taking the poster down
3184. Turning off the lights and locking the gallery
3185. The audience

Concluded with 3185.
454

To the potential guest
91 000 Skopje
Yugoslavia

INVITATION

We kindly request that that the above-named addressee read the enclosed text.

The group 1 AM is an informal artist collective. Their first performance begins with this text you are holding in your hands. This invitation should stimulate the reader's interest and serve as information on the place and time of the performance (Gallery of the Youth Club “May 25th”, Skopje, Yugoslavia from 10:30 PM to 00:00 AM, on Saturday, December 10th, 1983, Central European Time).

This text is also one of the 3,185 elements in the performance of the group 1 AM (please note the pointed repetition of the name of the group 1 AM, which ought to trigger the desired effect in the guest, i.e. to guide him to memorize the name 1AM). The rest of the performance elements is listed in the GROUP 1 AM LIST OF PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS, which will be distributed between 22:50 PM and 00:00 AM, on December 10th, 1983 (Central European Time), in accordance with the precisely drawn GROUP 1 AM PLAN OF PERFORMANCE (the Plan will be read between 10:39 PM and 10:46 PM, and will be distributed during the same time period as the List).

In an attempt to entice as many readers of this Invitation as possible to attend the performance itself, attached is the Plan, whereas the potential guest can hear or obtain the List, the times noted above, which have been precisely established, and to which the group 1 AM will make a determined effort to keep to.

From the group 1 AM
These early works foreground the experimental basis of Milcho Manchevski’s work across multiple disciplines, and highlight his grounding in an avant-garde practice. The context of working between the United States and Yugoslavia cannot be overlooked as an important factor in the development of this practice. In the 1980’s, Yugoslavia was home to a burgeoning contemporary avant-garde art scene and home to a number of artists’ collectives, such as NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst) and OHO, that pushed the boundaries of performance and conceptual practice. As a non-aligned socialist country, travel between east and west and open exposure to currents in contemporary art and theoretical debate contributed to a dynamic interdisciplinary experimental culture. In the US the work of the Pictures Generation, and artists such as Jack Goldstein and Cindy Sherman refocused attention on the importance of the image as a signifier of multiple, interlocking meanings, and on the relationship between photography and film in particular. Manchevski’s experiments with structure and narrative emerged from a period prior to radical shifts in the both countries. In the 1980’s the art market boomed and subsequently imploded in the US, and in the early nineties, Yugoslavia disintegrated in war. As he began to work on feature length films, he continued to develop the core thematic elements of this early work in film, photography and performance. In referring to the methodologies that he continues to draw upon, Manchevski states that this strain in his work “opens you up – like taking a cold shower”. His engagement with structure and representation also permeates his two major bodies of photographic work, Street, and Five Drops of Dream. Like his film work, and The Ghost of My Mother, these projects merge the formal and conceptual with the poetic to create multiple and open-ended readings that are seamlessly woven throughout.

5 Ibid.
CONCEPTUALIST MANIFESTO

This is the manifesto of the conceptualists.

(signed x 23)
ХИДИЈА 17.
СЕВИЈА
фамила Јовановић

2.
1.74

1) Da li film more da bude eksponiran?
2) Da li film more da bude prikazan?
3) Da li film more da ima traku?
4) Da li film more da ima sliku?
5) Da li film more da ima priču?
6) Da li film more da postoji da bi bio film?
1) Does a film have to be exposed?
2) Does a film have to be shown?
3) Does a film have to contain a film strip?
4) Does a film have to have an image?
5) Does a film have to have a story?
6) Does a film have to exist to be a film?
“Traces of humanity captured as if by chance, in the rhythm of their day-to-day life, routine gestures, figures met at the moment when pressing a button - who then slip away - visual structures stolen from environments that shirk every attempt to decode them.”6

While shifting from conceptual and performance art to feature-length film, Manchevski continued to build an extensive body of work in photography. Created in the 1990’s and drawn from numerous geographic locations, Street encapsulates the pulse of the urban. Multiple elements frame and run through this extended body of work. Texture and color, particularly the spectrum of red, blue and green, permeate the glimpsed fragments of anonymous lives. Multiple images of reflections expand the narrative potential in this series, a visual approach that is developed further in the film Shadows, where mirrors and reflections act as portals, letting individuals and memories from other time periods filter through. In One Way, 1998 (Fig 6), distortion and refraction soften and contradict the authoritative command of the “One Way” street sign. Here the road is inverted and folds back on itself, the abstract formal qualities of the image contradicting the rigidity of the command with the fluidity of its surroundings. In Billboard, 1998 (Fig 7), Manchevski draws our attention once more to the processes by which images are both constructed and revealed. The blurred Central Park, 1998 (Fig 8), on the other hand highlights how images can also conceal as much as they reveal though playing with or testing the mechanics of their production. In this instance, a photograph is an indicator of physical materiality yet fragile temporality.

Humor also permeates these works in Who Loves You Baby?, 1998 (Fig 9), where an unsuspecting pedestrian morphs through the lens of pop culture into Telly Savalas’ Kojak. Marlboro, 1998 (Fig 10) juxtaposes a protest march with the primary colors of a Marlboro ad. The forward momentum of the protest and raised hands are echoed in the epic, quasi-visionary gesture of the Marlboro man, pointing to an undisclosed future, and also serving as a nod to the use of appropriated imagery in the work of Richard Prince. The red flag of socialism carried by the protesters mirrors the red in the ad, contrasting starkly with its mythic promise of (unattainable?) capitalist fulfillment. Through capturing the incongruous this image bears the hallmarks of cinematography, and the cinematic reverberates throughout Street. Gestures and body language echo compositionally in West Broadway, 1998 (Fig 11) and Paris 3, 1998 (Fig 12). Rooftop or balcony views play with proximity and distance. Tomatoes, 1998 (Fig 13) bridges Manchevski’s film work and parallels the opening scene of Dust, which also features tomatoes on a market stall. With its assemblage of elements, Pisa, 1999 (Fig 14) reads as a DeChirico painting, its arch and leaning tower conjuring up the metaphysical works of one of the key figures in early twentieth century modernism.

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Fig 10
Fig 13
Expanding the context of this series in Riddle, Manchevski blew up a number of the photographs from Street to billboard size. When Street opened as an exhibition in the Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje in 1999, four billboards featuring enlarged photographs from the series of works in the exhibition were used to advertize it across the city. Subverting the conventional use of the billboard as a platform for presenting information, no details on the exhibition were provided. Decontextualized and ambiguous, the onus was on the audience engaging with these images to read, interpret or decipher any potential meaning. Traveling with the crew assembling the oversized photographic fragments on the billboards, Manchevski photographed the process of installation. The new images produced from this process once again foreground his interest in re-contextualization and re-presentation of pre-existing images. In these images the older photographs are represented as enlarged fragments undergoing combination in a new context. The fragmentation and recombination of pre-existing images back into their original form in a new context to create a new reading, builds on Manchevski’s concern with the constructed nature of reality, and an inherent desire to play with and question ‘reality’ as a form of assemblage. Four of these images were then exhibited alongside the four original photos, amplifying their initial concerns with process and display (Fig 15).
Five Drops of Dream

“In the collection of compositions FIVE DROPS OF DREAM I am interested in two things:
1. The explosion of the visual in the mundane moment; and
2. The wrestle and embrace of the narrative and the formal.

These photographs live only when they are together and when they form compositions. Like notes in a song.”

Encompassing photographs taken over a ten-year period, Five Drops of Dream spans time and, like Street, multiple geographic locations which are folded into each other in a series of 49 compositions called strings. Each string is comprised of 5 photographs aligned in a row, their composition serving as the locus for multiple associative readings. The images themselves are often close ups, or shot from askew angles and peripheral viewpoints, capturing what Manchevski describes as “mundane moments” in time. Like Street, these images feature the interplay between the incidental and the mysterious, and between light and texture. The richness of the light illuminates fragments of the built environment - concrete, walls, roadways and sidewalks – and activates the anonymous lives that define and pass through it. The balance between light and shadow accentuates the sense of mystery alongside the formal qualities it lends the composition of each piece. Walls and bodies emerge from shadows, and light defines and captures seemingly banal moments in time, its revealing glare asserting and elevating their presence (Fig 16).

If Street references the language of painting and the avant-garde, Five Drops of Dream pushes these references further. The use of line, color and shape in defining the formal considerations of each string, appropriates the strategies and techniques of twentieth century painting. In some of the strings, a line cuts or sweeps through the composition, unifying otherwise seemingly unrelated elements and linking disparate moments in time and space. As with the early work, images appear within images, and the predominance of windows and reflections add depth, accentuating their spatial considerations and expanding their narrative potential (Fig 17). Vibrant explosions of color and pattern punctuate the strings. A color is picked up in one image and echoed in another. Circles, verticals and diagonals repeat, underpinning the structure of each composition (Fig 18). Form defines these works, from the choices in the framing of the initial photographs, to their alignment into groups of five. This process of selection and arrangement evokes the cut-up method that informed cubism and other subsequent avant-garde practices that emerged during the twentieth century. In effect, each string is a linear collage; its totality wholly dependent on its separate composite elements. The formal considerations underpinning each composition provide a mechanism for the viewer to make numerous and overlapping assumptions about the suggested, if fragmentary, narrative or sets of narratives within each work.

In looking at Manchevski’s work in film, similar concerns can be distinguished in Five Drops of Dream. Rapid shifts in time and location characterize his films, as does a desire to play with temporal structure and conventional filmic narrative. While film is inherently dependant on the progression of time, the photograph, through its silent stasis remains divorced from this temporal flow. The power of photography, as in painting, lays in the silence of the image; a silence that demands an act of contemplation in order to elicit meaning. Manchevski’s films, of course, also demand the active participation of the viewer in constructing meaning, refusing to let them become passive consumers of conventional cinematic narrative. But the encapsulation of time and place in Five Drops of Dream provides a wholly different experience to that of cinematic time. The grouping of images in each string may formally echo the progression of images on a filmstrip, but there the comparison ends. As collages, these works are essentially polyptychs. Each individual image has a power and presence of its own, but it is only in their role as component elements within a larger singular framework that they activate the capacity for multiple readings.

The lived experience of the urban predominates in Street and Five Drops of Dream. It’s dynamic rhythm and flow framing the anonymity, work, poverty, and in some cases hints of conflict, that play out in these images. Children and animals form an almost constant presence in the works, foregrounding their poetic, erotic and dramatic context. The viewer is often peripheral, and in many of the works the gaze downwards, drawing attention to the surfaces of the built environment on (and within) which life is played out. In Five Drops of Dream, the peripheral or seemingly incidental is recast to become not simply a document of a moment in time, but a possibility. In each work the most overlooked aspects of life are transformed into an intimate visual experience that invites the viewer into a world of open-ended associative contexts and potential meanings.

List of Images:

Fig 1. Beard/Polaroids
Fig 2. Beard/Polaroids
Fig 3. 1 AM Manifesto
Fig 4. How to Explain Joseph Beuys’ “How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare” to a Live Rabbit
Fig 5. 1.74
Fig 6. One Way
Fig 7. Billboard
Fig 8. Central Park
Fig 9. Who Loves You Baby
Fig 10. Marlboro
Fig 11. Paris 3
Fig 12. West Broadway
Fig 13. Tomatoes
Fig 14. Pisa
Fig 15. Riddle
Fig 16. String 1
Fig 17. String 2
Fig 18. String 3
Fig X. A series of 4 Polaroid shots depicting a Polaroid shot in various stages of development
Fig Y. 1 AM Invitation
Fig Z. List of Performance Elements of the Group 1 AM
Milcho Manchevski has directed four features (Before the Rain, Dust, Shadows, Mothers) and 50 short forms (Tennessee for Arrested Development, Thursday, etc). He has won over 40 international awards, including the Golden Lion for Best Film in Venice. The New York Times included Before the Rain on its list of 1,000 best films ever made, and Rolling Stone put Tennessee on its list of 100 best videos ever made.

Tell a friend about this list: your friend's e-mail Send e-mail

If you have a question about this list, please contact Tanya Zaharchenko. If you have a question about a specific talk, click on that talk to find its organiser.

Screening of “Mothers” (2010) by Milcho Manchevski
Day 1 of 2: screening
Milcho Manchevski, director.
Audit Room (Old Lodge), King’s College.
Saturday 30 November 2013, 16:00-18:00

Film, conflict, representation: a discussion with Milcho Manchevski
Day 2 of 2: screening + talk
Milcho Manchevski, director.
Umney Theatre, Robinson College.
Monday 02 December 2013, 17:00-20:00
Filmmaker Milcho Manchevski at Yale
Monday, April 7, 7pm
Whitney Humanities Center, 53 Wall Street

WORKSHOP
WITH MILCHO MANCHEVSKI
28. bis 25. Oktober 2014, 10-18 Uhr

- Director/Writer: BEFORE THE RAIN (Goldener Löwe 1994); DUST, SHADOWS; MOTHERS;
  einige Folgen von THE WIRE u.v.m. -> milchomenachevski.com
- Lehre in den USA und in Europa, Russland, ist Ehrenprofessor an der GITIS, Moskau

About the workshop:
- I will select a few scenes from classic screenplays (e.g. DOG DAY AFTERNOON, THE CONVERSATION, BONNIE AND CLYDE, RAGING BULL) and develop them with the actors (usually two actors per scene) as a centerpiece of the workshop, with the other participants observing.
- During the filming, we will discuss the process and the practical and aesthetic considerations. If we can edit the sequences, we will eventually analyze the work with the participants.
- I will also screen a selection of scenes from my work - or an entire film, which we could then discuss.

Participants should speak perfect English because they will need to perform in English.

Anmeldung unter:
k_stutterheim@filmuniversitaet.de

Special 35mm Screening of Shadows (2007)
Premiered at the 2007 Toronto Intl. Film Festival
Not yet released in the US

Sponsors:
Stanley T. Woodward Fellowship, Film Studies Program

free and open to the public

Followed by Q&A with the filmmaker

Whitney Humanities Center, 53 Wall Street
Lent 2014 Events and Seminars

Tuesday 21 January 2014
5:00pm, Latimer Room, Clare College
Hamid Ismailov (BBC World’s Writer in Residence)
"A Poet and Bin Laden, or Islamic Militancy in Central Asia and Afghanistan"

Tuesday 4 February 2014
5:00pm, Latimer Room, Clare College
Mette High (Edinburgh); Caroline Humphrey, Tatiana Safonova, Istvan Szanto, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (Cambridge)
"Anthropology in the Russian Language"  
A panel discussion on the challenges and opportunities of interlingual translation

Tuesday 18 February 2014
5:00pm, Latimer Room, Clare College
Gruia Badescu, Elena Tchoukouanova-Paulson, Tanya Zakharchenko (Cambridge)
"Dovzhenko/Manchevski: Silence, Speech, and the Gaze"  
A panel discussion on two filmmakers across contexts

Tuesday 4 March 2014
5:00pm, Thirkill Room, Clare College
Peter Fedynsky (Translator / Journalist)
"Translating Shevchenko’s Kobzar"

Free and open to the public / Coffee and tea available from 4:45pm
Intervju: MILČO MANČEVSKI

LEPOTA SE KRIJE U RAZLIKAMA

Ljudi su svuda isti. Predrasude nas navode da govorimo o razlikama.

Ponekad su to naivne predrasude, ponekad su licemerne, a često su one koren rasisma. Naravno, postoje razlike, i lepota se često krije u tim razlikama, u kulturnim specifičnostima nekog prostora. Tužno je što zbog globalizacije te razlike veoma brzo nestaju, ali mislim da je suština ipak ista – tuge i radosti su slične svuda na svetu, i ljubav i nada i zluradost su slične i u Sibiru i u Njukorku i u Maliju. Naravno, različita društva u različitim periodima različito se nose sa impulsima i instinktima pojedinca i to je veoma interesantno, ali ne verujem u urođene razlike.

Za AKUZATIV govori Milčo Mančevski, poznati režisør poreklom iz Makedonije, autor kulturnih filmova “Pre kiše” (dobitnik Zlatnog lava za najbolji film na festivalu u Veneciji), “Prašina”, “Senke”...

AKUZATIV: Počnimo uspomenama na zemlju koje više nema. Kada se osvrate na Jugoslaviju, na život u njoj, kakva su Vaša sećanja, i u negativnom i u pozitivnom smislu?

- Ja sam rastao u zlatno vreme Jugoslavije, ali sam otišao pre tog nekog zenita i pre nego što je sve otislo bestraga. Školovao sam se na Midwegiani, a ponekad mi je taj sistem faktor negativnom i u pozitivnom smislu.

Bio je dobar sistem i znao da se ne bi dečak neko iz Jugoslavije upoznao s nekim iz Srbije, ako je neko iz Jugoslavije poznao neki iz Srbije, to je neki od veza. Ta vrsta odnosa je sada izgubljena, a to je osećaj opustetnosti. Da je bilo to izgubljeno, mog da pogledam na to i na zemlju izgubljenu, zemlju koja mi je bila dom i u kojoj sam mirno preminuo. Sve to je bitno kako se ova zemlja sada ne može, ne može, ne može, ne može... Ne može se ova zemlja, sada, ne može se ova zemlja, sada, ne može se ova zemlja, sada... Isto je s ovom zemljom, ili tome što je ova zemlja.

Imao sam valjda nekih 10 godina kad je na televiziji igrao neki dosadan japanski crno beli film, a tata mi kaže: “Pogledaj malo ovo, ovo, ovo, ovo...” I nije loš. Uopšte nije loš. Nisam ga bas shvatio, ali me je dojmio. To je bio Kurosavin “Rašomon” u vreme kad sam u velikom interesu za crno beli filmove ili predstave, a ja sam na početku svoje filmske karijere bio zbog filmova ili predstava.

“Miris poljskog cveća” Karanovića – ZAT


Fasbindera desetak godina kasnije. Čak i kad gledaš njegove dosadne filme, već ti je drago jer si proveo dva sata sa veoma interesantnim sagovornikom.

Od jugoslovenskih autora – Makavejev, Saša Petrović, Živojin Pavlović, “Breza” Ante Babuška, “Mlits poljskog cveća” Karanović... To su ljudi filmovi, može ih staviti na ekran u svako srce, može ih staviti na ekran u svako srce, može ih staviti na ekran u svako srce... – može da inspirisete, može da inspirisete, može da inspirisete... – može da inspirisete, može da inspirisete, može da inspirisete...

Swatting flies in Cambridge
ГОЛЛИВУД ВО ВГИКЕ

Принять участие в съемках «Бонни и Клайд», оказаться на месте Роберта Де Ниро или Ала Пачино — не об этом ли мечтает любой молодой актер? Оказалось, что для осуществления такой мечты не нужно имени Манчевски, американский режиссер, приглашенный во ВГИК провести расширенный мастер-класс, погрузил пять молодых съемочных групп в сюжеты классического Голливуда и показал им, как делается сегодня продюсерское кино.

Милко Манчевски

Во ВГИКе — там есть чему учиться. К сожалению, Голливудский университет, созданный в 1930-х годах в США, сегодня не может похвастаться таким уровнем образования. Впрочем, в неформальном плане, подобных учебных мероприятий, являющихся по сути экспериментом, куда пригласили Манчевски, множество. Его цель — показать студентам, как снимать кино, даже не используя для этого большую технику.

Милко Манчевски прилетел в Россию, чтобы провести мастер-класс в рамках проекта «Перед дождем». В прошлом году, когда Манчевски был приглашен на российский кинофестивале, он рассказал, что именно наша страна — нынешний студенты-актеры мастерской Игоря Ясуловича, который подтвердил Манчевски, — а в прошлом году — студенты Тильского университета (Нью-Йорк), — был ответственен за создание пяти независимых съемочных групп. Их задача — снять короткометражные фильмы, основанные на сюжетах классических американских фильмов второй половины прошлого века. Выбор пал на ленты Мартина Скорсезе и Фрэнсиса Форда Копполы.

По словам Милчо, его главной целью стала передача вгиковским операторам мастерства: «Это классика, однако далеко не все студенты знают об этом. Но действительно классические фильмы нужно знать, чтобы по-настоящему понимать современное кино». Милко Манчевски заранее продумал ракурсы и крупность снимаемых планов, но всегда был готов к экспериментам. Он не редко говорил: «Я старался быть достаточно жестким преподавателем, но учил, чтобы у студентов появилось желание и охота делать такие же работы. Мы старались выработать у студентов желание работать с объектом искусства — и он должен быть у них в голове всегда. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великую пусть даже и ограниченную творческую жизнь, которая тебя поддерживает, то ты можешь рожден хоть на Марсе, это не важно».

По мнению Милчо, его главной целью стала передача вгиковским операторам мастерства: «Это классика, однако далеко не все студенты знают об этом. Но действительно классические фильмы нужно знать, чтобы по-настоящему понимать современное кино». Милко Манчевски заранее продумал ракурсы и крупность снимаемых планов, но всегда был готов к экспериментам. Он не редко говорил: «Я старался быть достаточно жестким преподавателем, но учил, чтобы у студентов появилось желание и охота делать такие же работы. Мы старались выработать у студентов желание работать с объектом искусства — и он должен быть у них в голове всегда. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти формы для выражения своих идей. Я верю в великие произведения Манчевски говорил не просто так: в рамках проекта набранные им группы могли работать над любой темой. Я верю в людей, которые могут найти формы для выхода из труднейших ситуаций. Я верю в объект искусства — и он есть что сказать и которые могут найти форм...
Режиссер Милош Манчевски будет учить русских студентов

В декабре 2012 года знаменитый режиссер Милош Манчевски прибыл в Москву с целью подготовить и реализовать уникальный образовательный проект совместно с Всероссийским государственным университетом им. Кинематографии им. С.А. Тарковского (ВГИК). В его планы — создание короткометражных фильмов с использованием опыта кинематографии и профессионального образования США совместно со студентами университета.

Справка
Милош Манчевски — македонский кинорежиссер (в том числе документального и экспериментального кино), сценарист, писатель-премьер и увлекается фотографией. Живет в Париже, преподаёт в Тихвинской художественной школе (ТХШ) Всероссийского государственного университета им. Кинематографии им. С.А. Тарковского (ВГИК). В его фильмах: «Печать женщин», «Остров скрещенных», «Погребение», «Политики» и других неоднократно становились участниками, номинантами и призерами различных международных кинофестивалей.

«Воспитать новых Тарковских»

Первым этапом данного образовательного проекта станет проведение конкурса со студентами иркутского факультета национального университета РФ им. И.Н. Яковлева. Затем, в марте 2013 года, Манчевски будет делиться своими знаниями и навыками с молодыми абитуриентами непосредственно в процессе съемок.

В декабре ВГИК организовал для студентов и представителей СМИ специальную встречу с кинорежиссером, а в конвенте университета был погован фильм Манчевски — «Привет» (2001).

Несмотря на то, что Милош Манчевски заведущий университета и вместе со своими студентами съездил почти весь мир, в России он истратил. Как рассказывал сам режиссер, он «занял» посещение нашего студента и наведаться с ним в кинематографию, чтобы студенту не вредить и с ним разговором с ними, узнать, как протекает обучение, и какое предложение Университета кинематографии сыграть с ним у студентов.

Милош рассказал, что главной целью своей работы со студентами он видит в том, чтобы «воспитать новых Тарковских». По мнению М., «среднестатистический студент» он подзволит со студентами своего, а в свою очередь, помогут ему открывать новые горизонты.

Знакомство с будущим преподавателем

В декабре в македонском городе было показано видео с одной из картин режиссера и лично задать ему вопросы.

Премьера фильма «Привет» (Dust) состоялась еще в 2001 году, но режиссер по праву считает его одной из лучших своих работ. Картина дважды выигрывала в своем жанре на престижных международных кинофестивалях, хотя она никогда не получала всенародную известность. Лента, как и все фильмы режиссера, была снята в формате цифрового видео, что позволило режиссеру получить новые возможности.

Второй этап проекта — российская студия — запланировано на первую половину 2013 года. В ВГИКе планируется создать студию и начать съемки нового фильма со студентами иркутского факультета. Как рассказывал режиссер, он готовит к премьере новую картину, которая будет представлена на одной из международных кинофестивалей.

Студенты ВГИКа, конечно, интересовали «профессиональные секреты» режиссера. Как написать хороший сценарий? Как довести успех дебюту? И как влюбить в аудитории?

По словам режиссера, создать текст означает часть работы. (Недостаток в творческой сфере: полноценный фильм не может быть создан за несколько месяцев, так как процесс съемок длится несколько лет.) Поэтому, важно не только написать сценарий, но и понять, как он будет реализован. Как измерить это на примере Манчевски, он большое внимание уделяет аудитории, а также академическим вопросам. Важно, чтобы студенты и сотрудники, заинтересованные в развитии кинематографии, понимали, что «фильм — это и не только кино. Это возможность взглянуть на мир глазами кинематографиста».

По словам режиссера, он больше всего хочет, чтобы студенты научились работать в команде, а также научиться работать с кадрами. Он говорит: «Важно, чтобы студенты научились работать в команде, а также научиться работать с кадрами. Это позволит им стать профессионалами в своем деле». Манчевски подчеркнул, что у него часто хотел снимать знаменитыми, но начинают требовать присутствие режиссера на съемочной площадке. И так как съемочная группа — это часть работы, важно научиться работать с ней. Манчевски подчеркнул, что у него часто хотел снимать знаменитыми, но начинают требовать присутствие режиссера на съемочной площадке. И так как съемочная группа — это часть работы, важно научиться работать с ней.
ARTS

Cinema

Macedonia’s leading film-maker, Milčo Mančevski, highlighted interethnic relations in the Oscar-nominated Before the Rain (1994). Mančevski’s next film, Dust (2001), was an illidren Uprising-era cowboy classic that riled the Greeks (see p503). In 2007, Mančevski released Semki (Shadows) a racy urban love story with supernatural overtones. In it, an elderly female speaking an ‘Aegean’ Macedonian dialect intones the film’s recurring line – ‘give back what is not yours’. The Greeks were infuriated; Mančevski insisted it was not a nationalistic reference.
Negli articoli sulla Macedonia si pone per lo più l’accento sul “delicato equilibrio etnico” del paese, di cui si poteva temere lo sconvolgimento in seguito all’arrivo dal Kosovo di almeno 250.000 profughi. Un giudizio che non coglie nel segno. Non si tratta di un problema di equilibrio etnico ma di qualcosa di molto più semplice: la Macedonia è un paese povero che si sente tradito. Nel marzo scorso, prima che iniziasse l’esodo di massa, si riteneva che non sarebbe stato necessario accogliere in Macedonia più di ventimila profughi. Il Partito Democratico degli Albanesi, una delle tre formazioni politiche che compongono il governo macedone, aveva convinto gli altri partiti della coalizione a riconoscere ai profughi lo status di “ospiti”. Così hanno potuto entrare come turisti, con formalità di ingresso semplificate e senza controlli sanitari, e sono stati alloggiati presso famiglie che si erano offerte volontariamente di accoglierli. Un trattamento che era sembrato più umano. Mi ero recato al valico di confine di Blace con il mio produttore, Domenico Procacci, il 28 marzo, quando secondo le valutazioni l’aumento dei profughi era di 20:1 circa. Quando vi ritornai sei giorni dopo, si era ormai ammassata nella zona a cavallo del confine una folla di 30.000-50.000 profughi, alcuni ancora in Kosovo, altri nella terra di nessuno e altri in salvo in Macedonia. I trattori erano rimasti impantanati nel fango e gli addetti locali venuti ad assistere i kosovari distribuivano pane e acqua. I malati venivano portati via su barelle improvvisate con coperte piegate in due. Circolava la voce che la notte precedente una dozzina di persone fossero morte nel campo. I poliziotti erano confusi e insolitamente benevoli, forse perché colti alla sprovvista di fronte a quella grande tragedia umana. Mentre il numero totale dei rifugiati in Macedonia si avviava rapidamente a superare i 200.000 - il decuplo del previsto - appariva chiaro che il governo non aveva la minima idea di come far
Born in Skopje, Macedonia, Yugoslavia in 1959.

In 1973, a couple of months after his father died (his mother had died in 1966) Milcho Manchevski won the newspaper Politika’s prize for young people’s fiction, presented by the Nobel laureate Ivo Andric in Belgrade. Encouraged to continue writing (he could read both Cyrillic and Roman alphabets since he was four;\(^1\) his first attempt at a novel, *Desert Blood*, came at age ten), Manchevski won several awards for short fiction. He was soon offered a full-time job as a journalist while still in high school and was writing a regular magazine column by the time he was seventeen. He published in newspapers, magazines and periodicals based in Skopje, Belgrade and Sarajevo.

In 1978, Manchevski attempted to enroll in the renowned Lodz film school in Poland. In spite of being the best student of his class, he failed to get a state scholarship. Without it, Lodz would not accept him. Nevertheless, he traveled to Poland, visited the school and looked up the Polish directors Krzysztof Zanussi and Andrzej Wajda in the phone book. This resulted in a magazine interview with Wajda\(^2\) and in Manchevski’s first day on a film set, Zanussi’s. The following year, with the help of a professor he had met at a lecture at the Macedonian Cinematheque, Richard Blumenberg, he won a scholarship from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. The focus of the SIU film school was on hands-on production and on experimental film. His encounter with experimental film turned into a life-long love affair with the form and strongly influenced his future narrative films. His professor Mike Covell and his colleagues (including the future Academy-award nominee Steve James) immersed themselves in experimental film and Manchevski – in addition to narrative films – directed several conceptualist pieces, including the so-called film without title (*The Black Film*), *Wednesday Morning at Five O’clock as the Day Begins*, *Paths of Glory*, *The Wire*, *The Working Class Goes to Heaven* and *Beautiful Blue Danube*. He officially graduated in 1983.

Manchevski spent the years 1982-1985 in Skopje. He wrote several essays – on the Hollywood horror film of the 70s, on the American avant-garde cinema, on art history – *Towards Total Art* – and, most importantly, in 1982, the screenplay *Mousaka*. The script was praised by several prominent Yugoslav filmmakers and playwrights, including Dusan Makavejev and Goran Markovic, and was picked up by Makedonija Film and put on a fast track. It was a story of a young punk photographer who moves between different social circles, eventually falling victim to a drug deal gone awry. The bleak social commentary was not, however,

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\(^1\) A parent of a classmate recalls Manchevski doing the crossword puzzle in Nova Makedonija on the first day of school.

\(^2\) Published under the heading “19-yr-old Milcho Manchevski interviews Andrzej Wajda.”
ИНТЕРВЈУ: МИЛЧО МАЧЕВСКИ

До избрано време

- Како ќе оцениш својата фотографска творбица?
- Потисна популарноста и критичкото признание што доби ма фотографска картина "Врата на Брегот". За мене, ова е убедливо доказ за моето творешко задоволство и креативност.

- Како е твојата фотографска техника?
- Техниката ми варира според контекста и темата на Јазеха. Каде се користат наставнички тонови, користам ЦФС. Каде се одликуваат надворешни обекти, користам и специјални техники како аматорска светлини и облати на фокус.

- Како вработувате фототехника?
- Фототехниката ми служи како инструмент за изразување на внатре снима. Вработувама фотографските техники за да се создадат истински животни стилови и емоционални изрази.

- Како се справувате со портретите?
- Портретите ми приближувам како со портретки, со личноста како основа. Вработувама портретни техници како светлини, фокус и композиции за да се создадат истински животни стилови и емоционални изрази.
welcome in a Macedonia then run by the communist oligarchy. Manchevski’s unorthodox appearance and cocky interviews3 didn’t help with the old guard, and the project stalled. Makedonija Film soon gave up and Manchevski tried the state-owned production company Vardar Film. The cast and crew offered to make the film with fully deferred payment, but the directors of Vardar Film turned it down anyway; a member of the Central Committee received the delegation, but never responded to their plea. After almost three years of trying, the 24-year-old Manchevski found a home for Mousaka at Macedonian TV.4 The script was praised again—especially the topicality, the dialogue and the pacing—and a date was set. He completed the pre-production—full scouting, crewing up,5 a thousand-drawing storyboard, costumes and art direction—even most of the music for the film was ready.6 Shortly before principal photography, the commissioning editor abruptly canceled the project without an explanation. This came on the day after Manchevski submitted the cast list: the list did not include the actor who starred in most Macedonian TV productions of the time overseen by the commissioning editor. The actor had previously approached Manchevski with an offer to help get the project financed.7

During the three Mousaka years in Skopje, Manchevski also formed the art collective 1AM and staged two art performances, exactly a year apart. The first complex performance revolved around (1) the interplay of several theoretical statements, (2) the fulfilling of a long list of promised simple actions (unlocking the gallery door, turning the art towards the audience, observing a melting block of ice, etc) and (3) a number of elements: hand-made invitations, the statements, the promises, the simple actions, his conceptualist films from Carbondale, variations on the theme of the alphabet (a song where the alphabet is sung, a recital where it is recited), the conceptualist manifesto (which includes 20+ signatures under only one sentence, “This is the manifesto of the conceptualists”), his Polaroid project (Face), etc.

The second performance was titled How to Explain to a Live Rabbit the Joseph Beuys’ Performance “How to Explain Art do a Dead Hare”.

Manchevski’s interest in performance art met his filmmaking in a piece (he called it film) titled 1.72 (which he performed two more times as 1.73 in Croatia and 1.74 in Brooklyn). Performed at Belgrade Alternative – where it won an award in 1984 – the work consisted of exposing a length of film (1.72 meters) on stage, projecting it, slicing it into pieces, stapling them onto a questionnaire asking questions such as “Does film have to have a story?”, then distributing the questionnaire and the bits of film to the audience.

In 1983, he also helped put together the techno-band bastion!, wrote the lyrics for their songs and directed the seminal music video Hot Day in Mexico. The ambitious video – following the lyrics that speak of a subject unusual for a pop song – reconstructed the 1940 assassination of Leon Trotsky in Mexico, cross-cutting with a contemporary assassin who gorges on violence in Scorsese’s Taxi Driver. The video was banned after one airing, but became a cult classic.

3 “My goal is to poke my finger in the eye of those who’ve spent tons of public money and created shit [films],” Manchevski in a 1983 interview in Mlad Borec.
4 Three music videos for the band Leb i sol he directed for Macedonian TV the previous year were banned without explanation and never aired.
5 He had to hire mostly Macedonian TV employees and thus had to give up on the services of his professor Mike Covell, who had agreed to come to Macedonia to shoot the film.
6 The hard-rock band that was doing the music for Mousaka had no place to rehearse, so Manchevski invited them to work in his living room, much to the consternation of his elderly aunt.
7 Dancho Chevrevski would eventually officially become a film producer, but at this juncture he was officially only an actor. He was also 20 years too old for the part of Mousaka.
After the collapse of Mousaka in 1985, the 25-year-old Manchevski moved to New York. He made a living as a production assistant, editor of documentaries, teleprompter operator, videographer, video-conversion operator, and assistant art director on in-house Wall Street videos, court interpreter, house painter and hat check clerk. For five years he took his showreel to numerous production companies on a daily basis. He also wrote several screenplays: a madcap nuclear-end-of-the-world comedy (How to Save the World (and Why)), a sci-fi about people for whom film has become more real than life, a horror script, a First Blood-inspired script, etc.

The New York adaptation of Mousaka, titled Puma, got some traction, but it was the screenplay for a thriller, Possession, that garnered several offers. In an effort to prove his directing ability, he raised a small amount of money in order to film the first seven minutes of Possession. But instead of getting Possession off the ground, the sample landed him a deal with a music video production company, exactly five years after moving to New York. A year later, the company did not renew the contract, and he signed with a new, smaller company. Their first project together was a low-budget video for Tennessee (1991), the debut song of the emerging hip-hop band Arrested Development. The video flew in the face of the current rap trends: instead of the brutal urban gangsta rap of the day, Tennessee focused on a rural community where children and old folks were seen side by side with the band members, living in a harmonious community. The video ended with a contemporary reworking of an old real-life photograph of a double lynching. Shot in black and white and inspired by Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank and depression era photographs, the video became an instant hit, earning an MTV Award in 1992, a Billboard magazine award, and a platinum record. It became an MTV Buzz Clip and was eventually included in Billboard's list of 100 best videos ever.

As a result of the success of Tennessee, Manchevski directed dozens of music videos and commercials in New York and San Francisco the following year, becoming one of the most sought-after new music video directors in New York.

In the summer of 1991, Manchevski went back to Macedonia for the first time since moving to New York and severing his ties with his home country in 1985. The aunt who had raised him had fallen ill, and he flew to Skopje to visit her and arrange for her care. Yugoslavia was falling apart and fighting had erupted in Slovenia and Croatia and would eventually lead to a bloody civil war. Macedonia declared independence three months later. The situation and the atmosphere Manchevski encountered inspired him to write a five-page synopsis. The melancholy “tale in three parts” told three love stories set in Macedonia and London against the backdrop of impending inter-ethnic violence. As a metaphor for the idea that violence begets violence, the story had a circular structure, but with a subtle quirk in the circular chronology. Because of the sense of impending change that permeates the story, he named it Before the Rain.

Upon his return to New York, a director of photography he was working with suggested he send the synopsis to two London-based companies: Aim Productions and British Screen. Aim turned it down, as the producer Sam Taylor felt the three part concept did not work. Tessa Ross of British

8 When Tennessee was shown on the Virgin flights, the end was re-edited to eliminate the double-lynching references.
9 In subsequent interviews, Manchevski has described the quirk as an optical illusion in time.
With Simon Perry
Screen, however, liked the synopsis. British Screen commissioned a screenplay and Manchevski hand-delivered the first draft in London on March 1, 1993. The head of British Screen, Simon Perry, and the head of development Steven Cleary, greenlit it immediately. A British producer was a requirement for a film supported by a state entity such as British Screen. The project had no producer at all and Perry asked Manchevski to propose one. He suggested Judy Counihan, whom he had met in New York, but had never worked with. British Screen accepted Counihan, but since she had no experience and was unknown to them, they proposed a production company they were familiar with – Aim Productions. Manchevski did not mention that Aim had already turned down the project.10

Noe Productions, a French subsidiary of Polygram joined the project with Cedomir Kolar as producer, as did Channel 4 in London. Vardar Film from Macedonia also got involved with Stevche Acevski, and later, Gorjan Tozija as producers.

Pre-production commenced in London and Skopje, with additional casting and crewing up in Paris. Lack of experience (this was the first film for Taylor, Kolar, Counihan and Cat Villiers of Aim), the limited budget (originally around 1 million British pounds) and co-production issues (Macedonia had never been a party to a co-production before; Great Britain and France had yet to recognize the new country) soon became issues. The Yugoslavian actor Rade Serbedzija was cast as Aleksandar. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, he became a target for both Croatian and Serbian nationalists and had since moved to London.11 The Macedonian high school student Labina Mitevska, who had come to volunteer in the production department, got a chance as Zamira. The 18-year-old French actor Gregoire Colin was cast as the young monk Kiril.12 It was not until a couple of weeks after production had started that Katrin Cartlidge was cast as Anne.

During pre-production, the Macedonian Ministry of Culture shocked everyone by suddenly withdrawing its support. Influenced by several established Macedonian filmmakers,13 the Ministry had started to doubt whether the foreign partners’ commitment was real. The Ministry was contributing only 7% of the budget, but they were essential in the co-production structure. This could sink Manchevski’s attempt to make a film in Macedonia again. Simon Perry lobbied the Ministry, providing a letter from the British Foreign Office to a country Britain ironically had yet to establish diplomatic relations with. Manchevski requested meetings with the Prime Minister and with the President. The Ministry eventually rejoined the project only near the end of principal photography in Macedonia.

As pre-production moved to Macedonia, the crew, led by the production designers David Munns and Sharon Lomofsky, continued scouting the countryside. The remote mountaintops and deserted villages would provide a spectacular backdrop for the story. Access though was difficult: the equipment had to be hauled by tractors and Russian Lada SUVs. On a few occasions a bulldozer was even required.

10 Manchevski also offered the project to New Line Cinema in New York, ZDF TV in Germany and Macedonian TV. New Line and ZDF turned down Before the Rain. Macedonian TV has yet to respond.
11 Vanessa Redgrave invited Serbedzija and his family to live in her house.
12 The young English actor Jude Law was the runner up.
13 The Minister of Culture later named Chevrevski and Stole Popov.
Production was scheduled to begin on September 20, 1994, but some of the locations were yet to be found, many of the actors were still to be signed and the camera truck was more than a week late. It had gone from Paris to London, instead of coming to Macedonia, and this caused a delay in the start of principal photography by half a week. This delay, combined with a number of pre-production issues, put the project behind schedule and thus over budget before principal photography had even begun. Disregarding the conflict of interest, the producers hired the bond controller, Paul Sarony as line producer, and he immediately got down to business. He declared that the film should be treated like a made-for-TV movie and tried to make up for lost time by applying pressure on the director to shoot faster. He insisted they leave locations as soon as possible, sometimes before the filming had even been completed. At one point, scenes were removed from the shooting schedule without the director being informed of the cuts. When he realized this, Manchevski resigned. He rejoined his own film once the scenes had been reinstated in the script.

Two weeks into production both Channel 4 and the director of photography, Darius Khondji abandoned the project. Khondji’s departure meant a new D.P. – Manu Teran who picked up on the day Khondji was flying out. Teran sometimes had to complete scenes begun by Khondji, including reverse angles of shots already

14 The director was shown the budget and the schedule only a few days before the filming began.
15 The crew did not receive the following day’s schedule until after 11p.m.; this made preparation and purchases for the following day difficult.
16 Khondji had hard time working under constant pressure and was not happy with the lack of control over the lighting of the many exterior shots.
17 Manchevski met Teran when Teran replaced Khondji on a music video in Paris a few months earlier. Ironically, Manchevski accepted that video in order to work with Khondji in preparation for Before the Rain, but Khondji turned it down nevertheless.
filmed weeks ago, occasionally on locations a couple of hundred kilometers apart. The rush at the beginning sometimes meant that important shots were missing, and the editor Nic Gaster helped by directing the second unit. Gaster also picked up some missing shots, while Manchevski picked up some more – mainly closeups from incomplete scenes – while shooting new scenes on the side. They even filmed missing close-ups against the sky or on a patch of grass months later in London, or on a return trip to Skopje in April 1994. Manchevski’s thorough preparation – storyboards for all his films usually consist of more than a thousand drawings; the acting rehearsals last three weeks in prep – and his ability to keep the continuity in his head prove invaluable, as the filmmakers faced a daunting task: shooting most of the Macedonian section without seeing any dailies, and without a continuity person. The withdrawal of Channel 4, however, was more serious. It meant both a big hole in the budget and organizational problems that could sink the entire project. It was early in the process, however, a fact which made it possible for most parties to abandon the film without a major financial loss. Simon Perry went in front of the board of British Screen and got a permission to increase their involvement in the film, even without a British broadcaster involved, until the film was completed. This ultimately was what saved the project.

The plan called for the exposed film to be sent to the London lab three times a week. In order to save money on shipping, Sarony and the producers kept it piling up in Macedonia for almost three weeks. When it eventually arrived at the lab (the sound followed

18 Cedomir Kolar would say: “Milcho had a fantastic ability to shoot out of continuity. He also had an incredible drive to push things forward.”
19 The continuity person, Biljana Mirkovic left midway through the shot for another, bigger project.
Cinema/Chi è il trionfatore della 51ª Mostra di Venezia

Milcho il Macedone

Incontro con Manchevski, l'esordiente di 34 anni che ha sconfitto Stone e Amelio.

di PAOLA JACOBI

S"alottino del Blue Bar dell'Hotel Excelsior al Lido di Venezia: la Mostra del cinema è in corso. Il via vai di festivalieri è frenetico. Si chiude con fervore e pazzesca ossessivita di cinema. Tra gli altri, si notano due giovani direttori stravaganti. Uno, alto, massiccio, in bermuda e camicia rossa e una sedia, è Quentin Tarantino, regista americano iconoclasta. L'altro è Milcho Manchevski, 34 anni, nato a Skopje, in Macedonia. Veste in jeans e maglietta, porta minirocchioni e capelli biondi spennacchiati. La Mostra ha appena presentato il suo film Before the Rain (Prima della pioggia). Tarantino l'ha visto
several days later, while the continuity reports never made it), the lab discovered that some of the footage had been ruined due to a camera fault. The late discovery meant that the small problem had now ballooned. Eventually, Gaster had to cut around the problematic shots, sacrificing many, and some footage was stabilized with an optical printer. Some of it was finally fixed 21 years after the release of the film, during the digitization at the ARRI labs in Munich.

The difficult six-week shoot in Macedonia was followed by an additional week of pick-ups with a crew of four and a three-week London shoot. When Manchevski went to his first acting rehearsal in London instead of going to a technical recce," Sarony gave him a second 24-hour notice (the first one he delivered to the director in Macedonia). After Perry heard of this, he replaced Sarony.

Manchevski envisioned a score based on traditional Macedonian and Byzantine music. Polygram suggested the Bosnian star Goran Bregovic, but the director had already picked an unknown Macedonian band, Anastasija. He asked Anastasija to record an audition tape for Polygram, then convinced Polygram to pay for the recording session. One of the three songs Anastasija recorded as part of their audition was the soaring closing number, *I Was Born in Pain*.

The almost-finished film was submitted to the Cannes Film Festival, but all three programs rejected it. A couple of months later, the director of the Venice Film Festival, Gillo Pontecorvo screened the French productions and co-productions in Paris. Because of the ongoing feud between Macedonia and Greece, an employee of Unifrance tried to keep the film off the screening list, but Pontecorvo did see it – without subtitles. He invited *Before the Rain* to show in Venice, and then asked to see it again the next day, this time with subtitles.

It was Manchevski’s first real festival – and it was a sensational launch. Before the Rain won the 1994 Golden Lion for Best Film (ex aequo with *Vive L’Amour*), the FIPRESCI (The International Federation of Film Critics), UNESCO, Leoncino d’oro and Kodak awards – among others – for a total of 10 Venice awards. Manchevski thanked the cast, the crew, the people of Macedonia, and Simon Perry “without whom this film would never have been made.”

The film was a favorite with audiences and critics. Manchevski was compared to Tarkovsky and Bergman, and *Before the Rain* was called a masterpiece. The film historian and critic Annette Insdorf called it one of the greatest first features in history of the cinema, The Miami Herald goes on to say that if Manchevski never makes another film he’d already earned a footnote in film history and The New York Times included it on its “Best 1,000 Films Ever Made” list."
Before the Rain also became a global phenomenon — it is film of the year in Argentina and Turkey, wins a total of 30 international awards from Brazil to Russia, including David di Donatello. In the United States, it wins the Independent Spirit Award and gets an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign-Language Film, when the Greek objection to the use of the name Macedonia causes a scandal.25 26

This film from “a country that does not exist” and which almost didn’t happen, played at more than 100 festivals, was distributed commercially in close to 50 countries, was included in numerous film encyclopedias, and became the subject of numerous essays. It was taught at hundreds of universities and in the Italian high schools, was the subject of a multi-disciplinary academic conference in Florence and was eventually released by the Criterion Collection alongside Bergman, Godard, Rossellini, Ozu, Wilder, Cocteau, Truffaut, Fassbinder, Lean.27 The former Macedonian president, Kiro Gligorov would say years later: “Before the Rain is the most beautiful thing that happened to Macedonia.”28 Most notably, years after seeing Before the Rain viewers still talk about the emotional experience.

The film turned Manchevski into a celebrity. He traveled from Brazil to Japan,29 from Stockholm to Sarajevo,30 where he screened the film while the city was still under siege.31 In 1995, the Cineteca di Bologna organized a retrospective of his work32 (and another one in 2011). He gave hundreds of interviews, took meetings with studio heads, powerful producers and movie stars,33 lectured at Ivy League schools, was stalked by paparazzi, attended receptions by the presidents of Italy and Macedonia, and Madonna’s and Mick Jagger’s birthday parties.

Manchevski was offered scores of projects — a Hitchcock remake (Warner Brothers’ Dial M for Murder34 with Nicole Kidman35), Hollywood blockbusters with Brad Pitt (The Devil’s Own for Columbia Pictures) and Jean-Claude Van Damme, films based on best-selling books (Patricia Cornwell’s From Potter’s Field for Universal Pictures), scripts by Krzysztof Kieslowski, a project about a Sarajevo zookeeper, Graham Greene’s The Quiet American36 and dozens of others.

Between 1995 and 1998, Manchevski started to develop several projects. He hoped to cast Sean Penn and Morgan Freeman in Three Kings, but abandoned it after disagreeing with the studio over where to shoot it — he preferred Morocco, as it resembles Iraq and Kuwait, where the action takes

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25 Manchevski refused to attend the ceremony since the Academy had unexpectedly changed the way it was addressing his home country to the (for most Macedonians offensive) “Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.” A compromise was finally reached two hours before the start.

26 The Greek Embassy lodged a similar objection in Venice. Later that year, Before the Rain was invited then and then disinvited to the Thessaloniki Film Festival. When it eventually screened in Greece, it received glowing reviews.

27 A wine in Italy and two restaurants have been named after the film. A special award in the 1998 Venice Film Festival program CinemAvvenire was named after the central line in the film, “Il cerchio non è rotondo – Cinema per la pace” (“The circle is not round – Cinema for peace”). Graffiti with lines from the film still pop up on walls in Macedonia and students demonstrating against the government in 2015 carried placards with a favorite line from the film, “Shoot, cousin, shoot!”

28 When Gligorov learned of the 1994 Venice invitation, he requested a screening. The filmmakers obliged. After the film ended, the 77-year-old president stood up and started to applaud in the empty 600-seat movie theater. After a few moments, the two translators and the bodyguards joined.

29 In Tokyo he was photographed holding Kurosawa’s 1951 Golden Lion.

30 The UN transported him from the coastal town of Split to Sarajevo. Once a four-hour trip, now took 14 hours in an armored military vehicle. Even though the guns were silent at the time, the visit to the besieged and war-ravaged city was a sobering experience. The film screened to a packed house.

31 Manchevski eventually got Ingmar Bergman, Nagisa Oshima, Milos Forman and Martin Scorsese to help the new Sarajevo Film Festival by becoming its honorary directors.

32 Even though he’d directed only one feature-length film at the time.

33 Warren Beatty was his sponsor when Manchevski joined the Directors Guild of America.

34 Under the headline “Dial M for Milcho,” Daily Variety reported that Manchevski was working on the Hitchcock remake, but also that he was “being courted for Dean and U.S. Marshals.”

35 When the producer Arnold Kopelson wanted to rush the film into production, Manchevski resisted as he felt the script needed more work and found seven weeks insufficient to rewrite and prep a big studio film. Kopelson was concerned that Kidman would become unavailable for a very long time once she started Kubrick’s Eyes Wide Shut and pressured Manchevski, who then promptly walked away. Kidman did indeed spend the following year and a half working on Kubrick’s film.

36 Sydney Pollack called, trying to convince Manchevski to take on the project.
Fine Young Cannibals

A studio exacts its pound of flesh by bouncing an award-winning director from the set of 'Ravenous'.

EVERYONE LOVES THE story of the点——if prickly——director who butt heads with a studio-conscious studio as he struggles to realize a vision. But not all of these tales turn out as titanic. Case in point: Milcho Manchevski.

In February, Manchevski, whose 1994 Before the Rain garnered festival awards and an Oscar nomination, was in Prague, starting principal photography on Ravenous. His first film since Rain had all the markings of a very special project, starring two today's hottest actors: The Full Monty's Robert Carlyle and L.A. Confidential's Gwenneth Paltrow. Two weeks later, Fox 2000 head Laura Ziskin was on a plane to fly him.

The project had gotten rolling in the fall of 1996 when an unknown writer named Ted Griffin sold Fox his first screenplay, Ravenous—a three-inducing tale of flesh and fate. Set at the end of the Mexican-American War, the story revolves around a haphazard group of soldiers, stationed in an out-of-the-way hut in the Sierra, who got sucked into the cannibalistic world of a psychotic (Carlyle). Griffin's concept looked onto the twenty-first century gray, and Fox bit. Two days later, the studio bought Griffin's second script, Best Lair Plans (see story on page 32).

While Griffin's star was rising, Manchevski's would be Hollywood center was going rotten. "There are aspects of Hollywood storytelling that I love," Manchevski had said after Rain. "But I don't know if Hollywood will like me." In the months that followed, he'd be slated to write and/or direct six films for six studios and would complete none of them. For various reasons, Manchevski had walked away from The Perfect Murder (Warner Bros.), The Devil's Oven (Columbia), and An Alan Smither Film (Hollywood Pictures) before production began.

"After Before the Rain, I was asked to do a lot in Hollywood," he says, "and I said no. I don't know if I'll be part of Hollywood stories."

Black Box Carlyle (top) stars in the cannibalistic thriller from which Fox 2000 head Ziskin (bottom) gave Manchevski (bottoms) the ax.

"Black Box" Carlyle (top) stars in the cannibalistic thriller from which Fox 2000 head Ziskin (bottom) gave Manchevski (bottoms) the ax.

"Black Box" Carlyle (top) stars in the cannibalistic thriller from which Fox 2000 head Ziskin (bottom) gave Manchevski (bottoms) the ax.

Proud to view fifteen years afterward."

But Manchevski had a reputation for being difficult and demanding luxuries inconsistent with either his check or a given film's budget. He had originally envisioned Alan Smithers as a "guerrilla production." At the time, the film's producer, Ben Myerson, said, "We disagreed over the meaning of 'guerrilla production.' Milcho's definition was a casting director's flyer with six first-class tickets. This is not our definition."

Ciao to September 1997. Ziskin signed Manchevski to direct Ravenous, despite knowing his reputation. "I made a mistake," she says now, "I should have listened."

Manchevski and Ziskin struggled to find common ground with their visions. Ziskin says, but they appeared to be in agreement by the time production began. Even so, there were hits that this would not be a smooth ride. "Milcho seemed more interested in creating dramas than in directing them," a source familiar with the production says. "He threatened to quit a hundred times, and everyone begged that he be fired a hundred times. And the only thing that's unfortunate is that it took so long."

"Whether deliberately or not, we were not on the same page about the movie," Ziskin says. "If a director does something better than what he said he was going to do, I'm the first one to say okay. That was not the case." Manchevski wouldn't comment directly on his firing, saying, "I thought I knew how the system operates."

The sacking solved one problem but created another. Fox needed to find a new director quickly. Initial reports had Home Alone 3 director Raja Gosnell flying to Prague. Within a week, however, Fox had signed Antonio Bird, the idiosyncratic director of Mad Love and the controversial Priest. Gosnell raised eyebrows for artistic reasons. Bird for commercial ones. And it was said that Carlyle's hand may have been in the final choice, because he and Bird had worked together three times before, including on Priest. "Carlyle just made

"Black Box" Carlyle (top) stars in the cannibalistic thriller from which Fox 2000 head Ziskin (bottom) gave Manchevski (bottoms) the ax.

"Black Box" Carlyle (top) stars in the cannibalistic thriller from which Fox 2000 head Ziskin (bottom) gave Manchevski (bottoms) the ax.

"Black Box" Carlyle (top) stars in the cannibalistic thriller from which Fox 2000 head Ziskin (bottom) gave Manchevski (bottoms) the ax.

For his part, Manchevski says he has no regrets about the films he's backed out of and is not concerned about how this firing will affect his would-be Hollywood career. "I trust the whole experience as a university," he says. "I just need a little time off to really think about it."

Reminded of his 1994 production that Hollywood might not like him, Manchevski laughs. "Well," he says, "now you have the answers."
Y

ou’ll recall about a week ago I wrote an article titled “Creative Differences” exploring the various reasons and consequent repercussions of filmmaker/studio disparagement.

In addition to tackling the much-discussed exit of Sam Raimi from the “Spider-Man” series, I spoke of some lesser-known on-film brawls like, the incident between then-Fox2000 prez Laura Ziskin and “Ravenous” director Milcho Manchevski, which resulted in the allegedly “difficult” filmmaker getting the boot from said film.

One thing I couldn’t help but notice, when searching the web for further information on the case, was that everyone but Manchezski had spoken out on the situation; we’d never heard his side of the story. Some might say that’s simply choosing a no-comment approach in the hope that everyone soon forgets about his wrongdoings on the film, but others might be of the assumption that the all-powerful studio has bullied him into keeping quiet fearing the truth might get out.

Lo-and-behold guess who I heard from earlier this week? One Milcho Manchevski!

After a decade of keeping dead quiet about what sounds like an inequitable discharge, the Macedonian-born filmmaker is now ready to open up about the prickly experience of working with Fox2000 on “Ravenous” and hopes he’ll be judged more fairly than he was by the entertainment rags, who were quick to label him “the bad guy” when news got out that he’d split from the production in 1999.

Rather than ease into the conversation, and keep it fairly ambassadorial, Manchevski gets right to the point:

“Ziskin wanted to micromanage the project and to direct vicariously. She was vetting the smallest non-speaking bit of cast, rejected Tom Waits – who had agreed to act in the film, rejected a brilliant composer (Zbigniew Preisner who scored Kieslowski’s films) and insisted on turning this intelligent, dark, quirky script into a scream knock-off.”

(Star Robert Carlyle would back up those claims, stating in an interview that “[his] vision of the whole thing was an awful lot darker than they had bargained for; that’s basically what was going on there. He’s seen very very dark. In simple terms, Manchevski was looking at Deliverance, and Fox were looking at Scream.”)

For those who never caught it, “Ravenous” was a dark comedy, originally intended to be a horror flick, about a group of military misfits in Sierra Nevada following the Mexican-American War in 1847. A madman turns up at their outpost and it’s not long before the troops learn he’s a cannibal.

Manchevski had recently directed “Before the Rain”, a drama about ill-fated love affairs, that’d won the Golden Lion for Best Film at the Venice Film Festival when he was hired to direct “Ravenous”.

Manchevski says when it became he didn’t want to direct a popcorn film, but something a little more meaningful, he was let go (just two weeks into production).

“I refused to be told how to direct by a suit – and I told her that she didn’t have the creative credentials to tell me what to do, so she brought instead the director of Home Alone 3 to replace me! When the crew and cast rebelled, the studio brought in their lawyers and yet a third director (Antonia Bird). The director of photography and the editor walked, but the actors had to complete the film.”

Manchezski suggests I get in touch with the film’s star Guy Pearce, who he will gladly back up his claims. But no need, Pearce has said plenty of times that it was Hollywood who ruined that experience for him and the consequential film.

“That whole experience was a nightmare, an absolute nightmare for about four and a half months,” Pearce said. “We did two weeks of filming and then the studio came over and said, ‘The director’s not doing what we want him to be doing,’ and we actors said, ‘Well, he’s doing exactly what we thought he’d be doing…’ the studio wanted to make Brain 3, a good teenage horror movie that would sell for billions of dollars. There was a clash of idea”.

Manchevski says he was shocked to read, shortly after the “Ravenous” experience, that he’d been let go from the film because he was far too demanding, hard on his cast, and couldn’t get along with the studio.

“I come from a school that believes that creative authorship cannot be bought with money. The studio planted articles (most notably in premiere) full of lies – for example, I spent weeks rehearsing and hanging out with the actors and crew, which is the opposite of saying that I only allowed them to talk to me during certain hours; I had no car while on location, so the story about expensive cars is a fabrication.

“I was offered a lot before Ravenous — dozens and dozens, read hundreds of scripts. I started working on “Three Kings” but we disagreed over locations, A Perfect Murder, The Devil’s Own, The Quiet American…. but I didn’t like the lack of creative freedom, and was more interested in making dust, a film I did with another Aussie, a brilliant actor, David Wenham”.

Manchevski doesn’t sound like he’s in hurry to return to Hollywood - and not just because he’d find it hard to get a job.

“Ravenous did damage as far as getting another studio film off the ground, but in a way it was a mute point, as I decided that Hollywood has nothing to offer except money — no creative results, no creative process, no honest people nor friendships…”

Though based in New York, Manchevski has been working in Europe ever since.

And “Ravenous”? The film went on to gross $2,062,405 domestically, far less than its reported $12 million budget.

Guess nobody came out a winner.
place, but Warner Brothers changed the original location to Australia. He also briefly worked on the bio-pic *Dean*, written by Israel Horovitz and produced by Marvin Worth with Leonardo DiCaprio as James Dean; and Joe Eszterhasz’s *An Alan Smithee Film: Burn Hollywood, Burn*. In addition to developing *From Potter’s Field* for Universal Pictures, he also rewrote the script. In Europe he was offered and started developing the *Heaven* and *Hell* portions of the trilogy written by Krzysztof Kieslowski and Krzysztof Piesiewicz.

However, during this time Manchevski’s real focus was on *Dust*, a complex script which continued his exploration of the non-linear narrative. The story – which switches, sometimes smoothly, sometimes jarringly, between New York City today, the American Wild West, Paris at the turn of the 20th century and the Ottoman Empire in its final years – is first told at gunpoint by a 90-plus-year-old woman to a robber who breaks into her apartment. The storyteller and the story spanning one century and two continents eventually merge in an intricate emotional and narrative puzzle.

Manchevski himself wrote the script after being approached by Robert Redford, who offered to produce his next film. Even though Mike Medavoy’s Phoenix Pictures and Michael Kuhn’s Polygram were vying for the project, it was eventually set up with Redford’s South Fork, and Miramax as financier and distributor. Manchevski insisted on a final cut.

Harvey Weinstein, the head of the independent giant Miramax, greenlit the project as soon as the script was delivered two months ahead of schedule, but ended up reneging on the budget as specified in the contract. Manchevski then refused to

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37 | Responsible for *Lenny*, *The Rose* and *Malcolm X*.
38 | Kieslowski and his writing partner Piesiewicz wrote the treatments and some of the script material in the months before the Polish director died in 1996.
39 | Medavoy was responsible for the United Artists’ golden era in the 70s, when films like *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, *Rocky* and *Annie Hall* were produced at UA.
40 | Since his agent at ICM shied away from negotiating the final cut with the powerful head of Miramax, Harvey Weinstein, Manchevski did it himself, telling Weinstein that it was an absolute deal-breaker. Weinstein eventually consented, adding: “Just don’t tell anyone.”
41 | In a detail highly unusual for a screenwriter’s contract, Miramax agreed to a specific budget figure for the film before the script was even written.
work with Weinstein, since he viewed the breach of the contract as inherently a breach of trust. He tried to take the project back, but it was not until Redford intervened that Weinstein would release it.

Manchevski, initially aided by Redford’s partner Michael Nozik, and then on his own spent the following five years (1995-2000) trying to get Dust financed. Including the writing and the actual making of the film, it took almost seven years to make Dust, at a time when Manchevski was being offered a number of other projects instead.

Nozik approached the Hollywood studios, but they were reluctant to take on a relatively expensive and unusual film without a star attached. Manchevski saw Tommy Lee Jones as the gunslinger from Oklahoma, Luke, and they hit it off. In 1995, Richard Gere contacts Manchevski, expressing interest in working with him. Manchevski’s agency ICM and Nozik take him up on it and try packaging the film with Gere attached. However, while Gere was rehearsing the part of Luke with Manchevski, his agent refused to negotiate a contract. Gere soon filled his summer with other work, but maintained that he will return to Dust in the winter. Since it was impossible to shoot exteriors in Turkey in the winter, Manchevski rewrote the screenplay, setting it in Mexico instead. He did extensive research and substituted an uprising in an Ottoman province with the Mexican Revolution. “I make films about people, not about places; people are the same everywhere in the world,” he has often said. The Hollywood studios declined to make the film with Gere, but the world sales company Moonstone Entertainment did strike a preliminary deal. Still, as Gere and now his agent were telling Manchevski that Gere was on board, his lawyer was unreachable for the production lawyer to make a deal – despite the fact that both lawyers worked at the same firm. Nine months into the game, Gere changed his mind back and forth once again, and eventually walked away.

Disappointed by the inability to get Dust off the ground, Manchevski considered one of the several studio offers: Ravenous, a strange cannibal-vampire-themed Western set in the snow-covered Sierra Nevada Mountains, inspired by the Donner party events of 1847. Manchevski liked the dark humor and social commentary undertones and in 1998 he accepted the Fox 2000 offer. He set up production at the Barandov studios in Prague and assembled a stellar cast: Guy Pierce, Robert Carlyle, Jeffrey Jones, Neil McDonough, Jeremy Davies, John Spencer, Stephen Spinella and David Arquette. Initially the writer Ted Griffin and the director recruited Tom Waits, but the head of Fox 2000, Laura Ziskin, nixed the idea and brought in Arquette instead.

This was just one of the many disagreements between studio and director. Ziskin also nixed the composer Zbigniew Preisner and attempted to micro-managing every aspect of the production. The essence of the conflict boiled down to two issues: (1) the tone of the film (Ziskin was aiming for the teenage audience who went to see Scream, while Manchevski spoke of a dark and ambivalent film along the lines of Rosemary’s Baby), and (2) the creative control of the film. Manchevski did not accept the fact that a financier would have the right to get heavily involved in the creative process and famously told the studio head that she “do[es] not have the creative credentials to tell [him] what to do.”

42 Redford’s South Fork was already scouting Eastern Turkey.
43 Gere visited Macedonia in 1999, where Manchevski took him to his favorite restaurant
44 Manchevski did extensive research on the period, on the Native American tribes, on cannibalism, on supernatural beliefs, etc. He used the under-utilized Fox research department – the only studio that still had such a department at the time – assembling more than 1,500 pages of research material, much to the excitement of the Fox research staff, and to the derision of the Fox head of production, who said: “Why bother? It’s a film about people eating other people.”
45 Months earlier, she had fired the director Carl Franklin from another Fox 2000 project over creative control.
46 Manchevski had a meeting with the head of distribution of Twentieth Century Fox who requested a different beginning and end, saying this would help the sales of the film. Ziskin promptly pressured the writer, Ted Griffin, and Manchevski to do a rewrite. During pre-production, in October 1997, Ziskin flew to London with a studio creative executive and Griffin, where they met Manchevski and the producer, David Heyman, who came from the set in Prague. There, Ziskin insisted on a much bigger re-write. Huddled in her hotel suite for 20 hours straight, they went through the script line by line and made numerous changes to her liking. Years earlier, Ziskin was one of the producers on Pretty Woman, which was initially a dark drama about prostitution in Los Angeles. Ziskin turned the script into a romantic comedy about a beautiful innocent prostitute and a charming rich businessman played by Richard Gere.
47 He had also said: “I come from a school that believes creative authorship cannot be bought with money.”
Ziskin replaced Manchevski with Raja Gosnel, the editor of *Home Alone* and *Home Alone 2* and director of *Home Alone 3*. The crew and cast rebelled. The director of photography Peter Sova and the editor (Nic Gaster in his second outing with Manchevski) were allowed to leave, but the cast was threatened with lawsuits and this crushed the Prague revolt. They eventually completed the film under the directing guidance of Antonia Bird.

Manchevski flew directly from the set of *Ravenous* to Rome to meet Francesco Tagliabue, the producer who held the rights to Kieslowski’s *Heaven* and *Hell* stories. As they started developing the projects and it became clear that Tagliabue was – in spite of claiming he was eager to go into production right away – not ready to proceed, Manchevski received an offer from Amedeo Pagani, another Italian producer, this time about *Dust*.

Pagani introduced Ovidio Assonitis as a financier. Pagani and Assonitis then brought in Paris-based Pandora Films as a sales company and counted on the substantial pledge by the Macedonian government, since the location had now shifted to Macedonia. They too insisted on securing a name cast and made offers to Uma Thurman and Ben Affleck, unauthorized by the director. Assonitis eventually skipped town, his hotel bills in Skopje and Ohrid unpaid. Tagliabue then entered the fray, shifting his attention from *Heaven to Dust*. He was looking for a French partner, and – in spite of the difficult experience on *Before the Rain* – Manchevski introduced him to Cedomir Kolar. The new producers assumed pre-production with the crew that had already been at work in the Macedonian mountains for weeks, but several weeks later Tagliabue canceled everything, via fax. Taglibaue then entered the fray, shifting his attention from *Heaven to Dust*. 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The Turkish ambassador to Macedonia visiting the set of Dust, 2000
public to buy Macedonian products\textsuperscript{54} and he wanted Manchevski to direct the first commercial. His name was Nikola Gruevski, the future and longest-serving Prime Minister in Macedonian history. Manchevski was inspired by the charitable concept behind the campaign. The spot he would create centered on a wrinkled filigree artisan who makes a meticulously crafted butterfly brooch, then takes it over seven mountains to a merchant in Dubrovnik who is stunned by its beauty. On the choice of an old artisan as the hero, Manchevski has said: “I didn’t want to promote a killer on a horse waving a sword or a gun as a national hero; instead I thought that a hard-working man with a heart of gold should be a national hero.” The commercial was immensely popular and became a template and benchmark of sorts in Macedonia.

As the war over Kosovo drew to a close, the work on \textit{Dust} continued. David Wenham, Joseph Fiennes, Adrian Lester, Rosemary Murphy,\textsuperscript{55} Anne Brochet and Nikolina Kujaca were cast, and principal photography began in New York in April 2000 with Barry Ackroyd as director of photography, David Munns as production designer, Nic Gaster as editor, Kiril Dzajkovski as composer\textsuperscript{56} and a crew from more than a dozen countries. In June, the big production started filming\textsuperscript{57} in Macedonia.\textsuperscript{58} The art department built a stone church, a Wild West brothel and a sheepfold, before moving on to construction in the Cologne studios. The summer of 2000 was extremely hot, but the project managed to chug along.

\textit{Dust} was an ambitious, textured and intricate film. The shifts in tone – from heartfelt to comical, from brutal to absurd make it a tough, but entertaining and fulfilling piece. It opened the Venice Film Festival in 2001 and was instantly and perhaps surprisingly attacked by the British critic Alexander Walker, who called it racist at the press conference, as he felt the film made the Ottoman soldiers look bad.\textsuperscript{59} Manchevski refused to respond to Walker’s assertions, later saying that he did not want to dignify the fabrications with an answer, but the wire services and reporters repeated and amplified Walker’s claims of racism. Some reviews, notably in Germany and the UK, analyze the film in the context of an opinion piece Manchevski published the previous month in Süddeutsche zeitung and The Guardian,\textsuperscript{60} in which he called for an end to the 2001 violent conflict in Macedonia between the Albanian guerrillas and the government, calling it a war for real estate and political gain rather than for human rights, while putting some blame on NATO whose local allies were the backbone of the insurgency, and insisting on the applicability of a Western-style rule of law. These Venice reviewers saw in \textit{Dust} metaphors for Manchevski’s purported take on the current conflict in Macedonia (March-August 2001) and anti-Islamic sentiment.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{54} Modeled on earlier examples in several European countries.

\textsuperscript{55} At an earlier point, Manchevski approached the legendary New York actor and acting teacher William Hickey (known for his role in \textit{Prizzi’s Honor}), and asked him to play Angela. Hickey accepted wholeheartedly, but died before the financing came together.

\textsuperscript{56} Dzajkovski was the creative force behind the 80s band bastion!.

\textsuperscript{57} On the first day of principal photography in the Macedonian town of Stip, the production changed so much foreign currency for their petty cash needs that by 10a.m. all foreign currency exchange offices in town ran out of local currency and closed for the day.

\textsuperscript{58} Meanwhile, after the 1998 elections, the government in Macedonia changed, and the contribution to the film shrunk by four-fifths. The filmmakers had no choice but to accept the lowered amount. \textit{Dust} and \textit{Before the Rain} are among the cheapest Macedonian films ever in terms of Macedonian contribution.

\textsuperscript{59} The Turkish ambassador to Macedonia visited the set of \textit{Dust} in the summer 2000 to communicate his concern with the portrayal of Turkey in a film that had not been made yet, citing the problems his country had had with \textit{Midnight Express} years earlier. He also complained to the Macedonian government about \textit{Dust} while the film was in pre-production. It took more than a decade for \textit{Dust} to be shown in Turkey, at the Izmir International Film Festival in 2012.

\textsuperscript{60} Both newspapers changed the title of the piece, shifting the tone of the article to NATO-blaming. The article was picked up by De Standaard in Belgium and Pravda in Russia.

\textsuperscript{61} A German reviewer called the film “(Neo-)fascist”.

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Even if one disregards the fact that the reviewers misread the original article (which is opposed to ethnic discord), and if Manchevski’s life-long anti-discrimination work and statements and his insistence on separation of his art and politics are ignored, it would be hard to see how a film seven years in the making could comment on the specifics of current political events. Never mind the general message of the film itself, which is essentially humanist.

While some of the reviewers have since revised their initial criticism, but the damage had been done. After the Venice scandal, Dust never got the distribution the filmmakers were hoping for. The distributors cancelled or changed their plans. It did play in a couple of dozen countries, but the reception was unenthusiastic, except in Macedonia, where it is considered a classic.

When the film opened in Europe, the US and Japan, the reviews became more kind as the reviewers shifted their focus to the film itself, rather than politics real and perceived. Some in fact were very good: “Milcho Manchevski’s stylized western, Dust, is a potent, assured and ambitious piece of filmmaking. Mr. Manchevski suavely shuffles his various narratives, sometimes smoothly presenting the juxtaposed tales and on other occasions cutting violently from one story to another.” … “High-end surreal western” … “Part tragedy, part farce, quirky melodrama and buddy flick; Dust is a very strange film. […] It does make sense, but you have to be wide awake to catch it.” … “This extraordinary TransContinental, TransCentennial epic plays like a cross between a savage Leone Spaghetti Western and an arthouse experiment in temporal narrative structure. […] The clever ending keeps you guessing right up to the last moment. By juggling past and present in what might be described as a cubist mosaic editing style, the whole grapples at some length with the meaning or futility of human existence begging questions long after viewing. Director Milcho Manchevski is a real original and Dust (a Feta Western?) unlike any other film you’ll see this year.”

Just like Before the Rain, Dust was the subject of a two-day academic conference (in Leipzig) where a number of scholarly papers analyzed the film from different perspectives. Scores of essays over the following years examined the film’s “cubist narrative” and other aspects. Fifteen years after the film was released, online discussions point to a small, but appreciative audience.

In 2002, Manchevski was invited by the producer Bob Colesberry to direct the Game Day episode of the HBO series The Wire, written by David Simon. The quick and efficient shoot took place on location in Baltimore; the series eventually received two Emmy nominations and became a television classic.

The same year, Manchevski was invited to teach at the New York University’s Graduate Film Program. Just like first was meant to be a brief visit at the Tisch School of the Arts grew into a seven-year

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62 In addition to the co-producing countries (the UK, Italy, Germany, Macedonia), the film was presold to most of Latin America, Spain, Poland, and Japan before it premiered. The global success of Before the Rain made it easier to sell Manchevski’s second film. But after the Venice 2001 scandal it was difficult to sell the film. Deals were canceled or altered; in the UK the number of screens was cut down to only three in London. In Poland, Dust opened six years later, in 2007. The sales team did not capitalize on the controversy.

63 NYU boasts one of the most prestigious film alumni lineups: Martin Scorsese, Oliver Stone, Joel Coen, Spike Lee, Ang Lee, Chris Columbus, Marc Forster, Jim Jarmusch, etc.
engagement, with Manchevski heading NYU’s directing program. In 2013, the US Department of State organized a project for Manchevski at VGIK, the Russian state film university. He instructed and directed 60 VGIK students in an extended hands-on educational project; after the project, VGIK bestowed an honorary doctorate on Manchevski. He has also taught, lectured and held workshops at the London Film School, Cambridge University, University of Chicago, Yale, Hanoi Cinematheque, Cineteca di Bologna, Binger Film Lab (Amsterdam), Temple University (Philadelphia), Tisch Singapore, Columbia University, his alma mater Southern Illinois University, the state film school in Sofia, Elon University, Marubi Film Academy in Tirana (Albania), Oxford Brookes, the German state film school Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf, University of Tsukuba (Japan), FDU (Belgrade), University of Oklahoma, Bielefeld University (Germany), University of Texas at Austin, Multimedia Museum in Moscow, Pratt Institute, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), Brown University, several festivals (Venice, Goa, Trieste, Aruba, Manaki Brothers, Madrid Experimental, SEEfest in Vienna...) among others. He was also invited to lecture in Macedonia – not however by the film school, but by the English department.

He published several short stories in New American Writing and other periodicals. His 1985 tri-lingual post-conceptualist piece The Ghost of My Mother was published as a book. He wrote introductions to two historical books, translated Annie Proulx’s Brokeback Mountain, designed album covers, toured with his photo exhibition Street and researched and put out a CD-ROM with a collection of 2,285 New York Times articles on Macedonia, published 1851-1922. He was never part of the film world – always more of a curious observer – but after Dust he withdrew even further from the business and from the festival circuit. He stopped reading the trades and turned down all festival and opening invitations.

In 2004 the Minister of Culture of Macedonia, Blagoja Stefanovski approached him with an offer: for the first time, the Macedonian Ministry of Culture would be the leading producer on a Manchevski film. The new project, titled Bones, and, eventually renamed Shadows went into production in the summer of 2006.

Shadows, an old-fashioned ghost story about debt, responsibility and redemption was described by Manchevski as a work “about death and sex and a few things in between.” It trades in discomfort and atmosphere rather than shock and gore; corruption (literal and moral) is central to the story.

64 Perhaps remembering the invaluable boost he received from Blumenberg and Zanussi as a youth, and more importantly from Simon Perry in 1993/94, Manchevski has an open-door policy for young filmmakers, who can observe his work on the set for as long as they wish. He has also given first jobs to dozens of filmmakers, including the three premiere film producers in Macedonia, and hired newcomers as storyboard artists, casting directors and composers. He managed to bring five young Macedonian filmmakers to work and learn on the set of a Hollywood movie (Ravenous).
65 Covering the period he researched for Dust.
66 He also gave a copy to Gus Van Sant when it was first published, urging him to direct it.
67 It was shown in close to a dozen countries.
68 The seventh Macedonian minister of culture Manchevski was dealing with in ten years.
69 In addition to the 7% contributed to Before the Rain, Macedonia participated in Dust with less than 5%. The participation in Shadows was closer to 50%.
For the first time a Macedonian production company was the main producer, but the project was plagued by poor pre-production and a difficult production process. The original producer quit when he couldn’t raise any international funds to match the substantial pledge by the Ministry. Manchevski undertook some of the fund-raising tasks. Amedeo Pagani returned to Macedonia as part of the Macedonian-Italian-German-Spanish-Bulgarian co-production, supported by Eurimages. This was the first film production for the new producer Ivo Antov, yet he hired his younger brother Ognen as line producer. In spite of the substantial budget and Pagani’s and Manchevski’s international connections, the Antovs had a hard time assembling an experienced crew and producing a proper cash flow and production schedule.

The start of principal photography was postponed twice, yet it still started without a First Assistant Director and a proper line producer – despite the crew swelling to over 200. The ambitious project called for construction of nearly two dozen big and small sets in an abandoned factory. The drama student Borce Nacev and the harpist Vesna Stanojevska were cast in the lead parts after seven callbacks. Fabio Cianchetti was the D.P. and David Munns returned as production designer. More than 50 reporters, Minister Stefanovski and the Mayor of Skopje visited the set on the first day; the Italian Ambassador and the Prime Minister-Elect Nikola Gruevski with several incoming ministers visited some time later.

The editing started in New York in September of 2006, but by mid-March 2007 it stopped. The funds stopped coming and the post-production company seized the project. It took almost eight anguished weeks for the editing to resume.

*Shadows* eventually premiered in the Special Presentations section of the Toronto Film Festival in September 2007, then played at a number of other festivals, winning three awards. Bavaria International sold the film to more than 30 countries on four continents. *Shadows* broke all domestic box-office records in Macedonia with a higher audience than all other films distributed in Macedonia the previous year – including Hollywood blockbusters – combined. The film was considered the cultural event of the year in Macedonia. One reviewer summed up the reaction by noting that with *Shadows*, Manchevski had finally returned home.

The international reviews were also good: “Call it a ‘ghost story’, but know that it feels more like Bergman or Polanski, or even Shakespeare – Macbeth and Hamlet come to mind. [...] To live through these moments in this setting allows for an uncanny intimacy – a face-off with personal fear that leads, strangely enough, to a celebration of life.” “*Shadows*’ style runs between hypnotic and frantic, which will surely set hearts racing. The film is unique in its ability to have a hand in multiple genres, horror, psychological thriller, and also somehow, a love story, too. It is refreshing to see an uncensored, stripped-bare European film that embraces its lying, cheating antihero with such brutal clarity that most American films wouldn’t dare.” “A visual tale of dramatic substance, with historical

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70 Robert Jazadziski had climbed the ranks from location scout. *Shadows* was going to be his first film as producer.
71 They also handed control of the negative of the completed film to a minority partner, accepted an in-kind contribution from the Bulgarian partner that was much smaller than the cash pledge by the Bulgarian government and paid the composer Zbigniew Preisner a substantial amount before the filming had even begun. As – after the two postponements and the shutdown of the editing suite – the production was late to send a rough cut to Preisner, he walked away without writing a single note, keeping the advance.
72 Akin to writing a book without a hard drive.
73 Jazadziski, who made a comeback as line producer, responded to the international co-producers’ requests to reduce the crew by shrinking it by a single person. Tom Woodrow, who succeeded him, didn’t realize he’d gone over budget until the last day of production and was surprised to find out that the production-related overages kept ballooning after the shoot had wrapped.
74 Munns serves as production designer on all Manchevski projects since *Before the Rain*. 
depth and contemporary thrust, adroitly told with innovation and élan.” … “An unusually smart entry in the supernatural cinema genre, Macedonia’s Oscar submission.” … “Evocatively works its theme of forces beyond the pale, with reflections and shadows taking a primary role in the narrative, along with an erotic subcurrent.” … “Manchevski is building a body of work that will shine in retrospective programs.”

Still, the German producer, Blue Eyes Fiction submitted an altered version of Shadows to the broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk. Manchevski’s lawyer promptly responded to the clandestine attempt to intrude on his work75, and the unauthorized version was shelved76.


In 2008, he made his second commercial for the Macedonian government, this one advertising it as a tourist destination. “Macedonia does not heave beautiful beaches or great cities. However, it does have rich and unique historical past. It is at a crossroad, a place where numerous civilizations left their trace – people in Neolithic times, ancient Macedonians, Romans, Eastern Orthodoxy, Ottoman Islam…. Yet, it is a modern state which welcomes the visitor with a warm smile,” Manchevski would say. The crew used real archaeological artifacts and shot on locations for a week. Peter Mostert edited it in New York. A variety of techniques were employed, resulting in a striking, syncopated 60-second film. Some shots are only a couple of frames long; a shot of film lights and filters on the set that lasts only one sixth of a second is included, along with gorgeous shots of the Macedonian countryside at sunset and aerial landscape shots. This juxtaposition of contrasting images and concepts is reinforced by jagged music based on a traditional folk song.80 Manchevski had complete creative control and used it to create a unique piece of filmmaking, talking about ancient and not-so-ancient civilizations in an utterly modern manner. The spot won four international awards and was highly regarded. In addition to the viewings on CNN,81 half a million viewers saw the ad on the website alone during the first week.82 It was also caught in a political crossfire, both in Macedonia83 and internationally.84

75 Some 20 minutes of the film had been eliminated by the German producers Corinna Mehner and Nermin Gladers in breach of the explicit final cut clauses in Manchevski’s contract. Manchevski learned of the attempt to violate his rights from a German voiceover artist.
76 Bayerischer Rundfunk aired the film in its original shape several times, but under the working title Bones.
77 Presented initially in a different form at a conference at the Pontifical Lateran University in the Vatican.
78 Presented initially in a different form as a keynote speech at the 2014 Screenwriting Research Network conference at HFF Babelsberg.
79 In the periodical Interpretations, published by the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences.
80 As is the case with all Manchevski’s work since Before the Rain.
81 BBC, TF1, Fox, and the main broadcasters of Germany, Russia, China, Spain, etc. were added later.
82 In spite of the existence of the Ministry for Information Technologies, Manchevski and a friend created the Macedonia Timeless website as a homemade project. This was the first time various sites and information sources were translated into English and pooled together for a potential foreign (or domestic) traveler to Macedonia. The government has since taken over the website and changed its concept and content.
83 An anonymous online campaign attacked the spot; the controversy was picked up by opposition media; the former Prime Minister from the main opposition party, Vlado Buchkovski, declared the spot a plagiarism on the parliament floor, then accused the government of waste and corruption in buying airtime on CNN. The philosopher and columnist Katerina Kolozova would comment: “The position of an independent intellectual or artist seems impossible here, because even if you don’t choose to belong to one or the other political camp, the public is going to place you somewhere.” Manchevski has said: “I work for this country and for the people in it, not for this or that party. It turns out that [in this country] you are not allowed to have an opinion if it’s not approved by a party or a gang.”
84 At the U.N.-sponsored talks, Greece accused Macedonia of appropriating its history, but the Macedonian ambassador produced a map of his country showing the excavation sites of all artifacts used in the commercial.
The subsequent commercials (Temples, Archeology and Mountain Sports) continued some of the formal experiments.

Manchevski’s second photographic solo exhibition Five Drops of Dream is a show of photographic pentaptychs, a further exploration of the boundaries between narrative and abstraction. In the introductory notes, Manchevski writes: “In the collection of compositions Five Drops of Dream I am interested in two things:

1) The explosion of the visual in the mundane moment; and
2) The wrestle and embrace of the narrative and the formal.

These photographs live only when they are together and when they form compositions [pentaptychs]. Like notes in a song.” He had spent ten years photographing and almost a year working out the pentaptych arrangements. He combined complementing and contrasting photographs within a pentaptych, focusing on the form and emotion, rather than on the narrative.

Five Drops of Dream was curated by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje and traveled to Novi Sad and Belgrade (Serbia), the National Gallery in Sofia (Bulgaria), the gallery of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, the GRID Photo Biennial in Amsterdam, Normandy and Solyanka State Gallery in Moscow. The Miyako Yoshinaga gallery in New York exhibits a tighter, more intimate edition of the show.

Further examining film structure and film form (as in Before the Rain) and exploring in more depth the delicate relationship between truth and fiction (as in Dust) in 2009 Manchevski set out to develop Mothers.

He created a filmic triptych again. This time the plot does not “neatly dovetail” – instead, the stories remain stoically separate. Two of them are dramatic – scripted, with actors – while the final, longest episode is a straight-forward documentary. Even though all three segments are based on true stories, there are no plot connections. Manchevski notes that the style is Spartan and austere in terms of plotting. His most radical experiment on fact and fiction until today, the three parts are only connected by tone and theme.

The storyline of the film concerns (1) two nine-year-old girls who report a flasher to the police – even though they never saw him; (2) three filmmakers who meet the only residents of a deserted village – an elderly brother and sister who have not spoken to each other in 16 years; and (3) the case of small-town retired cleaning women who were found raped and strangled and the reporter who wrote about the murders, who is himself charged in the killings and eventually found dead in a bucket of water in his prison cell. More importantly, the film highlights the delicate

85 Manchevski linked the use of documentary and fiction in the same piece to the way the visual arts have been using found objects; he points to Rauschenberg as an artist who uses found objects in the creation of beautiful art.
relationships of truth and fiction, of drama and documentary, becoming thus a meditation on the nature of truth. The film eschews neat narrative devices and pushes the viewer to confront their own definitions of filmic reality.

It is also Manchevski’s first real – both filmic and anthropological – examination of contemporary Macedonia. Unsurprisingly, it led to blacklisting by the ruling party and brutal, personal attacks by the state-controlled media.

*Mothers* was a low-budget film, filmed almost clandestinely. A Macedonian-French-Bulgarian coproduction, it was produced by Christina Kallas, photographed by Vladimir Samoilovski, designed by David Munns, edited by Zaklina Stojevska and scored by Igor Vasilev Novogradska. Shot entirely on location in Macedonia, it was made far from the *Dust* and *Shadows* media circus.

The under-the-radar approach seemed to fit this quiet, but tough-as-nails, experimental film. Manchevski had unfettered access to judges, the police, state officials, police and court documents and video-recordings. The crew was streamlined and mobile, the management was young. The schedule was tight and precise, but the prepping and shooting are fluid and flexible. The film was unorthodox, but so as the way it is made. The usual order writing-filming-editing had been subverted for a looser and more organic style that combined firm planning with improvisation. The filmmakers filmed part of the documentary first; then Manchevski wrote the dramatic pieces and they shot the drama; then the editing started. While editing, the filmmakers shot more of the documentary and finally they completed the editing of both the documentary and the drama. In contrast to his previous three films, Manchevski has said, the process of making *Mothers* was harmonious and enjoyable for him.

*Mothers* had its world premiere in September 2010 in the Special Presentation section of the Toronto Film Festival. Even though, as a rule, the Macedonian government always supports Macedonian films at international festivals (it is indeed a rare occurrence when a local film makes it to an A-list festival), this time the Macedonian Film Fund did not respond for three months. They responded only
once the festival was over, and then they rejected the request without explanation. This was the first time ever that a Macedonian film had been refused government support in a serious festival, and it was a harbinger of things to come for Manchevski. He was eventually blacklisted: his future projects were put on hold\(^\text{86}\), the state-controlled unions were instructed to boycott *Mothers*, TV stations refused to run ads for it, he was subjected to a smear campaign\(^\text{87}\) in the local media and even to intimidation – this in spite (or possibly because) of the fact that he has been held in very high esteem by most Macedonians,\(^\text{88}\) is one of the few Macedonians known abroad\(^\text{89}\) and has been awarded a number of highest awards (October 11, Mother Teresa, Big Star, Ambassador of Culture and the highest honor – National Artist – of which there are only four in the country).\(^\text{90}\)

A columnist wrote: “the man who was considered a national treasure until yesterday is now exposed to punches from both opposing political camps. They are both sadistically enjoying knocking down the icon in whose construction they themselves participated until recently.” Another noted: “*Mothers* is an artistic indictment against the Republic of Macedonia.” A TV show interviewed the director of the film fund and the topic was “Is Manchevski a Public Enemy?” Prime Minister Gruevski has stated that *Mothers* “does not represent Macedonia in a good light”.

The film, however, was the best-attended film of the year, and the guild selected it to represent Macedonia in the Oscar race.

In February 2011, *Mothers* screened in the Panorama section of the Berlinale. In an ostensible about-face, four years later an offer came from the highest levels of the Macedonian government for Manchevski to direct a big historical epic based on the lives of the Macedonian saints, Cyril and Methoidus, the creators of the Cyrillic alphabet. Manchevski looked into the offer, but ultimately turned it down. As in Communist Yugoslavia in the 80s or during his Hollywood years in the 90s, Manchevski seemed to have determined that working without a complete creative control was not

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\(^{86}\) The Macedonian government (five different administrations over 20 years) spent less on all four films directed by Manchevski – combined – than it spent on one 2014 Macedonian film, *To The Hilt*.

\(^{87}\) Pro-government columnists and TV personalities called him a traitor and verbally abused him with vulgarities and threats.

\(^{88}\) He is indeed one of the few *bona fide* celebrities in the country.

\(^{89}\) Manchevski has won more high international awards than the rest of the Macedonian arts community combined.

\(^{90}\) Even though Manchevski’s films were globally perceived as Macedonian, and were shot and mostly set in Macedonia, they were chiefly financed from foreign sources (the governments of Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, and Eurimages) on a ratio of almost 5:1.
for him. He has said as much in interviews: “I don’t see the purpose of making a film or a work of art if you are signing someone else’s ideas or working under a diktat. Some things are not for sale.”

In 2013, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Venice Film Festival, Manchevski was invited by the festival to make a short film reflecting on the future of cinema – as one of the directors who have left their mark in the history of Venice, alongside Bernardo Bertolucci, Kim Ki-Duk, Abbas Kiarostami, Ormano Olmi, Todd Solondz, Atom Egoyan, Paul Schrader... All these little films would be assembled into one feature-length film to screen on opening night in the special program Venezia 70 – Future Reloaded.

Manchevski decided to explore the future-of-cinema proposition that people are getting sucked into their little screens, while ignoring the world around them. He underlined this dichotomy by using documentary footage. Thursday continued his investigation of the relationship between fact and fiction which began with Dust, and grew more intense in Mothers and the short book Truth and Fiction.

It was a quick shoot on the streets of New York with a compact and mobile crew. Manchevski seemed to be defining a new phase in his work with films that do not employ many people or layers of artifact. True to the growing tendency in his aesthetic and philosophical interests, he deftly interwove real-life footage from the crowded streets of the Financial District and Mid-town Manhattan with found documentary footage of a horrific event in China and with performances by Laura Lassy, young Ewen Avery and bit players. Thursday does not raise the questions of mixing drama and documentary the way Mothers does, and in that sense Thursday is an old-fashioned piece of filmmaking. It is a visual (no dialogue) haiku of sorts, super-short, ultra-modern and old-fashioned at the same time.

The little film was produced by Aaron Levine, executive produced by Gery Herman, and photographed by Manchevski’s former student, Eun-Ah Lee. He worked again with the brilliant editor of Macedonia Timeless, Peter Mostert and the composer of Mothers and Macedonia Timeless Igor Vasiliev Novogradkska.

After the Venice premiere, Thursday was invited to the German Short Film Program “Short Attack”, and toured some 15 cinemas nationwide in November 2013; it also won an award at the USA Festival in Texas in 2014.

Meanwhile, in spite of being maligned by the Macedonian political nomenclature, Mothers went on to screen in numerous academic settings and at some 40 festivals, including Sao Paolo, Istanbul, Goa, Minsk, Syracuse, winning seven awards and garnering enthusiastic reviews:

91 He has said: “This real footage of a gruesome accident in China, and – more importantly – the callousness of people brought human myopia and dichotomy into sharp focus. I laid another layer of contrast on top. On one hand we relate to something halfway around the globe, but do not notice things at our own feet.”
“Manchevski’s iconoclastic feature “Mothers” captures the heartbreaking state of contemporary Macedonia through the eyes of several mothers who are everything from dedicated, neglectful, loving and absent.” … “With this gradation Manchevski emphasizes that reality is more bizarre and crueler than any fiction. In addition to the very original directorial approach, the film is also dominated by a sharp critique of a system that supports police dysfunctionality and judicial inefficiency, leaving the citizens to live in insecurity and fear.” … “[A] devastatingly stark, yet ultimately compassionate portrait of mothers, violence and the state.” … “Mothers debunks the notion that documentaries can tell the truth.” … “Mothers offers a vision between truth and fiction.” … “Mothers is a film about moral courage.” … “Painfully beautiful.” … “A provocative and innovative film […] An intensely engaging film, Mothers is not only a study on how reality is perceived and recorded, but also an examination of how women survive in a contemporary post-war culture.” … “Structurally unusual, almost experimental and a very exciting film. […] A powerful punch in the stomach to the Macedonian society.” … “A really subtle exploration of truth and fiction in three deliberately diverse episodes, courageously pushing the boundaries between fiction and documentary in order to exert and negotiate a powerful feeling.” … “Original storytelling and courageous experimenting with the film language and genres. […] Subtle and truthful storytelling.” … “While we watch, we start to doubt the documentary and trust more and more the artistic, the intuitive, the dramatic. The bonds between elements exist only in the mind of the spectator.” … “Such moments give Manchevski’s film a special place in contemporary cinema” … “Conceptually challenging and thoroughly satisfying.” … “Beautiful art about ugly reality.” … “[Mothers is an] operation completely extraneous to the conceptual and aesthetic codes of contemporary cinema. […] Manchevski’s epic humanism finally returns.” … “One of those authors who are not afraid to face the genres and to push the boundaries.” … “Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski continues down his distinctive artistic path.” … “His work stands out in the world cinema in its unique way of playing with space, time and emotions.”
Milcho Manchevski
ESSAYS
Why I Like Writing and Hate Directing:
Confessions of a Recovering Writer-Director
I don’t really hate directing. But I want to share a few thoughts and personal experiences which – I would hope – might shed a bit of light on how I go about making films. It would be great if any of it were useful in your research on how some writer-directors work.

I’ll try to focus on the give-and-take between the writer and the director, highlighting the tension and synergy when the two tasks are performed by one artist.

1.

People usually chuckle when I say that I became a film director in order to make sure a bad director does not ruin my screenplay. It’s a joke, but as with many jokes, there is some truth to it.

However, deciding to start directing was not purely self-defense or – script-defense. The decision also involved offensive-minded plays, chief among them the desire to engage in creating works of syncretic art – film.

Film employs tools developed or derived by other art forms (visuals, drama, music, words), as well as uniquely cinematic modes of rendering (such as film editing). Still, it seems self-evident that – at least as far as the conventional narrative film is concerned – the centerpiece of any individual film is the story.

I don’t mean the plot. I mean the story.

People like stories, they like hearing and telling them. Why? Why do humans like stories? Why do we need them?

Is it because hearing and telling stories brings us closer to other people? Or is it because we like hearing how other people (even if they are invented) behave? Do we like learning how gods, or movie stars, or neighbors, or geniuses behave? Do we then learn from those stories how to behave ourselves? Or do we learn answers to important questions from stories? Answers such as – is love worth it?, or what is left behind when we are gone?, or is sacrifice a good idea?, or does good always triumph over evil?, or does the strong guy always get the girl?, or should I be pretty and faithful if I want my prince on the white horse…? Do we like the fact that stories are better ordered than our lives?; our belief in cosmic or poetic justice is reinforced, as most stories have happy or satisfying, cathartic endings. Or do we simply like the experiences we get out of hearing stories which attempt to parallel real experiences – except we don’t have to suffer the real consequences as this is only a story.

Really – is storytelling and storyhearing a form of human interaction on the par with the intercourse? Why are many of us addicted to soaps, or jokes, or history, or memoirs, or gossip, or movies…..?

Whatever the reason, fondness for stories cuts across generations and cultures.
Are we hard-wired to need stories? Isn’t pretend play in earliest childhood an early way of telling stories? I’ve heard people find stories in Jackson Pollock’s squirts and dribbles or in Mike Rothko’s soft squares and rectangles. (Personally, I love Rothko and admire Pollock, but I see them as pure non-narrative form, like music. Which doesn’t make them any less enjoyable and profound. On the contrary.)

2.

As a film director, it is my job to tell a story.

I don’t think that directing narrative film is about the visuals or the fancy shots or even about good scenes that stick in the mind of a critic. It is the director’s job to truly, deeply understand the screenplay – and I don’t mean only the plot or the characters – I mean the meaning, the themes, the connections to our experience and even to our subconscious that go beyond the pure mechanics of the plot. The good director gets to the essence of the story, then makes sure this essence is communicated, amplified, shaped and defined by all cinematic means at his or her disposal: casting, performance, blocking, framing, pacing, color, music, tone, sound... they all work towards one goal.

Towards telling a story well.

So, the director tells a story, but he or she is not the one who puts it on paper. The director is not the originator. The big bang has already taken place by the time there is a director on board. It has taken place months or years earlier at the humble keyboard of the writer. (Of course, the big bang could be a big whimper if there is no powerful medium to amplify the bang.)

3.

I am a writer-director. I tell my students that while I write, I – the writer – don’t let near me the other part of me that is the director.

I want to protect the freedom of the writer, I want to be free to fool around, and that is why I need to avoid Milcho the director. He always worries. He worries about how to bring things in front of the camera, whether we can find an actor who can deliver such a difficult role, how to convey the foreboding feeling while keeping the pacing brisk, how to shoot a convincing battle scene on the inadequate budget, how to get the crew to the best-looking locations... Milcho the director is much more responsible, restrained and concerned than Milcho the writer.

In other words, while I write a screenplay, I try to stay with the writing. I try to do the things writers do, and I avoid thinking of things directors do (such as casting, visualizing, blocking or thinking about music).
As a writer, I try to balance things between the fun of creation and the requirements of the piece I am writing. I am not talking about the practical requirements. I am talking about the requirements that stem from the responsibility the artist has to his or her work. I don’t think the artist has a dialogue with the audience or with the film critics or historians – he or she has a dialogue only with the work of art itself. The audience can always be bribed, something well illustrated by the success of the formulaic blockbusters. The critic or the historian can be bribed too, as illustrated by the art-house genre or the Sundance genre or the film-from-an-exotic-country-at-a-major-festival genre. In other words, working within the expectations of the viewers is a way of bribing them.

(On a related subject, I must quote the wise man who described the relationship between the artist and the art critic as similar to the relationship between the donkey and the zoologist.)

While I write, I simply write. I keep the dialogue with the work itself going, and I try to have fun. I often start with a feeling or with a formal concept, then move on to the plot. Creating the plot is easy, something I’ve learned from the stories I’ve loved all my life: comic books, serious books, historical research, good jokes, folk tales, other films….

I write as if writing for another director, someone competent who will understand and appreciate the screenplay for its plot, characters, themes and depth, another director who does not need too many words or details in the screenplay, but who will occasionally appreciate an incisive sketch of the proposed visuals, or a fun twist of phrase in stage direction. Someone who will further develop the written word into a full-blown film.

I focus on:
. the plot (which is the skeleton I hang everything else on);
. the people in the film (also known as characters, who are sometimes versions of people I know in real life: twisted, re-imagined, combined, complicated or simplified);
. the dialogue (keeping it fat-free, while aiming to have the characters speak, rather than sound as if they were trying to deliver plot points or suggest emotions on behalf of the filmmaker),
. but most of all, I take great pleasure in the wonderful surprises that can happen only when creating art from scratch, when writing or painting or composing…. When imagining and inventing. I try to enjoy the great sense of freedom that comes with creating from scratch.

These irreverent surprises are why I write.

Even though I treat the screenplay like a game of chess, I sometimes do not have a rational explanation, no good reason (nor rhyme) for the way things go in my writing. The overall structure is there, and I stick to its common sense diligently, but on the ground – where it matters – I follow my nose, fancying myself a prairie hunter. Even though perfectly sharp and sober, I sometimes act as if drunk and dare to take a wrong turn. I try to listen to the story the way one listens to jazz: “This twist feels right, that one just does not.” My criteria are sharp and precise (to me at least), but by no means rational. Often the rational explanation is not obvious at first. Sometimes it never is.

In other words, if something feels right, I will put it in the screenplay, but I won’t necessarily have a good rational explanation as to why. It will just feel right. Still – and I want to underline this – it must feel right, it cannot be haphazardly thrown in, it should not be driven by exhibitionism or lack of discipline or – even worse – laziness, or – heaven forbid – narcissism.
As a matter of fact, the answer to the why question must be rock solid – it just does not have to be a rational rock solid answer.

I play in the sandbox with my keyboard, but I am aware that I am now a responsible adult.

(With this issue of intuition vs. the rational in making films, one could argue that experience in telling and hearing stories can make you internalize the rational, so then it comes out as intuition.)

At the beginning of the process there is the bread-and-butter of the script, the humble, but strong skeleton upon which we will hang the flesh, nerves and handsome face of the screenplay – the plot. Its gallop toward an emotionally satisfying conclusion is driven by common sense, but not by the need to have rational clarity.

This is one of the disagreements I have with the Hollywood script doctors. We do not have to understand everything in the script to like it. I've seen many films that I fully understood, but I was still sorry that I wasted two hours of my life. I've also seen films that I do not understand to this day, but the thought of them fills me with joy. (I guess I prefer the script witch doctors to the Hollywood script doctors.)

Then, once Milcho the writer has completed the final draft, he delivers it to Milcho the director. The director in me usually accepts the script. He doesn't need many meetings, pitches or rewrites.

Then Milcho the director fires Milcho the writer.

Let me repeat – I don't really hate directing. After all, directing is when you take the story to another level, add fantastic new dimensions. You are creating or re-creating worlds and landscapes, especially mind landscapes.

When I – as director – sit down to do the director's work – casting, storyboarding and blocking, location scouting, acting rehearsals – that is when I begin to get into the script, analyze, dissect, and expand upon the themes and tone of the screenplay. This is when I begin to understand some of the surprises the writer in me had put in the script.

However, I dare not change things on paper, except for details that help clarify and refocus the ideas, themes, characters and plot.

When making directorial decisions on things that seem unrelated to the story – such as casting choices, or visual direction (the blocking, the mood, the colors, the lighting, the lenses) – I often get back to what the film is about. What is it that the writer wanted to say, as my grade-school teacher would put it?

For example: let's say that we – the writer, the director, the heads of departments, the actors, the people I test the film on telling them the story or asking them to read the screenplay – have somehow decided that the film we are making is about how optimism and warmth and the will to live and to love triumph in the face of obstacles, mental problems and selfish society; in the casting sessions I will prefer the actress who
offers this kind of energy, and I would encourage the actresses who approach the character from a darker perspective to give the character a heart of inextinguishable belief that things can be good in spite of everything.

I will make decisions guided by the discovery of what the film/the script is really about. Of course, not all decisions are dictated by the big picture, but the important ones should be. The big picture should be hidden in the detail. The god is in the detail. It is up to the good director to decide which detail is hiding god in its nucleus, and which detail is simply detail.

Early on, I analyze and discuss the intentions of the screenplay with the production designer. We come up with visual expansion on the screenplay, while at the same time I create the storyboard and discuss the approach with the director of photography.

Regardless of how well-written a screenplay is, the characters are incomplete until the actors and the director put their fingerprints all over them, internalizing and then spitting them out. I believe that a good actor will know more about his or her character than the writer or director.

I continue with this process of dissecting the screenplay and putting together the outlines of the film through pre-production. If there are changes in the script at any time during pre-production, we put them on paper, and distribute them to everybody. For example, while rehearsing with the actors, there is always a continuity person present, and she will amend the script.

And on towards the task of actually shooting the film as closely to the script as possible.

5.

Everything I said might sound as if I have a well-defined way of writing and then translating the written word into a film. It is only partly true. My experiences have been all over the map. Thank god.

For example:

I toyed with the five-page synopsis for Before the Rain for about a year and a half before I felt ready to write the screenplay. Then, once I sat down, it took me about two weeks to write the first draft. What you see in the finished film is basically what was in that first draft. In the meantime, in development and while we were prepping, Channel 4 asked for a number of changes which had mainly to do with script doctoring by the book. I fought them, but consented to some. When Channel 4 pulled out of the film two weeks into production, thinking we would never finish the film, I promptly threw out the changes they demanded. Once we started shooting, I stuck to the script as to a gospel, even resigning for 12 hours when I realized that the producers – without telling me – had removed several small scenes from the shooting schedule in order to save time. (They reinstated the missing scenes.)

On Dust, by contrast, I did many drafts, and the script really came together only when I rewrote it at one point from scratch during the long financing and development process. At that point, I simplified it and trimmed it by more than 20 pages. We did extensive historical research as half of the film was set in the Ottoman Empire and the American Wild West. Our bibliographical list consisted of more than 160 entries.
All of this detail and the ambition of the film guided the director in me to a lot of detail in the finished film. This contributed texture to the tissue of the film, but was contrasting the lean nature of the text.

I was also hired to make a film for 20th Century Fox, *Ravenous*. It was written by a young Hollywood writer and it held the potential of a dark vampire-themed film about cannibalism in the snow-covered mountains of the Wild West. I saw it as a dark tale along the lines of *Rosemary’s Baby* or *Fearless Vampire Killers*. The studio saw it as *Scream 5*. Shortly before we were scheduled to start filming, the studio head flew to London from Los Angeles; the writer and a creative executive came with her. The producer and I were summoned from Prague where we were prepping the film. Over a 20-hour session at a nice London hotel we went through the script line by line and the studio head changed a number of things before we went into production. The thing I missed the most after the surgery was a surreal adrenaline-fueled cannibal chase scene in the snow which saved the studio some money, but left a gaping hole in the middle of the story. Predictably, *Scream 5* won and *Rosemary’s Baby* meets *Fearless Vampire Killers* lost, and I was soon off the project.

On *Three to Kill* I had the opposite task – I was writing a script for another director. I was adopting a noir book by the French writer Jean-Patrick Manchette for a young Italian director. The book had previously been made into a film with Alain Delon, but I had not seen it and insisted on not seeing it. The book was lean and mean, to the point, and verb-driven. It was easy to turn it into a screenplay. What was more demanding was trying to discern what the first-time director wanted, what would excite him and what would highlight his strengths.

6.

Allow me now to zero in in greater detail on three other examples from my writing-dash-directing experience, which should better illustrate my working process.

In my film *Before the Rain*, there is a sequence consisting of three scenes featuring Aleksandar, the protagonist, and his extended family and friends: (1) feast, (2) wedding and (3) bedroom.

Aleksandar has just returned from London to his remote village in the Macedonian mountains, and the family throws a feast for him. His cousins and aunt have gathered around a table, drinks and food keep coming, people chat and joke. It is a scene of warmth with a whiff of threat hanging in the air. The overall feeling is that of familial comfort. In the screenplay, this first scene of the sequence – the feast – peters out, ending on a mild joke. Then the merry family hears the heavy sound of drums and music approaching – a wedding party.

Next – in the second scene – we see the initial group observing the village wedding from a little knoll. A majestic wide shot of the village and the river of people cascading down its steep streets resembles an old painting. The bride in heavy traditional costume is riding a horse, guests dance and wave a flag as the drummer and musicians play syncopated folk music. The portrayal of an ancient ritual helps establish the context and the contrast. A few lines of drunken dialogue from
the group observing follow, one of the characters falls of a chair. End of scene.
Then a hard cut takes us to Aleksandar’s bedroom. He is hung-over and an old flame comes to pay him a visit. Scene three.

That was what the writer in me wrote.

However, the director in me was not entirely satisfied. I didn’t want to be rude to the writer, but it was not working, really. Yes, the necessary information was delivered, the relationships within the family and the community were established. The characters were sketched out for further development. The tone of this new portion of the film was set up.

But, the inner dynamics of the sequence were creaky. We were already almost two thirds into the film and languid introductions would be counterproductive. We needed to be thrusting the action along at the same time as we were introducing new characters (two thirds into the film) and establishing new relationships and action. In addition, we were recently coming off a montage sequence that got us from London to the remote village, and now needed to get going.

Of the three scenes which constituted this family sequence, I felt that the problem was with the first two. They were slowing us down, and we couldn’t afford that. Yet, we needed the information and the tone that the feast scene provides, as well as the wider context provided by the wedding scene. There was also the added bonus of serious production value in the wedding scene – beautiful tableaux, wide shots, dozens and dozens of extras, exotic costume, fascinating music…

I did two things to try solve the problem. One of them I seldom do, but the other one I sometimes employ, even though not extensively.

I made a change to the script on the spot, while filming. That is the thing I very seldom do. Not that the script is sacred, but by the time I start filming, I usually have gone through several drafts, an extensive analysis while storyboarding and scouting, and weeks of rehearsal. All the changes that I may feel are necessary would have already been implemented.

This change to the script while filming involved the end of the feast scene. I felt that as written it was ending with a whimper. I asked for a few moments to think, something the director was not supposed to do on this film, considering how tight the schedule was. I decided to add a little coda. The family has been eating and drinking for some time when – according to this change – a white-bearded grandpa says in an improvised non-sequitor: “C’mon, Alex, take a picture of us.” So, Aleksandar – who is a Pulitzer-winning photo-journalist – sets the camera on automatic and runs to join his family for a group portrait. As they face the camera with smiles, a fly lands on his forehead. He smacks it dead at the very moment the shutter clicks and he is posterized with the hand on his forehead and a silly grin on his face. Everyone laughs and we have one of the iconic moments of Before the Rain, a still that ended up accompanying many newspaper articles about the film, and at least one about the Balkans in general.

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1 I riffed on this moment in my next film, Dust. An Ottoman major is having a photo taken. He and his soldiers are posing with the severed head of a local rebel, when a fly disturbs the major. He slaps it at the very moment that the photo is taken. His sudden movement causes the head he’s holding in the other hand to exit the frame of the photograph. History registers the mundane and misses the historic.
The scene ended with what it was about – the family, but it also ended on a completely unexpected, humorous note. This coda made the scene more human, and it also provided a micro-crescendo which set the table for a hard transition to the next scene.

The second thing I did in trying to make the sequence work better is something I sometimes do – I changed things in the cutting room. This is not the infamous “We’ll fix it in post.” It’s rather a re-write.

I often tell my students: The director who does not exercise the possibility of refocusing, recalibrating or outright reworking the story in the editing room is passing on a mighty storytelling tool.

What you have on film or on your hard drive as you begin the editing process is always different from what you had on paper. That’s the nature of the medium. It is your duty as a director to assess what you have in the can, to see the new strengths and weaknesses of the material you have in the can and to find the best way to exploit the former and underplay the latter.

Like it or not, the editing room is where you write the final draft of the film.

So, I killed the wedding scene. It wasn’t adding enough to the film to justify eating up valuable time so late in the game. The buildup was too slow. And as for the production value and the ritual? Most of it I threw away, but not all of it. I moved several shots – the beautiful wide shot of the village with the many extras, and a couple medium shots of the backlit drummer and musicians – to an entirely different place in the film. We moved it to the moment after Aleksander has decided to take action and is on his way to the sheepfold. He hears the distant sound of drums. I actually used a casual off-screen glance by the actor, added music a couple of seconds before he looks off screen and then cut to the few wedding shots, as if they are his POV from a hilltop down at the wedding in the village.

This gave the moment a different meaning. The lively wedding was not only establishing the social context, but it was now being contrasted with the tense action unfolding at the finale of the film.

Back to the original sequence: here is what we had in the film after rewriting the script on the set and in the editing room: a warm family gathering streaked with hints of danger that ends on a seemingly goofy high note (which becomes iconic once the film is released), then a hard cut to the bedroom scene which proceeds as written.

The combination of a small, but important re-write during filming and another intervention in the editing room helped fine-tune this portion of Before the Rain. It established and propelled the dynamics of the plot and the relationships, while moving the film at a clip.
Allow me another example from the same film of how the writer and director in me collaborated:

At another point in *Before the Rain*, a couple is on the run. He is a young Macedonian defrocked monk, she is an Albanian teenager in distress. A gang of Albanian men – her family – surrounds them. They are looking to save her from an opposing clan. Still, when the armed band lays their hands on the couple, her grandfather punishes and humiliates her publicly, beating her brutally, albeit reluctantly. Then her brother erupts in a fit of jealous rage and shoots her dead.

Now, in all the drafts of the synopsis, the brother killed both the girl and the monk. This was a befitting tragic end to the modern-day civil war Romeo and Juliet. They are both dead.

Yet, Kiril, the monk, refused to die. It didn’t feel right to kill him. I don’t know why. I could claim a number of rational explanations why not to kill him, such as that in *Before the Rain* different ethnic groups always kill their own, making thus the point that any war, and especially a civil war is in fact fratricide. The brother and the monk are not related.

However, the real reason was that Kiril, the character, simply refused to die. I tried killing him on paper, but he wouldn’t budge. And I followed his wishes.

The fact that Kiril did not die on the mountaintop gave me the opportunity to bring him back later in London. It also allowed me to have him sit on the tattered suitcase next to her body, looking on in silent shock as the life drains out of her. It allowed for a final exchange between the lovers: he says, “I’m sorry,” she – referring to their inability to understand each other’s languages and to his now broken vow of silence – puts her finger on her lips, “Hush.”

The tone of the silent goodbye scene was developed after I completed the screenplay. The director contrasted wide shots of a sole human in a vast, spectacular landscape with tight close-ups of the dying girl and the stunned ex-monk2. These close-ups turned out to be an important tool at this point in the story.

As for the wide shots – we invested a lot of time and energy in finding the most appropriate locations. We ruthlessly combined different places, creating cinematic space which does not exist.

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2 Since we were running out of time during the main shoot, we picked up the closeups of Kiril and Zamira against sky and neutral background on several later occasions – a few weeks after we filmed that particular scene, in a different location in Macedonia; and during post-production, in London, some six months after we initially shot the bulk of the scene.
I also filmed the gang walking away in silent procession after Zamira’s death, passing by the heart-broken Kiril seated on the brown suitcase. In the editing room, though, I decided to eliminate that part of the scene, as it felt at odds with the quiet and intimate way the scene was building to a crescendo. The music suggests a fleeting moment and the scene ends with a single flute accompanying the image of a lone boy under a solitary tree. He is alive, but alone. On the wings of the solo flute, we travel from the Macedonian mountains to a claustrophobic shower stall in London, where a woman breaks down in tears under the shower. Part 2 begins.

I remember watching this moment with an audience at the Cineteca di Bologna. I somehow managed to view the film as a viewer, not a maker, and I was excited by the leap, the emotional crescendo that is irreverently cut off.

This became one of the most important (and I dare say, poignant) moments in the film, a pivotal point when the cheeky leap from a place to a distant, seemingly unconnected place happens right after an emotional high note. It almost feels like a leap in time. The lift off and the landing together create new quality, presenting the director with an opportunity for a subdued (or an operatic) tour-de-force.

Even though the script called for this jarring, radical leap in the story (leaving behind everything we had developed to that point – the story, the characters, the setting and the atmosphere in Macedonia), the tone of this transition was developed by the director, not by the writer: the pacing, the music, the contrasting colors, the contrasting shot size, the timing of the change...

In other words: even though the potential for this moment of directorial fireworks emerged from what was on the page and from the writer’s freedom to be irreverent, it was dully amplified by the disciplined directorial work.

8.

The final example from my experience as writer-director is probably most challenging, but so was the film.

At the very beginning of the process of creating Mothers, I had a real-life story. A series of rape-murders of retired cleaning women in a small Macedonian town leads to the arrest of a journalist who was reporting on the very same crimes. He is then found dead in his prison cell, his head in a bucket of water. The authorities declare it a suicide by drowning. I was interested in this unusual story, but I was also very interested in the background – the suffocating life in a small town.

I knew this story was going to be only a part of a feature-length film. I did not see the documentary as a full-length film. Instead, I saw it as only one segment in a film consisting of three parts. These three parts would contrast and complement each other to create a bigger whole. I was not interested in telling the story of the crime and punishment, but was instead interested in telling the story of telling stories.

As I was developing the other two parts, I realized I had to start filming the documentary while the iron was hot. I did not want to run the risk of the real people involved in the story getting too far from it. There were also practical considerations – what if the story in their heads started to change, as stories always do, or what if some of them became unavailable?
So, I started filming the documentary, while I was still working on the big script.

I went to the small town, shot establishing and mood shots, found a local collaborator and started putting together the puzzle. I interviewed the families of the victims, the family of the journalist, and then the investigators who broke the case, the judge involved, the forensic pathologists, etc.

The information I was putting on film (or, rather – on hard drive) was in turn informing the big picture. I dropped the initial idea of making three versions of the same events – fictionalized, a fake documentary and a real documentary – and focused instead on creating three completely different stories which connect only on a different plane.

*Mothers* was intended as an experiment of sorts – two parts of the film fiction, and the third a documentary, so I started searching for the two fictional stories. In terms of the narrative, these two stories were supposed to have nothing in common with the documentary, except for thematic echoes and amplifications. They were, however, going to be connected by tone and the big picture itself: the nature of truth. And how we tell it.

This is a fairly unusual combination – fiction and documentary. We perceive the two in a completely different way; our expectations and the way we experience them are different. And therein lie the experiment – what will happen if we treat both as simple means or tools in telling a story, the way an artist like Rauschenberg mixes photographs or even a blanket within an old-fashioned painting?
For parts one and two of the film – the fiction parts – I chose real-life stories told to me by friends. The event underlying part one had happened some eighteen years ago; the one underlying part two more than thirty years ago. One happened to a little girl in a big city, the other to old folks in a deserted village. They had seemingly nothing in common with the documentary about a serial killer of retired cleaning women and a suicide in a bucket of water.

Yet, they felt like they fit perfectly together. The contrast and the resonance felt just right. I had my three sides of the triangle-film.

So, while filming the documentary, I went about writing the fiction. When I felt I had shot enough of the doc, I started preparing the filming of the fiction parts. After I filmed those, and after we edited the doc, we went back to the real-life small town and filmed the missing links in the documentary portion.

The day-to-day writing of the fiction screenplay was not affected by the developments in making the documentary, but shooting the doc had opened the doors to better thinking about the rest of the big picture. The writing and the directing did not exactly happen at the same time, but I came as close to interweaving the two in the same span of time as I would ever dare.

Thus, in *Mothers* I wrote, then filmed, then edited, then wrote again, then filmed some more, then filmed yet again, and then edited the whole. This is very different from the way I always work. The writer and the director in me interwove their work on this project. The writer let the director shoot before the entire script was finished, and the director started shooting before the entire screenplay was finished. This was new and it was different.

And, in a significant way, it was also liberating. It allowed for freshness that is seldom possible when making a film. It allowed a certain level of spontaneity that the necessarily bulky process of filmmaking restricts. This freshness and freedom marked not only a new approach for me, but also new quality in that I was able to let the instinct have a bigger part in the final product. I wasn't writing lines of dialogue on the set, nor letting the actors improvise, but I was shaping the structure of the overall screenplay after I started filming. This was an experiment in a somewhat different film form, yet I was very happy with the experience and with the result.

I don't know whether I'll ever replicate this experience, but it certainly opened new possibilities. It demonstrated that it is possible to make intuition play a bigger part in the creation of this bulky cyborg animal called film.

I think that I would be more open to other experiments where strong intuition or well thought-out framework would allow for a different schedule or a different kind of give-and-take between the writing and directing segments of the process. If this means more fun (while still effectively managing the overall practice of making a film), and especially if it results in a good film, I'd be game for it.
Truth and Fiction,
Art and Faith
Three years ago I read a fascinating article in the New York Times. The article told of Vlado Taneski, a Macedonian journalist. He was a correspondent for a major Macedonian newspaper from a small town, Kicevo. Taneski had been covering the case of several missing women in Kicevo. They were all elderly, some of them used to work as cleaning women, and they all lived in the same neighborhood. They could almost see each other’s houses from their windows. Taneski wrote that the retired women had all gone missing over a period of three years. Their bodies were later found in plastic bags, discarded in illegal dumps, raped and strangled.

No sooner did Taneski finish writing his most recent report on the unknown serial killer than he was arrested and charged with rape and murder. His DNA was found inside the victims, his wife’s hair was found on the clothes the victims’ bodies were wrapped in, and the evidence started accumulating.

Taneski was a neighbor. He lived in the same neighborhood as the victims; one of them lived only three houses down from Taneski. All the victims knew him as a friendly neighbor. Their children went to the same schools. They shopped in the same stores. They chatted when they met in the street. Sometimes they would help each other. He may have asked one of them to help him clean his house – his wife lived in the capital, and he was a man alone. He was well-respected as a solid citizen, a journalist, a pillar of his community.

I read the article and pictured Kicevo. It is a small town where people know each other and most live quiet and conservative lives. Many businesses, most of them industrial plants, closed their doors over the last twenty years. Unemployment is high. Macedonian and Albanian peasants from the countryside come to town on the market days to sell fruit, vegetables and their wares. Children play basketball right next to a car wreck left to rot in the school yard. Attractive women socialize in the downtown cafes.

It was hard to believe that these hideous crimes took place there. We are used to serial killers in America, not in the sleepy Macedonian countryside. And not just any serial killer, but a rapist who preys on retired cleaning women. This is not something one associates with the country I know.

To make things stranger, Taneski not only wrote the articles about the serial killer (including one titled The Investigation Stalled, where he chides the police for shoddy work), but he also went to see the families of the victims after the women had disappeared and before the bodies were discovered. He went to the families asking for statements, information and for photographs of the missing women to accompany his articles. They kindly obliged.

The Vlado Taneski story went around the world: a crime reporter who allegedly killed by night, and wrote about it by day.

Three days later an even more bizarre twist of events was reported. Vlado Taneski was found dead in his prison cell, his head in a bucket of water.

“Now, this is impossible,” many readers exclaimed.

It does seem impossible. Even after two years, the official investigation has not uncovered what had happened that night. The coroner reported that the death was caused by drowning; he reported no signs of violence on Taneski’s body or traces of any mind-altering substances in his blood. The press from as far
as Korea, Argentina and the US had a field day with the story: a crime reporter, suspected of the serial rapes and murders of retired cleaning women that he was reporting on, ends up dead in a bucket of water in his prison cell.

“Now, this is impossible,” is the way many would describe this string of events. “It can’t be true,” others would say.

As I said, I read this story in two articles in the New York Times in the summer of 2008. I am a storyteller and filmmaker, and I often look at things in life or read books and stories thinking what they would look like if one tried to convert them into films. This story stood out. It was one of those stories that are unbelievable, yet true.

“But, it really happened” is something a student of mine once told me after I remarked that his idea for a film did not hold water dramaturgically. His reaction is typical of a common belief which holds that if a film is based on events that really took place the film itself should be believable and believed.

Yet, we have all seen bad and unbelievable films based on real events. And we have all seen great films that were entirely the product of someone’s imagination.

Still, just like my former student, most of us do look at films differently or accept stories in a different way if we believe they are true. We watch a documentary film in a different way from the way we watch a drama. We read a magazine article in a different way from the way in which we read a short story. Sometimes, we even treat a film that employs actors differently because we were told that it is based on something that really happened. We treat these works based on truth or reporting on the truth in a different way.

Why?

What is it in our relation to reality or in our relation to what we perceive to be the reality that makes us value a work of artifice (an art piece) differently depending on our knowledge or conviction of whether that work of artifice is based on events that really took place?

Mind you – this is not a case of actually observing reality. We are not watching events as they unfold. We are not observing the truth happen. What we are observing in a film based on a true story is a highly artificial construct. We are observing actors delivering lines written by a scriptwriter, actors and landscapes and objects filmed in a way determined by the director and by the director of photography and by the production designer. What is left out of the film is determined by the director and the editor. What we are observing is a work of art – or sometimes just a movie – with its own inner logic, rhythm, development and feel. These are all created by the filmmakers, usually deliberately and in line with numerous conventions established between the filmmaker and the viewer, and following the concept or idea the filmmakers had in mind.

The same applies to a documentary. When we watch a documentary we are not observing reality happen in front of our eyes. What we are observing is a film. A documentary film. With its own set of rules and conventions, with its own conclusions as to what exactly happened. These conclusions will sometimes depend on the point of view or on the context the particular film establishes. It
will depend on the conclusion the filmmakers have come to while making the film, or – quite often –
before even setting out to make the film. Regardless of how faithful the filmmakers want to be to the
events they are talking about (and which most of them had not witnessed first hand), such a film is a
reconstruction. Or a construction.

In addition, the feel of the documentary will depend almost entirely on the filmmakers, and this may
remove the film one more step from reality – and sometimes even from the truth. Quite often the feeling
we’d have when we walk out of a film, even if it is documentary, will be very different from the feel we’d
have if we were to observe reality instead of watching a film about reality.

In other words, the film – any film – will be different from the reality or the truth it is talking about.

Why then insist on the “faithfulness” or “truthfulness” of the film? No one has ever said – except
on advice of their lawyer – “This film was entirely made up. Nothing in it is true.” On the contrary,
filmakers often highlight their film’s connection to the real events or people, sometimes at the very
beginning of their films.

Does it make a film more truthful if it is based on a true story?

Or do we insist on the “faithfulness,” the “truthfulness”, the “based on a true story” as a way of giving
the film more credibility? In the sense of, “This is not just something I dreamed up. It really happened,
I am reporting it and that makes me a serious member of society.” Is that why a lot of serious people
prefer documentaries?

As the former student of mine would put it: “But, it really happened!”

Do we use it because the tagline “based on a true story” helps the viewer suspend their disbelief? A
viewer walks into a theater and she is supposed to enter the filmmakers’ world. It may be a world she
likes or a world she doesn’t like; it may be a world she believes, or a world she doesn’t believe (a world
of constructed connections and artificial feelings instead of a world of coherent vision and compact
drama).

The filmmaker needs to gain the viewer’s trust. And this is where the filmmaker may say: “What I am
saying makes sense because it really happened. Trust me.”

As every artist knows – or, at least, feels in his or her bones – it is essential to gain the viewer’s trust if
you expect for the work to resonate with the recipient. It is not easy to establish the field of reality in
a dramatic piece, so using the true story crutch may be helpful in gaining the viewer’s trust.

Of course, every work of art has to earn the viewer’s trust. The viewer comes to the piece with a level of
trust, but the artist has to satisfy – or, if possible, expand on – this trust. The viewer trusts that the film
will be worthy of her expectations, that it will be an emotional, intellectual and perhaps even a learning
experience for her. She trusts that you will take her by the hand and rule her inner world for two hours.
She has faith in your ability to deliver, but she also has expectations.

Now what is interesting about this trust – or faith – is that it goes both ways.

Or, rather – it is something that happens twice: once when the artist creates the piece – and once when the viewer takes it in.

So, the trust is essential for a work of art to:
(1) Be created, and
(2) Be consumed.

We are talking here a high level of trust.

I need to trust that the film I am making is worth it in order for me to invest my emotional and, often, physical well-being, plus a minimum of two (and in one case, for myself – seven) years of my life.

Most importantly, I have to have faith in this undertaking in order for myself to strip down to the core and to bare my soul, my real emotions and my deepest thoughts on essential issues. It is important that I strip down in order to reach the emotional and conceptual essence of what I want to say, even when my work does not necessarily seem personal. Yet, it is this personal involvement that provides the basis for my art.

Again – I don’t need to talk directly about my concerns, but I need to invest myself into my art for it to gain that breath of life. Craft alone is not enough.

Of course, every piece of art has to contain the truth. But, not the truth of “what happened.” It needs to contain the truth of how things are.

While making my art, I am communicating with my piece, not with the audience or with myself. My commitment is to the piece of art alone. Nothing can make my faith in my work relative. The art piece is not negotiable.

It is a little bit like a musician on stage, playing his instrument with the light in his eyes. He is wrapped up in the music, and becomes aware of the audience only when they start applauding.

The honesty of my relationship with my piece, plus my ability to communicate this onto the work of art is what inspires faith inside the viewer.

For her part, the viewer – as I said – comes to the battlefield, or to the bedroom, or to the cinema theater with herself also exposed, even if to a smaller degree. She comes and says, “I like this kind of films, I am investing my time, a bit of my life, and my emotional expectations in your work. I believe you to the point of crying because an actor on the screen pretends to be dying. Do it for me.”
Both of us are taking a major leap of faith.

What does the filmmaker do with this faith is essential. If the artist takes it seriously and repays it multiple times with his or her work, it becomes love.

I approach the film I am creating with faith. The viewer approaches the film she is watching with faith. There is no film and no art without this faith. This is it: faith in the art piece itself to transcend the moment.

A perverse question floats up to the surface here:

Did Vlado (if he was the real murderer) need the reality of the rapes and murders so that he can write about them? It is as if he could not just write about them, invent them, but he needed to report about them. Could that be part of what happened?

Two days ago a viewer asked me why I decided to make the film about Vlado Taneski a documentary.

Yes, I did make a film about the case of the Kicevo reporter who died in a bucket of water in prison, after being charged with raping and killing the retired cleaners he was writing about.

However, the story of Vlado Taneski, told as a documentary, was only a part of the film, only one of three completely unrelated stories that comprise my film Mothers. The other two segments are drama pieces, with actors and scripted dialogue. Yet, they are both based on real events. What unfolds in these two drama parts is based on what happened to two friends of mine. Thus all three stories were based on real events, but they were treated differently; I applied radically different cinematic approaches.

Truth is extremely important, and I fulfilled my obligation to it in Mothers by trying to get to the bottom of what happened in this complicated series of events. The facts and the context. I also tried to give everybody involved a chance to convey their experience. Yet, this attempt to tell the facts and to satisfy different perspectives was not the most important thing.

What was more important was the following: I was trying to ask questions about the nature of truth, rather than about truth plain and simple. We see different permutations of truth and lies in the three parts of Mothers.

In a structuralist manner, we are finally faced with considering the medium itself, the font the song is printed in, the texture of the canvas, the clash and marriage of the documentary and fiction approaches in one and the same piece.

So Mothers is comprised of three unrelated stories – two of which are drama and one a documentary.
These stories never really come together on the narrative level. The fact that they remain unconnected plot-wise, and – more importantly – the fact that I mix drama and documentary (or as some people would have it “truth and fiction”) is not very common. Documentary and drama usually don’t mix. When they do, the drama is often just a re-enactment of what happens in the documentary.

I wanted to combine these two approaches, two genres, two kinds of filmmaking. I felt there was no need to be restricted in the way I use the material, in the style and approach, the way we have been taught. Painting has been using found objects for about a century now. Many great artists have been incorporating found objects in their art pieces. The shock of seeing an unexpected other medium (found object) within a painting or sculpture adds a new level to the experience. Artists like Picasso and Rauschenberg have created works of art of classic beauty by using objects seemingly incongruous with a work of art, such as a blanket, linoleum, bicycle handlebars, stuffed goat or newspaper photographs. Yet, what really matters in the final piece is not the shock that we are looking at unexpected material where we don’t expect it, but rather the fact that the found object has been incorporated into the art piece in a way that contributes to a great piece of art, a piece of art that has touched our heart, has spoken to our mind.

In other words, the novelty of incorporating found objects in a work of art (or of mixing drama and documentary in a substantial way) is not enough. The work itself still needs to be good.

Why couldn’t film expand the means at its disposal by freely mixing documentary and fiction? Why do those two approaches – documentary and fiction – have to be considered mutually exclusive? Is it something in the nature of our perception of the work of art, the work of telling stories, of creating something out of nothing that makes us treat the drama and documentary as separate animals? After all, a story is a story?

This is where we neatly circle back to an earlier point – We watch a documentary film in a different way from the way we watch a drama. We read a magazine article in a different way from the way in which we read a short story. Sometimes, we even treat a film that employs actors differently because we were told that it is based on something that really happened. We treat these works based on truth or reporting on the truth in a different way.

Why?

I am not sure.

Several years ago I screened my first film, Before the Rain at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. That film consists of three love stories set in London and Macedonia against the backdrop of tension and potential violence which is about to erupt – both in London and in Macedonia. Some of the tension is caused, “excused” or enhanced by ethnic intolerance. However, there was no violence in Macedonia at the time. The film was made eight years before an ethnic conflict – or what was being explained as an ethnic conflict – erupted in Macedonia.
Yet, since Before the Rain came from Macedonia, and Macedonia had only recently declared its independence from Yugoslavia, which itself was right then torn apart by wars of disintegration along ethnic lines, many people looked for clues about the nature of the actual war in this film.

I did not feel that watching Before the Rain would help anyone understand the facts of the actual wars in Yugoslavia. (For starters, there were no politicians in Before the Rain.) My intention was to talk about other human issues that concerned me, not to explain a particular war. I conceived and perceived Before the Rain as a piece of fiction applicable to any place in the world. And, indeed, viewers from very different places did come up to me after the film opened to tell me that it had made them think of their homelands. That it could easily have taken place in their homelands.

With this in mind, I told the viewers before the screening at Brown that the film they were about to see was not a documentary about Macedonia; nor was it a documentary about the wars in what used to be Yugoslavia. It is not a documentary at all, I told the audience. Satisfied that I helped frame the film for the viewers, I settled down.

After the screening I came up for a Q&A session. An elderly lady raised her hand and asked the first question: “Did what we saw in the film actually happen to you or to anyone in your family?”

Relying on whether something “really happened” or valorizing documentaries over drama only because they are documentaries, or praising a film because of the subject matter it treats and not because of its essence, soul, mind and muscle feels like a cheat. A crutch.

It seems that some of us need to know that something is “true” only because it would help our faith. Our faith in the power of the piece of art. Whether something is “true” or not is an external category. Sure, it can ease our way into trusting the plane of reality of the particular work, but it can not substitute for the lack of heart and soul.

Did the lady in Providence like Before the Rain more because she thought it was “true”?

I don’t think so. As I said, we’ve all seen many “based on a true story” films that were no good. We didn’t like them. I would like to believe that the lady in Providence liked the film because of the film itself.
I believe that deep down our experience with a film does not really depend on whether the film speaks of events that truly happened or not. Yes, both viewers and filmmakers often put a lot of stock in whether something is based on a real story. Still, I am convinced that the emotional charge we get out of a great work of art is mainly related to that particular work of art, to that particular piece of artifice, to that particular object, that particular sound or that particular image or that particular concept which we call a piece of art.

Faith that needs outside support (“based on a true story”) seems suspect to me. Seems like faith lite.

I think that when we like a work of art, we like it because of what it does to our body and soul while we are receiving it. We like it because of what we are experiencing while watching, reading or listening; we like it because we trust the **plane of reality** created by the work itself, we trust its inner logic and integrity, we have faith in what happens while we give ourselves to this work of art.

In other words, it is beside the point whether a work of art is real or fiction – it is the viewer’s faith in the work of art, that that particular piece of art has earned, which makes it work.

We accept the artistic truth because we have faith in it.
In order to accept art, we need exceptional faith.
ART, VIOLENCE + SOCIETY: A FEW NOTES
TONE AND FUNCTION:
ART AND RITUAL
violence

Function: noun
1 a : exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse (as in warfare, effecting illegal entry into a house)
   b : an instance of violent treatment or procedure
2 a : intense, turbulent, or furious and often destructive action or force <the violence of the storm>
   b : vehement feeling or expression

ritual
Function: noun
1 : the established form for a ceremony; specifically : the order of words prescribed for a religious
   ceremony
2 a : ritual observance; specifically : a system of rites b : a ceremonial act or action c : an act or series of
   acts regularly repeated in a set precise manner

Ingmar Bergman is quoted as having said that film is a perfectly legitimate way of ritualizing violence in
society.

Mind you - ritualize, not glorify.

[Bergman is also quoted as having said: “When we experience a film, we consciously prime ourselves for
illusion. Putting aside will and intellect, we make way for it in our imagination. The sequence of pictures
plays directly on our feelings.”]

The ritualistic aspect (among other things) has to do with creating a substitute, a mock-up, a
representation of a particular experience.

This representation, re-creation provides the experience of the real thing without the necessity to face
the consequences. More importantly - it also allows one to deal with the meaning of the real thing, the
thing that is being represented.

For example, riding the roller-coaster is a mock-up of a particular experience – falling down. The fear is
real, but the danger is not, as we know the contraption is supposed to be safe.

Film is often like a roller-coaster for the mind, the gut and the heart: experience without the danger,
experience without the consequences. (“...we consciously prime ourselves for illusion.”)

Even though the viewer knows perfectly well that the film/painting/story/play is a lie (“When we
experience a film, we consciously prime ourselves for illusion.”), she still desires to respond as if it were
real. This is simply because the lie is - at the same time - a truth.

As the hero fires his gun, he really does fire a gun, even if it is one loaded with fakes.
As an actor at the receiving end of this shot falls down, playacting, we know that he is pretending he has
been hit. Yet, we also know that he really fell down, cried in anguish, writhed in the dust.
Playacting or not, all of these actions really did take place. And they suggest what the filmmakers wanted to suggest and what the audience has agreed to assume - that the actor is dead. The meaning has been put together.

That is part of the contract (“...we consciously prime ourselves for illusion.”) - the viewer knows full well that the actor is not dead; yet the viewer accepts that these more-or-less realistic symbols and gestures say “I am dying/dead.”

More importantly, the viewer’s heart and gut respond to these as if they were real.

Ultimately, as the piece wraps up, the viewer has accepted the emotional, narrative or philosophical point; the meaning that the artist wanted to communicate has traveled via the work of art.

One aspect of contemporary rituals is not that different from ancient rituals. Experiencing it without really doing it.

How much do we fill in the blanks? Is the actor’s death realistic without our participation and without our acceptance of the rules of the game? Will an unsuspecting viewer who doesn’t know that this is a piece of fiction think the actor has really died?.

Is this any different from the experience in the syncretic art?
Is it different from the experience during a ritual around the bonfire thousands of years ago?
Is it different from what the audience of the oral storytellers experience? The audience of Homer, bhopas (bards and shamans, oral storytellers in Rajasthan) or guslars (musician/storytellers of the Balkans)?

Society’s survival depends on its ability to pass on information.

In other words - to teach.
What would happen if every generation had to discover anew the fire? Or the wheel? Or electricity?

Society facilitates the transfer of information from the teacher (the one with the experience or knowledge) to the pupil (the one without the experience or knowledge).

The cornerstone of this activity is the potential for the pupil to absorb information without having to personally experience it.

The narratives are one way to teach.
The Bible teaches its students how to behave.
Even the less overt instruction manuals do so by providing templates of behavior (if Zeus can cheat on his wife Hera, why shouldn’t I?)
The narratives were only oral at first.

Speech, written language, mental concepts.

Art is non-verbal conscious communication. (“Putting aside will and intellect, we make way for [art] in our imagination.”)

Rituals - and, by extension, art: experiencing (and exploring) it yourself without the consequences. Participating and experiencing the emotional impact. Learning - or at least feeling.

Do the technological developments make the experience more convincing? Is a bhopa listener in Rajasthan less convinced of the “realness” of the story she’s experiencing than a kid at an IMAX theater in New York with its gigantic screen and sophisticated surround sound? (A standard IMAX screen is 22m wide and 16 m high (72.6 x 52.8 ft), but can be larger.)

Were the 3-D films too realistic, or were they irrelevant?

Is the intensity of the experience relative to the personal investment, or do the technical attributes add to the experience? Is it relative?

I remember reports of adults in cultures unexposed to film who were confused when they had their first experience with film. They were confused by many conventions of the form that we take for granted: editing - changes in shot size, time compression, parallel action...

The movie theater obituary had been composed several times - with each new technological discovery affecting film exhibition - and always prematurely. The film industry itself has certainly contributed to this with its own paranoia. (Anyone who uttered the word “television” on a Hollywood movie set in the 40s was fired on the spot; Universal sued Sony over the invention of the Betamax video recorder. Today film studios make more money off TV or video than at the cinema box office).

In spite of the convenience of TV, pay-per-view, video, ti-vo, people still go to the movie theaters by the millions. Is it the collective experience?

Film is experienced alone - we usually don’t talk much while watching a film, we don’t chant, don’t boo, nor hiss (unless in Cannes). Still, we usually prefer company while engaging in this solitary experience. Even when we rent a film, we often invite friends or significant others to see it with us.

Does the collective aspect of this solitary experience resemble the experience of participating in a ritual? In this respect, how much does a movie theater resemble a temple?

The first time I saw John Carpenter’s Halloween, I was blown away by the effect the film had on its audience. It was profound and it was visceral. The viewers were so terrified that it was almost palpable. I saw the 6 o’clock show, and then decided to stay for the 8 o’clock as well. The new audience reacted in much the same way, screaming, shrieking, shouting at the screen and covering their eyes - at the same places.
Halloween kick-started the renaissance of a venerable old genre (going back via Hitchcock, Frankenstein and Dracula to The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari and way beyond). There were half a dozen sequels to Halloween alone, as well as a series of other scary sequel-spinning films. Over the following couple of decades these scary films evolved into films of gore. Horror no more, gore now.

Yet, there was not a drop of blood nor gore in the first Halloween. Only masterful manipulation of the cinematic elements and the Freudian subtext to cause a pure visceral reaction in the viewers. All of this on top of a rudimentary narrative. A strategy that only enhanced the mastery and the subtext.

Marshall McLuhan has reportedly said that the characters at the movies are like gods - big and powerful, while the characters on TV are like friends - accessible.

DIALOGUE: OF DONKEYS AND ZOOLOGISTS

The emotional, visceral and intellectual responses to art are only personal. They are ultimately in the eye of the beholder.

It seems absurd to discuss the experience of experiencing art. It is like discussing the experience of experiencing love, or fear.

In spite of how absurd it seems, we do discuss those, as we are social animals. It may even help us deal with the experiences themselves.

Art provokes what’s inside the beholder.

The force of the emotions stirred is an indication of the powerful effect the work has on the beholder. The root is often in the taboo and is triggered by the tone of the work of art.

If the beholder lies to himself/herself, then a reminder of the lie in the form of art feels like a provocation.

Art functions on a personal level. It is a proto-emotional, sur-philosophical one-on-one metacommunication.

The arts deal with the personal needs – and by extension with the social needs – of the society as reflected in the individual (as no man is an island). The plane of communication of the arts is personal: emotional, by extension philosophical, sometimes conceptual.

The social reaction to art has everything to do with society, and nothing to do with the art: Guernica, The Wild Bunch, Lolita, Damian Hirst...

A public debate of the personal experience is bastardization of the experience; yet the impulse to discuss and judge is understandable as homo sapiens is zoon politicon.
The public re-telling of the beholder’s personal experience with art is not unlike pornography.

This public re-telling may be relevant to the teller or even to some listeners, but it is irrelevant both to the work of art, and to future works of art.

The loudness of the voice debating the work of art has no correlation to the work of art. Even its relation to the experience itself is often doubtful. Yet, it has everything to do with the societal structures.

Mass-media treatment of the arts (film, but also other arts).

Picasso is said to have said: “Computers are useless. They can only give us answers.”

Society responds/reacts to art that deals with taboos.

Art is equipped (and indeed expected) to deal with taboos.

The representation of violence is a taboo in contemporary society.

The hypocritical nature of social attitude towards art is reflected in society’s attitude towards the representation of violence.

The reactions to works of art in other representative arts (painting) and narrative arts (literature) dealing with violence seem less vitriolic nowadays. This might be due to the fact that film (rightly or wrongly) appears to be more convincing. One often hears that film is the most “realistic” art.

What is realistic? It is often taken for granted that what we find convincing or what “seems” realistic or “reflecting reality” is realistic.

Is a real-time eight-hour film of a man sleeping realistic?

And what if there is a cut in the middle? Does it make it less realistic?

What if the eight-hour experience has been condensed to two hours? Five minutes? Ten seconds? Do these interventions make the film less “real”?

In film is it realistic to hear music as the hero and heroine finally consume their relationship on the beach (more music preceding this at their first encounter, perhaps)? Where is the orchestra?

Realism is just another form of stylization.

Like Expressionism or Cubism or Impressionism.

Realism is a form of stylization which convention has declared closer to our desired perception of physical reality outside the plane of the work of art (outside of the movie theater).

What is realistic changes with the times. Marlon Brando in A Streetcar Named Desire was once deemed too realistic/naturalistic. His acting today feels highly stylized, not gritty.

It is said that a graduate student once asked Daisetz T. Suzuki whether he spells reality with a small or a capital “r.” Professor Suzuki nodded, then closed his eyes, went on nodding, and - it seemed - thinking. Ten seconds passed, then a minute, then five. As it started to look that he fell asleep, he finally opened his eyes and answered the student’s question. “Yes,” he said.]
. Still, if the artist wants to have a dialogue with society or with those who have declared themselves its spokespersons, s/he is compelled to take the art critics into account. As inspiration and as the object of (sociological?) (anthropological?) analysis, not as a guide in creating art.

. The artist needs the critics as much as the donkey needs the zoologists.

. Debates about art often center on the “representation” of the world, as perceived in a work of art.

. There are several issues here:
  . The artist deals with her or his world, not with the world outside. The outside “real” world comes into play as something to be refracted through the artist and the work of art, and as the host of the final result, the work of art.
  . The way the beholder sees the world “portrayed” has more to do with the beholder’s perceived (or ideal) world, not with the aspects of the scraps of reality refracted through a work of art.

. It is more likely that a disturbing “portrayal” is disturbing or undesired not so much because it “shows” an outside world that the beholder does not like/appreciate, but rather because the “portrayal” awakens an inner world in the beholder which disturbs the beholder, upsets him/her, angers her/him, leading him/her where s/he consciously would not want to go, regardless of whether the work of art is dealing with a taboo at all or not.

. It is not that important what/how the work of art “portrays.” It is much more important what is the goal and - even more importantly - what is the tone.

. Ultimately, the dialogue about and through art is an intimate experience and it has to do with the individual’s experience of him/herself and the universe around.

**TONE, OR GOD IS BETWEEN THE LINES:**

. Thousands of painters could have painted Mona Lisa. Some possibly did. Including Leonardo. It is his touch that made her “portrayal” what matters, not the thing/person he was painting.
. Picasso and Braque painted the same still lifes in the same studio, often painting together, each on his easel. Even though the paintings were done in the same style, they are very different.
. Several directors have worked from the same scripts, most notably from the classics. Each film is distinctly different. Do Polanski’s, Welles’s and Kurosawa’s Macbeth even have similar tone? How about Zeffirelli’s and Luhrman’s Romeo and Juliet?

. So, it’s not the text.
. It is between the lines.

. Humanistic, reflective...?
An often-heard complaint about the mainstream studio and independent films is that the stories are all the same.

I don’t think that this is the main problem with the mainstream studio and independent films. I think the main problem with them is that the tone is always the same.

Open endings, mixed feelings, fractured feelings, shifting feelings, unpredictable tone, tragedy, and especially - doubts are big No-Nos.

Even though the outside (“corporate,” “committee,” “money”) control over the film works of art centers on the story, it is actually more concerned with the tone of the work. This control, however, is more subtle and involves several layers of controllers and middle-men.

If the tone is what’s between the lines, what kind of tone does the social art critic like in his/her work of art?

What about violence in art?

Does s/he like gleeful violence?

Is it supposed to be dismissive and easy? Like Arnold Schwarzenegger? (In one film, his character promises a minor movie villain that he would let him go if he gave him the information he needed; once he gets it, he throws the petit villain into an abyss, saying “I lied.”) Like Sylvester Stallone (the vehicle for the stunning transformation of the bottled-up Rambo from First Blood into a killing machine in Rambo 2 and 3)? Like Michael Bay, Simpson/Bruckheimer + Co, the Hollywood blockbusters of Ronald Regan’s 80-90s?

Sadism might be an explanation for this tone, but somehow that doesn’t seem to be the real answer, as these films seem to suggest an emptier, less affected, less involved tone than that of a sadist.

The tone of psychopaths?

It is easier for the suburban and the politically correct latter-day transfigurations of the Mayflower and Salem judgmental spirit to focus on measurable quantities like minutes than on empirically imperfect elements like tone and intention. Tone is not a scientific, nor a statistical category.

Professor Charles Harpole mentions in his lectures that in Hollywood films of the 40s and 50s, a character would shout “Darn,” after being shot in the knee. Not “Damn!” or more appropriately “Fuck!” After being shot in the knee.

Desensitizing the viewer to the impact of (both real and filmic) violence has more adverse social consequences than portraying violence in its full glory.

Types of violence: which is worse: a wounded soldier, a dead dog or an employee laid off after 20 years of service?
. How influential is film?:
. On one hand, little Roma kids coming out of the Napredok or Karpos Cinemas, jumping and air
  kick-boxing a’la Bruce Lee.
. On the other hand neither Genghis Khan nor the Inquisition watched violent films.
. Check a report that the U.S. Air Force pilots watched porn films before going on air raids.

. Press briefings from the NATO bombings in Kosovo and Serbia.
. Ditto the First Gulf War.
. The view of real death and destruction as seen from 30,000 feet eerily resembles the gleeful victory
  accomplished in a video game. A cloud of white smoke. Game over.
. Detached, fun.
. Getting desensitized to violence.

. If one hopes for a work of art to have a social function (and it is not meant to have a direct social
  function by any stretch of the imagination), then one should certainly hope that exposing violence in
  its despicable and repulsive brutality - if not absurdity - is one of the socially beneficial side-effects of
  art.
. Thus, society is better served by gross “portrayal” of violence than by sanitized studio fare. A matter
  of tone.

. What is the tone of snuff? Real-life violence. Does it begin to matter only if we know that this is
  portrayal of real violence?
. Yet, it has been mediated/transfigured to a new place/new meaning.

. The God is in the detail.
. The art is between the lines.
. It is not the “what”; it is the “how.”
TOWARDS TOTAL ART:
NEGATION AS MOVEMENT
So, the movement of art as a process of changing the relationship of creativity with reality (that which is objective).

I take that which is objective (reality) as one of the most basic elements in the creative – artistic – process because of its direct connection of the art and that which is objective.

As the second basic element in this analysis, I include creation, and I consider it as a result of the idea and presentation.

And all four (idea, creation, presentation and that which is objective) as an atomized structure of that which is called art.

In spite of the subjective skepticism towards evolution theories, especially those in arts, I do believe that changes in the art can be observed as process of movement; not \textit{a priori} as development seen in a (straight, circular, elliptic or spiral) line with a defined direction; but rather as a movement in coordinates of no dimension.

To simplify the process (and because I am partial to the aesthetics of visual art and music, which stems from my purism), I will observe the changes in the relationships of these four atoms, and with that in art, through the changes incurred in the visual arts, but with hope that the same observations one day may be extrapolated onto the movement of art in general.

1. OBJECTIVIZED ART MAKING

The tradition of realistic painting: the tendencies (if not the achievements) from prehistoric (i.e. post-syncretic) to socialist realism and hyper-realism, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, etc.

The “similarity” of the artwork to the “original” is considered important, and theories on the “objective reflection” of the reality emerge, which when analyzed more closely from an aesthetic point of view bring themselves to sophism or absurdity because of the subjection of these theories to susceptibility (which is incompatible with their basic concept).

Counter-point: “the original” is negated by the artistic creation itself, while the actual art making in this case is itself crucified between the re-creation of that which is objective and the subjectivization, as a key element that drive the art making.
2. SUBJECTIVIZED ART MAKING

Impressionists, expressionists, El Greco, Modigliani, Van Gogh, and co.

That which is objective as the starting point of the artwork (which then passes through the art processing phase) is still important; although the presentation based on similarity yields greater space for subjectivized presentation.

Counter-argument: negated similarity with the initial (objective) object.

3. SUBJECTIVE ART MAKING

Abstract and non-representative painting, Malevich, Pollock, etc.

That which is objective has been rejected as an art element of art. The roles and possibilities of the idea and presentation are released from certain confines.

Counter-argument (trump): the importance of that which is objective as a starting point of the art process is negated or diminished.

However, that which is objective is still the final segment element of the process: idea – art making – presentation. The presentation is still manifested in the physical (objective) object. It is possible to be without that which is objective only at the beginning of the art making.

4. NON-PAINTING, MEDIATING

The Dadaists, Marcel Duchamp, etc.

The art making has been reduced to idea - presentation. Creating and the object are not in the foreground of the art making, but rather the mediation of an object, which thus (by the mediating intervention of the artist) acquires artistic meaning (a urinal placed in a museum with no physical intervention).

That which is objective (the object) passes through the act: idea – art making – presentation without the classical (physically materialized) creative intervention.

Counter-argument (trump): the process of art making as a process resulting in the creation of a physical object is rejected on the account of the idea (of mediating in this case). There still is a physical object but it has only been mediated, not created or altered by the artist.
5. NON-PAINTING, NON-MEDIATING, HAPPENING

Allan Kaprow (“18 Happenings in 6 Parts”), Ben Vautier (who in 1962 moved into the display window of the Gallery One in London and lived there for fifteen days), Josef Honys (who under the title “Mystification Event” organized a fake funeral for himself, invited his friends, and then, without their knowledge - committed a suicide in 1969), Tehching Hsieh (who transforms a big part of his life into a work of art, performing simple, yet difficult projects, all of which last between one year and 12 years), Joseph Beuys (in large segment of his art), etc.

The event, meaning the presentation itself, is the artwork.

No material art is left behind after the happening.

Counter-argument: nothing is left behind the art act, yet it is precisely the material residue, which is one of the destinations of the traditional art.
6. NON-PAINTING, NON-MEDIATING, NON-HAPPENING, IMAGINING

Dr. Charles Harpole (who claims that there is a film in a film can, yet he does not show it to anyone, claiming that the act of the imagining of the film in the box is what is important).

The idea itself is the art, with no assistance of (physical) art making nor (temporal-spatial) presentation in the traditional sense of the word.

Imagining of the art act, or more to the point - of the art piece – is the piece itself.

Counter-point: there is not objective act behind the art, but only the act of imagining, which is deeply subjective and – for the first time not externalized.

Hence, it is not only that material remains are avoided but the objective act of physical (temporal-spatial) performance is also avoided.

7. NON-PAINTING, NON-MEDIATING, NON-HAPPENING, NON-IMAGINING, NEGATING

Achieving a state of non-imagining the idea of the artwork is the art act. So, a state in which there is not only absence of material remains and an objective act, but there is also no imagining of the art. A state in which there is no thought of art.

This state of absolute intentional absence of an idea of the art piece, in a situation where that which is objective, the physical creation and presentation is already eliminated – is the art itself.

Counter-point: the negation of the idea means its own negation as a being of ideas, which ultimately means negation of the art.

Potential counter-point to the counter-point: the self-negation is not necessarily the negation of the art. The art is not identified with the being (with its temporary-physical, temporal-spatial or conceptual manifestation in the art), since once created, it can exist independently of the existence of the being, which means that the negation of the existence of the being can represent a culmination – meaning, total art.

(1983)
MEN WITH
Men with machine guns made me ill-at-ease three years ago while I was making my first film, BEFORE THE RAIN.

The film consists of three love stories, all ending in violence brought on by ethnic hatred. It’s about heavy expectation of war, and takes place in Macedonia, a nation which had just declared its independence from war-torn Yugoslavia. For more than seventy years, Macedonia was within the same country as the areas now awash in blood, like Bosnia and Croatia. Yet, Macedonia was the only part of what used to be Yugoslavia not involved in this war; nearly a miracle, since two Balkan wars this century were fought precisely over her.

So, I felt ill at ease putting men with machine guns in my film: there were none in Macedonia at the time. While writing the screenplay, during preproduction, shooting and editing, one question haunted me: am I actually portraying my country in a funny mirror? Is my hardworking father seen as a drunk, even in a piece of fiction?

I was relieved when the film was applauded there, even beating all box office records. After a few viewers - both at home and abroad - asked me why there are men with machine guns in the film, I told them that BEFORE THE RAIN is not a documentary, that I would not dare make a documentary about a theme as complex as the Balkan war, that there is tension in Macedonia, but no men with machine guns, that it’s a metaphor, that the story could take place in any country (including, but not limited to Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Russia or the U.S.), and that it should serve as a warning, not a testimony. And indeed, the Bosnian carnage went on, but over the mountain - in Macedonia - not even a single bullet was fired.

The following year I was in Bologna. The Cineteca was showing a retrospective of my works (the men-with-machine-guns film, plus music videos and spots I’ve directed), when on CNN I saw a body next to a burnt-out black Mercedes on a cobblestone road. The road was Macedonia Street, the main street in the capital. The body used to be the President’s driver. The President was in a hospital, shrapnel in his brain, his right eye gone.

At the press conference after the screening, the Italian press asked me about the assassination attempt on President Gligorov. While answering, I realized that this was an event so unexpected, bold and simply unreal, that it could never make it as a screenplay. This was no simple men with machine guns. Life employs methods bolder and cockier than fiction.

Peace went on.
Last month I was in Gostivar, a town some fifty kilometers from Skopje, the Macedonian capital. On the main street, riot police with machine guns stopped us. A few armored cars and many cops were baking in the scorching sun. The town was unusually quiet, even for a July day in Macedonia. I saw bullet holes in a tin roof. At one point, tears filled my eyes, and my throat started to sting. Tear gas from yesterday.

The previous day, units of the riot police stormed the city hall and took down the state flags of Albania and Turkey, which the local authorities displayed in front of the building. A few hours later, a crowd gathered, rioting began, then erupted into an armed conflict. With both sides shooting, according to reports, three people died, and many - including cops - were wounded. The police were enforcing the state law and the Supreme Court ruling on the use of flags in front of municipalities in Macedonia. The protesters, considering the Albanian state flag a symbol of their minority, felt offended and reacted with rocks, bars, Molotov cocktails and bullets.

The day we visited, two of the casualties were buried, as peace went on. In BEFORE THE RAIN there is a scene of a double funeral. This real one I didn’t see. I was thinking about how difficult it would be to write a realistic screenplay about a car bomb assassination on the head of state in the main street in the middle of the day, and about a bloody conflict over the use of flags.

I was thinking how to reduce the complexity of this, and many other realities to two hours. It felt that the truth which one film talks about could only be personal truth, the author’s truth, told with fictional dialogue, actors, make up, repeated takes and music. So, when men with machine guns parade on film, they are only narrators of that personal author’s truth, not men with machine guns from the real world.

There’s plenty of those on CNN.
Milcho Manchevski
FICTION
The Ghost of my Mother
THE GHOST OF MY MOTHER

1.
Around 6:30 the winter ended.

2.
Have you heard the argument?
Is there no offense in't?

3.
MOTHER
When you're anemic even the mosquitos won't bite you
and your mother's not here
gliding slowly across the sky, leaving a white trail
in a big chair turned upside down while they're cleaning around you
and you get a big marble...
... as the phone line is your umbilical cord.
...and they all talked about Joujou’s orgasm.

Smells like summer
mild soft draft
in which small scent hovers
Smells like summer

Superman & Robin Hood are still alive in Hollywood.
A folk song on Radio Ljubljana
19-20. 6. 83

On October 21, 83, around 4 AM I had this morbid dream. It was so scary I woke up. There were some people from life after death. I was afraid to go back to sleep, but also to get up. I started reading a book. I read a chapter from "Belgrade for Beginners" by Bogdan Tirnanic. I knew it was an upbeat book and it would cheer me up. Then I fell asleep.
21. 10. 83
The object of war is not simply to kill, but to convince the survivors to submit.

He kissed her and said:
- "Politics",
like the newspaper.

&

„The question is,” said Alice, „whether you can make words mean so many different things.“ „The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, „which is to be master - that’s all.”

UP TO 103

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TASTES OF ROOMS

Some strange tastes of rooms come over me and pull me back to the childhood of huge things.

&

TOOTH, MOTH

What fear is so big to fill up a whole apartment?

&

Why does every room have to have twin-wardrobes?

The attempt failed, but the autopsy gave interesting results.

&

Numerous substances provoke bitter taste in humans.

From a paper presented at the 22nd Congress of the Anthropological Society of Yugoslavia
SUMMER STREET

Windows open outwards like butterfly wings.
And people between them swimming in the hot air.

There are two sects in this religion. According to one there is no God, while according to the other there is no God.

THE MANIFESTO OF THE CONCEPTUALISTS

This is the manifesto of the conceptualists.


Precisely with deference to these higher goals, an exceptional, insightful, highly original psychoanalytic study by Hugo Klain The War Neurosis of the Yugoslavians, in which the author analyzes the behavior of our veterans since 1943 and after the war had the bitter fate of most critical works:
With a shriek birds flee across the black sky, people are silent, my blood aches from waiting.

I SAW A NUN BEGGING

I saw a nun begging.
God, I saw a nun begging.

With a poem
instead of sperm.

Nobody’s young no more!

Sometimes, at night, as I type in the empty apartment, my back to the door, I have a feeling there’s someone behind me. Just like now.
22.

I am different.
I can’t stand pain.
Pain hurts me.

23.

Bureaucracy is a new ruling stratum, 12-15% of the population. Its main concern is to preserve the Status Quo at home and abroad. It favors change only if necessary to preserve its powers.

24.

NO POEMS

No poems
for this world
on this day
of empty P.O. Boxes
and C.O.D. air.

5. 4. 81

- I like the image of the world as forgotten by all, as waiting for a message that someone/something cares about it.
- It leaves a lot to your imagination.
- I like its simplicity, more images perhaps.
- Good rhythm. More poetic tension.
- Very different, but creative/imaginative.
- Probably the weirdest poem in the world, but I can relate to it.
- It makes me want to tear you into a hundred pieces and mail you C.O.D.
MARCUS' PORTRAIT

I hate sentimental novels, but Marcus' mother really died.

The entrance to our place was on the outside, up wooden stairs leading to a mini-porch, and through a screen door to a living room, then into two rooms, one of which was too small, and the other one on the way to the bathroom.

Marcus lived next door. He was letting us borrow coffee cups from his garage. His father was famous because he'd made the sculptures in front of the library, on the little hill, where I was taking pictures, not even knowing they were by Marcus' father. Marcus was helping me write the credits for my film - I wrote them with purple crayon on the back of the house like graffiti, then shot them, but didn't use them, I wanted something slicker.

Marcus was painting, and we were doing all kindsa things. There was also this lunatic who was following the girls and whistling after them, plus got inside their place. Even I saw him once. The house was packed. There was stuff belong to all of us. Two slept in the living room, two with a dog in the little room, and the two of us in the room on the way to the bathroom. I woke up and saw his pale face at the door. I thought I was sleeping, so I fell back to bed, but I got up right away. He was gone, but I knew he been there.

Marcus was painting his mother's portrait. I didn't like the portrait. Marcus was letting us use his phone. When I was looking for my lost passport, I used Marcus' phone a lot. Once even my not-meant-to-be professor was visiting with Marcus. Once later he asked me what's happened with Marcus, since he used to be friends with the parents, and now the boy was all alone. Frank Paine's question surprised me.

Marcus had black curly hair and blue eyes. He was, actually, a good friend, but who was noticing that then. I was cramming film theory.

These weirdos lived downstairs. One of them was working himself to death, had an eagle-nose and moss for beard. He was a perfectionist and very delicate. We thought he was a virgin. The other one was even weirder. He was a regular guy, but always sorta smiling and tricky. At one point they had a fight, so they cooked every man for himself. Neither one ate your typical steak and veggies with milk.

I think Marcus knew them, but no way I can remember what their relationship was like. We were using their phone, too.

Marcus didn't finish the canvas with his mother's portrait. They knew she was gonna die, but I wasn't taking that seriously.

Later, Tori hung the unfinished portrait over the window, it fit nicely, but I still didn't like it.

11. 4. 1984
Just how serious this activity can be is seen from the Black Happening of the poet Josef Honys (1919-1969), who arranged a fake funeral for himself as a "Mystification Event," invited his friends, and then in fact committed suicide unknown to the friends (23).

(23) ________________

Dialectical materialism, in the heat of the day, draws a pickax from its raincoat.

SPIRAL JETTY

The work "Spiral Jetty," which is under water today, achieved mythical status. The jetty represents a work of art, while the film and the essay accompanying it are documentary-critical works. Their existence creates the context for "Jetty," and in a broader sense opens up the potential for this piece to function as a work of art.

18. 6. 84
Eternity’s a Five Year Plan:

LOVE

I get up in the afternoon and light a cigarette which I’d quit long ago, while still in Skopje.
It’s some kinda midnight. I smoke and get high in half an hour.
I watch MTV.
All I want is to watch MTV.
I smoke and get high.
I’m most active after midnight.
My life’s dream is to watch MTV.
I watch MTV best when I get high and at night.
Sometimes I drink. Beer or gin. Instead of smoking. MTV remains. A constant.
I love MTV.
Sometimes, somewhere in the background, a desire to describe my love for MTV sparkles. Fortunately, that’s where it remains.
Phew!

17. 6. 1984, Skopje

NIGHT MISSION

Around the battery there was barbed wire, and a guard behind it. The leader signaled, and a partisan ran out of the column. With a knife, he accurately hit the German, who fell down without a sound. With quick strides, they ran to the wires, cut them and entered. Suddenly, a machine gun sounded. After the general surprise, and after a few comrades’ deaths, everyone ducked. The machine gun was mowing down.
Maria was mad at Nadia. If you didn’t know them, you’d think Nadia was a monster. But she’s only Maria’s niece.

Among other sins, Nadia had told Maria that when Maria dies Nadia will take her tea set. The set was colorful, for tea, in white, green and gold.

Maria was always saying that it should be the way some very smart man had said, put the graveyard on the square, so everyone knows what’s coming to them. Maria was seventy plus.

Nadia was thirtyish. And she had no children. Neither did Maria. She didn’t take her tea set. Because she died first.

Nadia died first. At the funeral in St. Nicolas, during the meal after the burial, there was a couch fixed like a coffin or like a corpse, and on the chest there was a small pot of water. Or, was it boiled wheat? Like hands folded on the chest.

I think Maria was at the funeral as well. Or maybe not.

What matters is, she kept her tea set.

I took it recently. It was dusty.

She wasn’t buried on the square. But, at least she kept the tea set till the end.
Twelve Years Ago
Twelve Years Ago

Twelve years ago my aunt tells me that my father’s life depends on the yogurt I should buy. I walk out into the summer street and let the dust get in between my toes. In my empty neighborhood, filled only with a summer afternoon, across the blacktop I see a girl angrily leaving a man, who stays on the edge of the park and mockingly calls for her to come back. Trying to forget, she turns to me, and I show her the way. As we walk, I timidly place my hand under her mini skirt. I don’t touch her, my hand hovers there, in the air. Only, at one point, the tips of my fingers touch her flesh. She turns and gives me a glance with no reaction.

I take her by the hand and lead her home. We enter the green yard of my yellow house, as my hand is under her mini skirt, and my father and aunts on the ground floor. We enter the shadow with a smell of basement, I lock the downstairs door, and we climb the stairs. Before me, she enters the apartment of lukewarm air between the open doors. In the foyer, she turns to me and, wordless, takes off her panties. Then the T-shirt, and the bra, under which white tits come out, hemmed in by brown skin, that other people could’ve seen too. Finally, she takes off the brown mini skirt as well, under which I discover a cunt - hair. I look at the cunt. She has strong legs. Sits down and spreads them. Offers her hand, while I’m discovering her. I ride, rub my bone against her mound above the cunt, and she is my sister, while the aunts, distressed, gather downstairs in front of the door locked from inside with a silver aluminum key, and try to restore me to the time twelve years ago when my father is supposed to be dying.
My Grandf
My Grandfather

It had snowed. I made a snowball (probably in the backyard) and went home (probably running up the stairs) because I had an idea. I had an idea to run into my grandfather’s room. He was sitting on the bed to the right and reading a newspaper, probably yesterday’s “Politika,” which he would get from my uncle downstairs. He was bent like a donut over the paper. I ran in and threw the snowball at him. Bull’s eye. When I’d played with the children, it was a big deal to hit somebody, and bull’s eye was to hit someone on the head (just as I - many years later, an adult already playing in the street - hit the girl who was then in love with Cuba, yet a couple of years later she bears a son to a man from Stip). The bull’s eye with my grandfather was really a bull’s eye - the snowball hit him in the head. More precisely, in the forehead, it got in between his glasses and his eyes and got crammed there. The glasses were old, thick, plastic and held with scotch tape. The space between my grandfather’s eyes and glasses filled with snow.

My grandfather didn’t say a word. He just took off his glasses, slowly removed the snow, then wiped off his eyes, then glasses.

All without a word. He probably continued to read.
Flight

At the point when he double-hovers - between the dream and the reality, between the sky and the earth - he gets scared.

He falls asleep on a plane.

The rational trust disappears, transparent at first, then more so, then replaced by a simple, sound and wrong estimate: I am 30,000 feet above the firm ground in a steel container, and it has a beginning and end.

The fear is both simple and plain.

So, here, in the leather seats of first class, half-asleep (this “half” is very important), he very tangibly faces his fear.

Of death, not of flying. Of nothingness, non-being.

The avalanche is so simple that he’s surprised he can stop it in reality: happy he is not, smiling even less, and only the worst half of his life is left, the one he will crown with soiled underwear, red eyes, hairy ears, helplessness (desperate helplessness, because there’s no tomorrow), people running away from him, from his smell and from the mistress he carries on his shoulders because they don’t want to watch her swinging as she rides on top of him.

Amid the avalanche, he remembers he doesn’t have the stomach nor the time for children, and there’s some vague sadness in that.

Vague, since he never wanted to have children.

Then he remembers his older colleague with a bald head. They are standing in the parking lot in front of the hotel, 3-4 in the morning, and he feels free or intimate enough to ask about children. (Strange, he always asks older colleagues whether one should have children. And when.) Or, perhaps, the slightly hunchbacked colleague offered himself, said it on his own. He said he was sorry he didn’t provide that pleasure to his wife. Now, he already likes behaving like an old man, he walks like an old man, talks like an old man, likes being an old man - as a mutual co-worker once said.

The next day he is awake and on the ground. Because of the jet-lag, he’s got a bit of dream in his reality, but pleasant, like a cloud in the eye.

And then he remembers that he’ll fuck with women most beautiful, that he’ll tenderly touch their faces with the tips of his fingers and with his lips, that he’ll tell them from the depth of his heart they are beautiful, that he won’t believe his luck he is with such most beautiful, slim, dark beauties - a deer in their walk, that as he feels their long, endless legs on his ribs, hips, thighs and shoulders, as he turns around to see whether they have straightened, or hold their feet at a 90-degree angle, as he rubs their torsos with his, leaving seven curly little hairs on their white tits, as they laugh with gusto and as he feels their insides on the tip of his dick - he is touching the sky.
One of the best 1,000 movies ever made. (The New York Times)
One of the greatest first features in the history of cinema. (Annette Insdorf)
One of the most important films of the decade. (Ann Kibbey)

Milcho Manchevski’s work acts as a provocative counterpoint to complacency. It is in its ability to challenge the viewer, and open a discourse not only on film, but on our relationship to the complex construction of the social and historical fabric in which we reside, that its power truly lies. (Conor McGrady)

This book is a mid-career comprehensive resume of sorts about one of the most original and innovative contemporary filmmakers and artists. It contains ten essays, a wide selection of production notes, storyboards, letters, reviews and interviews, as well as Manchevski’s own theoretical essays and fiction.