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SCENES JOURNAL

The screenplay dreams of becoming images.

Scenes Journal was founded as a celebration of the screenplay as a unique form. It is a film journal with a focus on screenwriters and their process. By publishing short screenplays and excerpts from longer pieces, we hope to shed light onto the work of emerging screenwriters while also featuring established and award-winning writers too.

The screenwriter is a poet, distilling action to its most crucial description, yet, at the same time, obliged to maintain the intrigue of the reader to a higher level than that of a novel. Therefore, while the screenplay is not intrinsically literature, it cannot be simply a blueprint if it's to do its job. The writer must treat the form as literature, in its own right, in order to conjure something that can emotionally convince those with the means to produce it. The screenplay must be both a practical working document and affecting as poetry simultaneously.

Scenes Journal, founded by independent filmmakers who seek to bring the focus of film back to great storytelling and writers, is more than just a journal – it's a movement towards a collaborative style of filmmaking where the story, and the writer, are at the forefront.

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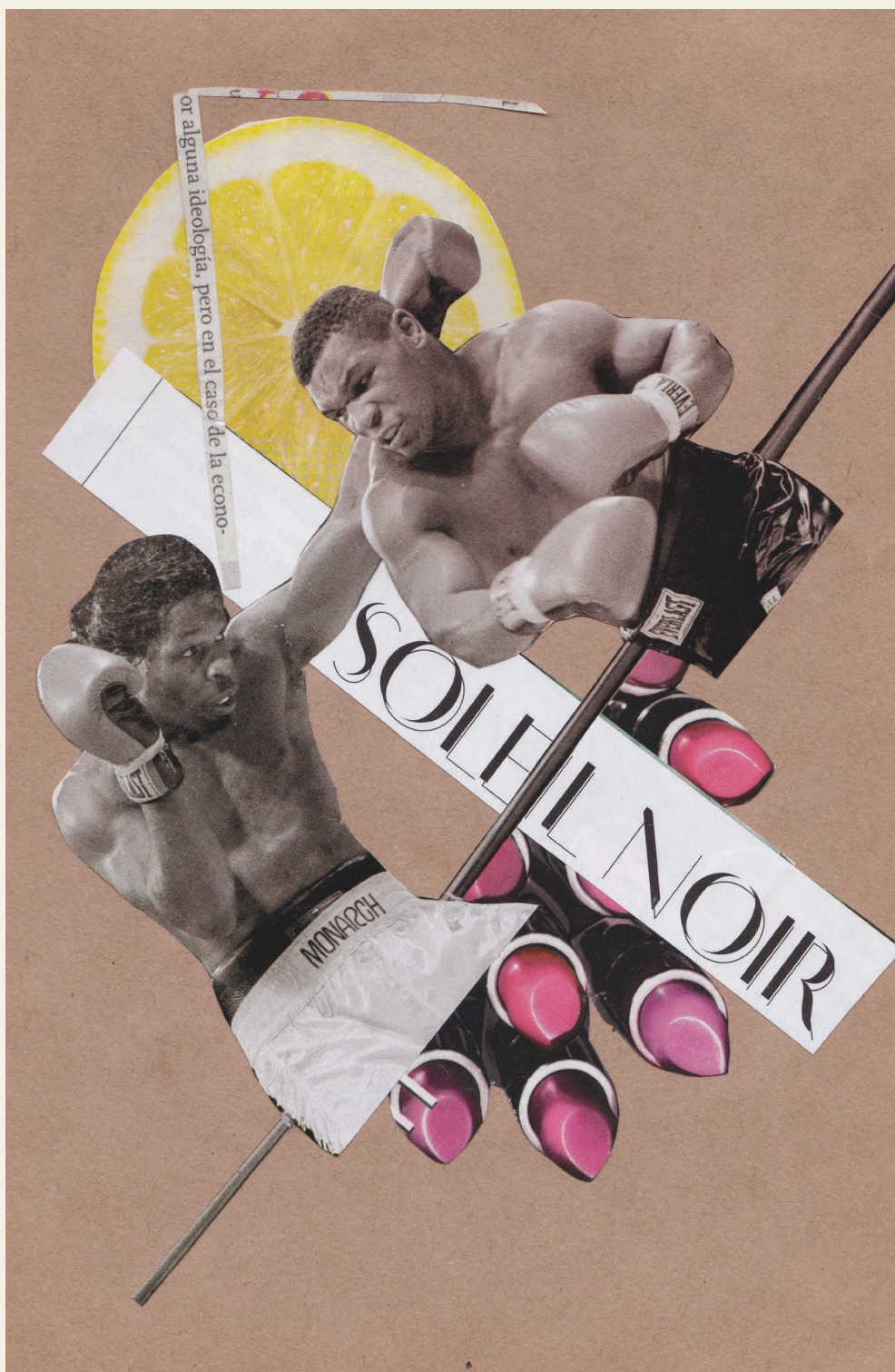
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Soleil noir by Virgile Demoustier

EDITORIAL

We've become swallowed by our devices and blinded by our own self-righteous identities. Globalisation has peaked and our democratic societies are tearing at the seams. Most of us coexist in two different worlds, with two different voices or more, between which we find ourselves fluidly shifting - sometimes changing our opinions in the blink of an eye. Transcultural hybridity is everywhere. Not only are cultural definitions blurred, but the binary language of gender, race and politics no longer sufficient define our identities with today. Yet despite the blurring of lines, we still continue to see fences everywhere. Amidst the growing so-called freedom, we're still fundamentally fractured.

Moving images are the most powerful weapon of manipulation governments have in their arsenals to turn the tide of popular opinion. They can rewrite history, affect the present or inspire the future. Whoever thought that our infinite scrolling of memes, viral videos and capsule political documentaries could be turned into one of the most effective tools of propaganda we've ever seen? Facebook algorithms are far more dangerous to us than targeted advertising could ever be, and film is only slowly following suit with the rise of streaming giant Netflix, a company that is removing gatekeepers and simply giving people plenty of what they want: whether it be mind-numbing drama or in-depth non-fiction. It would appear that we're all living in our own realities, conjured online from data on what we like, who we follow and what we watch.

Cinema, television and internet videos have all become blurred into one medium; entertainment channeled through the preferred-size of rectangle of the consumer, of you and I. Cinema is no longer just for the cinema, and it's been this way for a while. But instead of fighting against that, we have the unique opportunity, and obligation, to write, shoot and exhibit films that act as a countermeasure to the disinformation campaigns of those that wish to push us apart and keep us from making progress.

This issue includes interviews with Hossein Amini, Josephine Decker, Joel Potrykus and Ioana Uricaru - all writers and filmmakers, who, in some way or another, came from outside of the system and approach film through a different perspective. We speak to each of them about their progress, breaking into larger audiences, and the divides that they portray in their films. Furthermore, it includes scripts which relate to the divides in our society - from gender divides, to political ones, and physical walls separating us - all these scripts take these divides and demonstrate them through a human and individual perspective.

- Editors

and even as he does his worst. It's an odd, but effective, disjunction.

One character stands out, a decent man bent on justice: an African American, Nate (Jay Pharoah). He confirms the rule that in this film, the scriptwriters have stopped at no cliché. There's an accumulation of tropes in the film, and one which is specific to Nate: that there is a certain kind of nice guy who always dies in a film, that an African American man is inevitably killed off, sooner or later. Nate's fate is foretold, too, in Potter's *Thriller*. Nate will die. Cruelly so. Who does he die for? Whose gaze is at work?

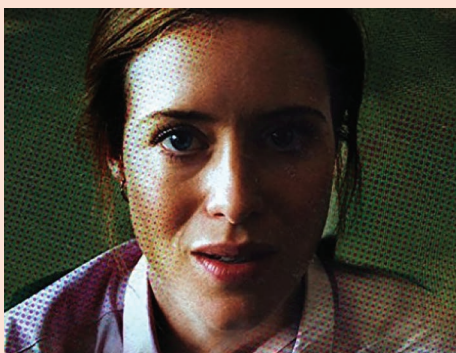
The graveyard of so-called secondary characters continues to fill up. Whose gaze does *Unsane* privilege? Not Sawyer's. Not Nate's. Not Violet's. All three remain Other, in a way the stalker does not, because the voyeurism, and the cruelty of the narrative, overlap with the stalker's own actions in the story. David's wish to control Sawyer, and his disregard for others' lives, parallel the film's own arc.

Sadism is a recurring theme in *Unsane* – for the benefit of whoever it is in the audience, who sees this as their particular cup of tea. During the press screening at the Berlinale, audience reactions to such moments were more of tea spluttered than savoured. And that's because *Unsane* is an exploitation film, and of a particular type, where the stalker seems to have a greater moral innocence than his prey. It is also a narrative where, in the pursuit of that prey, ancillary characters are dispensed with, predictably – a mentally ill woman, an African American man, a mother.

One can imagine that a convincing, gripping thriller – and *Unsane* is devised as a thriller – can work without resorting to the narrative devices which Sally Potter, in *Thriller*, had denounced: that it is unnecessary to systematically diminish, or to kill off, a particular type of person – the so-called Other – in order to provide narrative interest and pleasure. Yet in *Unsane*, the diminishing or elimination of the usual Other is an un-dissociable part of its fabric. The stalker's point of view remains pervasive, remains at the heart of the film's way of seeing, even when the lens is not expressly

adopting the stalker's gaze.

The final sequence, Sawyer again taken by the impulse to kill, is reminiscent – in spirit – of the last moments of *Fatal Attraction*. It's that gaze again, a throwback to the very thing that *Thriller* had denounced: the Other will always remain the adversary.



DUST

BY MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

EXT. QUEENS CEMETERY, DAY

The Manhattan skyline way in BACKGROUND, as if an oversized replica of the tombstones in front.

Edge is sniffing around a newly-tenanted grave. Checks out the little stones on the tomb, scrutinises a bouquet, then another one, can't decide.

INT. HOSPITAL, DAY

Both bouquets in hand, Edge walks down the hallway like a terrified big bunny.

Peeks into rooms.

Dodges dense traffic: nurses, gurneys, wheelchairs, doctors....

Seen on a B/W surveillance monitor. A security guard – and Edge looks the other way. Changes directions, turns around the corner swiftly.

Comes face to face with two large penguins: nuns in habits.

Smiles goofily.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, DAY

Poor.

Two beds: an OLD MAN and:

Tube world: IV, bottles, oxygen...

Wires, charts, machines...

Monotone beeps on monitors.

Somewhere at the heart of it all: Angela's skeleton. Sad, warmed-over.

Edge steps up to her, places the bouquets on the night table, starts to leave, then notices the "REST IN PEACE" funeral card still attached to the flowers, rips it.

EDGE

Need your gold. Real bad.

(gold coin in hand)

You got more where this came from?

The monitor beeps back at him indifferently.

EDGE

Hope you feel better.

(then)

Saved your life. You owe me one.

The old man from the neighbouring bed looks him over openly.

EDGE

You don't have it.

The passionless monitor keeps mocking him. He turns around to leave.

EDGE

(angry)

Rot in hell!

Exits.

ANGELA (O.S.)

(whispers)

You rot in hell!

He runs back.

Her eyes are open.

EDGE

(delighted)

Fuck, you alive, prune!

ANGELA

(whispers painfully)

No, I'm dead, and you're God.

She's still a sorry picture. Tubes in nostrils.

EDGE

Where's your gold?

ANGELA

(sniffs, smiles sadly)

This a hospital?

EDGE

You had a heart attack.

(milking it)

I saved your life!

ANGELA

Well, thank you so much, cupcake. Got my entire life in front of me.

He shows the gold coin.

EDGE

I need the rest. Real bad.

She stares at him.

EDGE

Where is it?

Silence.

EDGE

I need it!

Nothing.

EDGE

You got kids?

As tears well up in her eyes.

ANGELA

Would I talk to you if I did?

He is sorry. She stares at him.

EDGE

What are you lookin' at?

She swallows hard.

ANGELA

Gotta remember your face, cupcake. You the one to bury me.

He spins around in utter frustration, kicks the oxygen tank, hurts his toe.

EDGE

Oh, fuck!

OLD GUY

Shhhh!

Edge comes to Angela, looms over her.

EDGE
(hisses)
I could strangle you.

ANGELA
Good. Then you could go to my place an'
get the gold.

He is furious.

ANGELA
(cynical)
No! Don't tell me... You have already tried
and came back to tell me where you found it...
'cause gold is cold.

He looks around, stewing.

ANGELA
OK, sit down.

He sighs: she is mellowing out, will give him the money.
Sits down, expectantly.
She smiles at him.

ANGELA
Anyways... Back to Luke...

Edge clamps his head between his knees not to scream, then slowly looks
up at her, exasperated.

ANGELA
He's been trying to run away for two years,
and there he is now, gun at his brother's
forehead, surrounded by two hundred Turkish
soldiers ready to blast the heck out of him,
send him back to his Maker.

EXT. SHEEPFOLD, DAY

And, indeed: Luke has been surrounded.

Two hundred barrels looking down at him; foreheads wrinkled, fingers

itchy...
Two hundred.

Sweat drips down their necks.
Smells of dust.
A big, old-fashioned machine-gun.

Luke's gun pressed against Elijah's forehead, the soldiers' aimed at both
of them.
Clicking.

Luke stares into Elijah's eyes.

LUKE
You followed me?

ELIJAH
Two years, Luke.

LUKE
Shit on me.

ELIJAH
Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord,
how oft shall my brother sin against me,
and I forgive him?

LUKE
(exasperated)
Oh, shut up, ugly country coonass sonovabitch!

The soldiers glance at The Captain.
Itchy fingers.

EDGE (V.O.)
Yo, wait! You says twenty yesterday.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, DAY

She is looking at him in wonder.

EDGE
Yesterday... you says twenty Arabs surround
the fucker.

ANGELA

Hey! It's my story, I'll make it two thousand
if I want to. And they Turkish, not Arab.

EDGE

Why the fuck am I lis'enin' to your fuckin' story?

ANGELA

So you know where to bury me.

He sticks his broken thumb in front of her nose.

EDGE

They'll fuckin' bury me first!

ANGELA

Call the pigs...

(giggles)

Thumbalina!

EDGE

(really angry now)

Don't fuck with me!

She stares at him in silence.

ANGELA

Fine. You can pitch in, too. Twenty.

EXT. SHEEPFOLD, DAY

And, indeed again:

the two hundred soldiers who had their rifles pointed at Luke and Elijah...
they start disappearing.

ANGELA (V.O.)

Twenty it is.

Just like that!

Into thin air.

A soldier vanishes, his horse stays.

Another soldier stares at his canteen -- as it disappears -- then, he
himself is gone.

A soldier - his gun still aiming at Luke - glances from the corner of his
eye, afraid to face the fact that - behind him - two soldiers disappear.
Then he disappears, too.

Two here, five there, a dozen over there...

As about one-hundred-eighty vanish.

Only twenty remain.

ANGELA (V.O.)

Happy now?

EDGE (V.O.)

Guess so.

IORGO

(subtitled)

There were two hundred. I swear to
God, there were two hundred.

Twenty's still more than one. And, they look dangerous.

Glancing at The Captain.

Clanking and clicking...

... then stilted silence..

Luke glances back and forth, a large drop of sweat rolling down his temple.

A fly buzzes in the heat.

ELIJAH

Am I my brother's keeper?

LUKE

Shut up!

Iorgo starts laughing like crazy.

Vicious, rambunctious, animal laughter.

LUKE

(continuing; to Iorgo)

Shut up, you spineless miracle!

Iorgo laughs.

LUKE (cont'd)

Shut up!

Iorgo doesn't.

Lightning strikes again: swiftly, before anyone can see what's happening, Luke reacts. It's stronger than him: he swivels around and drills a hole between Iorgo's eyes.

Blood sprays the soldier behind, as lifeless Iorgo bounces and lands in the dust.

Silence.

The Captain is shocked.

So is Elijah.

The soldiers look back and forth. Confused.

Luke glances back and forth, swivels his gun to The Captain, then to the soldiers. Face to face.

MUSTAFA, the young soldier sprayed with blood starts wiping off the goo. Grimaces, disgusted.

The two soldiers flanking him start laughing. Spontaneously. Point at him and laugh. Like children.

Luke stares at them, then at The Captain.
The Captain is angry, but softens up.
Smiles.

Then - he starts laughing, too.

The other soldiers look at The Captain and follow suit.

Luke starts laughing, too.

Even Mustafa starts laughing.

Everybody is laughing, as the corpse's leg twitches involuntarily. A reflex. Full-scale party time.

Violent rap MUSIC floods the scene (v.o.).

EDGE (V.O.)

Yo! Cut it out!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, DAY

Edge is carried away by the fable, shouting down at the BLARING MUSIC out the window.

EDGE

(screams)

She talkin' here!

INSERT, STREET, HIGH ANGLE, EDGE'S P.O.V. FROM THE HOSPITAL WINDOW

Cars way underneath. A BLARING car stereo: the windshield throbbing with the bludgeoning bass.

BACK TO SCENE

Edge closes the window with a sheepish smile.
Apologetically clears his throat.

EDGE

I hate that track.

ANGELA

Yeah, me too.

(beat)

Luke and Elijah. Nothing but truth, cross my heart.

She does, and then -- clutches her chest in pain. Chest heaves, shakes. Another heart attack.

Edge leaps up in terror.

EDGE

Wait! Where's the gold?

She stops, wiggles her eyebrows, stretches a wide grin.

ANGELA

April fool.

EDGE

(sulking)

I ain't no fool, bitch!

ANGELA

It ain't April either, you fool. It's November.

EDGE

What you got to do with this stupid story?

ANGELA

You'll see at the end. Out with the gum!

EDGE

What?

She extends her hand.
He spits it out.

ANGELA

Anyways, the Turks love good blood-letting, too.

EXT. SHEEPFOLD, DAY

Everybody is laughing. Except Elijah. The corpse's leg keeps twitching.

The Captain is laughing to tears. Luke is laughing, apprehensive.

The Captain waves for him to go.

THE CAPTAIN

(subtitled)

Go! Go!

(to his soldiers)

Let him go!

They lower their guns. Luke can't believe it, then sharp pain strikes in his chest, he glances back at his brother and backhands him with the pistol.

Elijah flies off and collapses on the ground, unconscious.

THE CAPTAIN (cont'd)

(subtitled)

You are something!

The Captain laughs even more, waves for Luke to go.

Luke holsters his gun, sighs, worn down. His wounds hurt.

Milcho Manchevski is a New York-based Macedonian-born film director, writer, photographer and artist. His Academy-award nominated film Before the Rain (1994) won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, FIPRESCI and Independent Spirit, along with 30 other awards.

Manchevski has directed four other features - Bikini (2017), Mothers (2010), Shadows (2007) and Dust (2001), an episode of HBO's The Wire and 50 short forms.

