



Ann Kibbey

# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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),<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 Suitors*<sup>4</sup> 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*,<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> To understand the ideology underlying this belief, in

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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.<sup>7</sup> 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.

filmmaker for *Before the Rain*, his first major film.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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

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

It's raining, heavily, over the top of one of the jagged, snow-capped peaks of the Balkan mountains. The rain is cold, the air is thick with humidity. The rain is the only sound that breaks the silence of the mountains. The rain is the only sound that breaks the silence of the mountains. The rain is the only sound that breaks the silence of the mountains.



Manchevski's first film, 'Before the Rain', is a masterpiece of the Balkan cinema.

Manchevski is quiet, but his eyes are full of fire. He is a man of few words, but his eyes are full of fire. He is a man of few words, but his eyes are full of fire. He is a man of few words, but his eyes are full of fire. He is a man of few words, but his eyes are full of fire.

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Spettacoli  
Il Mercoledì

## "Prima della pioggia" nei cinema italiani L'anno di Manchevski

Il regista macedone (Leone d'oro) sta conquistando il mondo



Il regista macedone Manchevski, a sinistra, in alto, una scena del film.

Il regista macedone Manchevski, a sinistra, in alto, una scena del film.

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Corriere  
Il Mercoledì

## Worte, Gesichter, Bilder

Der mazedonische Filmemacher Milcho Manchevski und sein phänomenales Kino-Debut „Vor dem Regen“

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FILM  
& TELEVISION • VIDEO

## BEFORE THE RAIN

BEFORE THE RAIN

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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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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."<sup>13</sup> A "fable" rather than a historical or journalistic work, the film is "not a documentary about contemporary Macedonia."<sup>14</sup> 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.

12 Manchevski, "Rainmaking," pp. 132,130.

13 In Horton, p. E5.

14 Manchevski, "Rainmaking," p. 131

poetry.<sup>15</sup> 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.”<sup>16</sup> 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.”<sup>17</sup>

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.<sup>18</sup> 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.

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.<sup>19</sup>*

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 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 regnið

**PERLUR**  
 ÚRVALSMYNDIR  
 FRÁ HÁSKÓLABÍÓI



Meistarlega byggð, uggvænleg og ógnarfögur.  
 \*\*\*\*Ö.H.T. Rás 2

Frábær mynd, sem spinnur órlagavef persóna og  
 atburða í slóandi stríðsádeilu og minnir á til hvers er  
 var og hver sem við erum. \*\*\*\*Mbl.  
 ...övenjuglæsileg kvikmynd. \*\*\*1/2DV

í Feneyjum 1994  
 verðlauna  
 árin 1995.

HÁSKÓLABÍÓ

Þessi mynd er um fjölskyldu sem býr í  
 borginni Skopje í Júgoslavíu 1994  
 og er myndin af Júgoslavíu  
 sem hefur orðið til áherslu. Þetta  
 hefur verið áhrifamikill  
 mynd sem hefur verið sýnd  
 á flestum stórum myndum.  
 Þetta er mynd um Júgoslavíu  
 sem hefur verið sýnd á flestum  
 stórum myndum. Þetta er mynd  
 um Júgoslavíu sem hefur verið  
 sýnd á flestum stórum myndum.  
 Þetta er mynd um Júgoslavíu  
 sem hefur verið sýnd á flestum  
 stórum myndum. Þetta er mynd  
 um Júgoslavíu sem hefur verið  
 sýnd á flestum stórum myndum.

**Fyrir regnið**

Stereo

**Fyrir regnið**

**PERLUR**

**Fyrir regnið**

Stereo

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 reprised 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.<sup>20</sup> 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.

カトリン  
カートリッジ

レード  
セルベツジア

グレゴワール  
コラン

天才ミルチヨ・マンチエフスキーが放つ衝撃の映像美

マケドニア—ロンドン、交錯する愛は時を超えてめぐり逢う……



Before the Rain

マケドニアの山村に暮らす少年ミルチヨ・マンチエフスキーは、ある日、ロンドンの少年グレッグ・コランと出会う。二人は互いに惹かれ合い、愛を育んでいく。しかし、二人の愛は、国境と戦争の壁に阻まれる。本作は、マケドニアの山村を舞台にした、少年の成長と愛の物語。監督ミルチヨ・マンチエフスキーは、本作で第67回アカデミー賞外国語映画賞にノミネートされた。本作は、マケドニアの山村を舞台にした、少年の成長と愛の物語。監督ミルチヨ・マンチエフスキーは、本作で第67回アカデミー賞外国語映画賞にノミネートされた。

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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.<sup>21</sup> 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

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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

By Richard R. Woodward

Mikhail Mamonov of New York has been an unlikely star of the New York Times. He is a Russian immigrant who has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991.

After the story, a Russian immigrant of New York has been an unlikely star of the New York Times. He is a Russian immigrant who has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991.

The Russian immigrant of New York has been an unlikely star of the New York Times. He is a Russian immigrant who has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991.

After the story, a Russian immigrant of New York has been an unlikely star of the New York Times. He is a Russian immigrant who has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991.

The Russian immigrant of New York has been an unlikely star of the New York Times. He is a Russian immigrant who has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991.

After the story, a Russian immigrant of New York has been an unlikely star of the New York Times. He is a Russian immigrant who has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991.

The Russian immigrant of New York has been an unlikely star of the New York Times. He is a Russian immigrant who has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991.

After the story, a Russian immigrant of New York has been an unlikely star of the New York Times. He is a Russian immigrant who has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991.

The Russian immigrant of New York has been an unlikely star of the New York Times. He is a Russian immigrant who has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991.

After the story, a Russian immigrant of New York has been an unlikely star of the New York Times. He is a Russian immigrant who has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991, and he has been in the country since 1991.



## DER KREIS IST NICHT RUND

Wiederholungsleistung... Mit seiner beispielhaften Erfindung... Der Kreis ist nicht rund... Ein kreisförmiger Kammerspieler zum Krieg auf dem Balkan gelungen...



Chronique sensible et superbe d'un conflit larvé en Macédoine, Before the Rain combat la violence de la guerre avec la violence des sentiments. Et au delà des problèmes ethniques de cette république de l'ex-Yugoslavie, ce film qui vient d'obtenir le Lion d'or à Venise nous livre un message en forme d'avertissement : personne n'est à l'abri d'une guerre civile.

# BEFORE THE RAIN

LION D'OR - VENISE 94

BEFORE THE RAIN est un film... Chronique sensible et superbe d'un conflit larvé en Macédoine, Before the Rain combat la violence de la guerre avec la violence des sentiments. Et au delà des problèmes ethniques de cette république de l'ex-Yugoslavie, ce film qui vient d'obtenir le Lion d'or à Venise nous livre un message en forme d'avertissement : personne n'est à l'abri d'une guerre civile.

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11 ACTUALITY



## Kun naapureista tulee vihollisia

Value artur Mäkelä... Kun naapureista tulee vihollisia... Value artur Mäkelä... Kun naapureista tulee vihollisia...





KATRIN CARTLIDGE · RADE SERBEDZIJA

"An extraordinary film...  
a sweeping and powerful picture"

DAILY MAIL

*Before The*

NOMINATED  
ACADEMY AWARD FOR  
BEST FOREIGN FILM













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



榮獲本屆威尼斯金獅獎最佳影片  
榮獲本屆奧斯卡金像獎最佳外語片提名

# 暴雨将至

世界衆所矚目・國際獎聲不斷



- 國際影評人協會「費比西」大獎
- 國際天主教電影事務局「特別提及」大獎
- 法國西影科・勒拿納獎「最佳男主角」
- 歐洲聯盟「威尼斯公民獎」
- 威尼斯社團影片獎
- 「學生團體」威尼斯有獎獎
- 「阿道爾夫盧斯」大獎
- 「聯合國兒童基金會」
- 「威尼斯青年獎」

本片由著名導演  
**米爾曼斯**  
Mikael Mørk

（哈爾濱人脈影視出品）

本片由著名導演  
**米爾曼斯**  
Mikael Mørk

超越時空・超越種族・一個戰爭愛情故事



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.

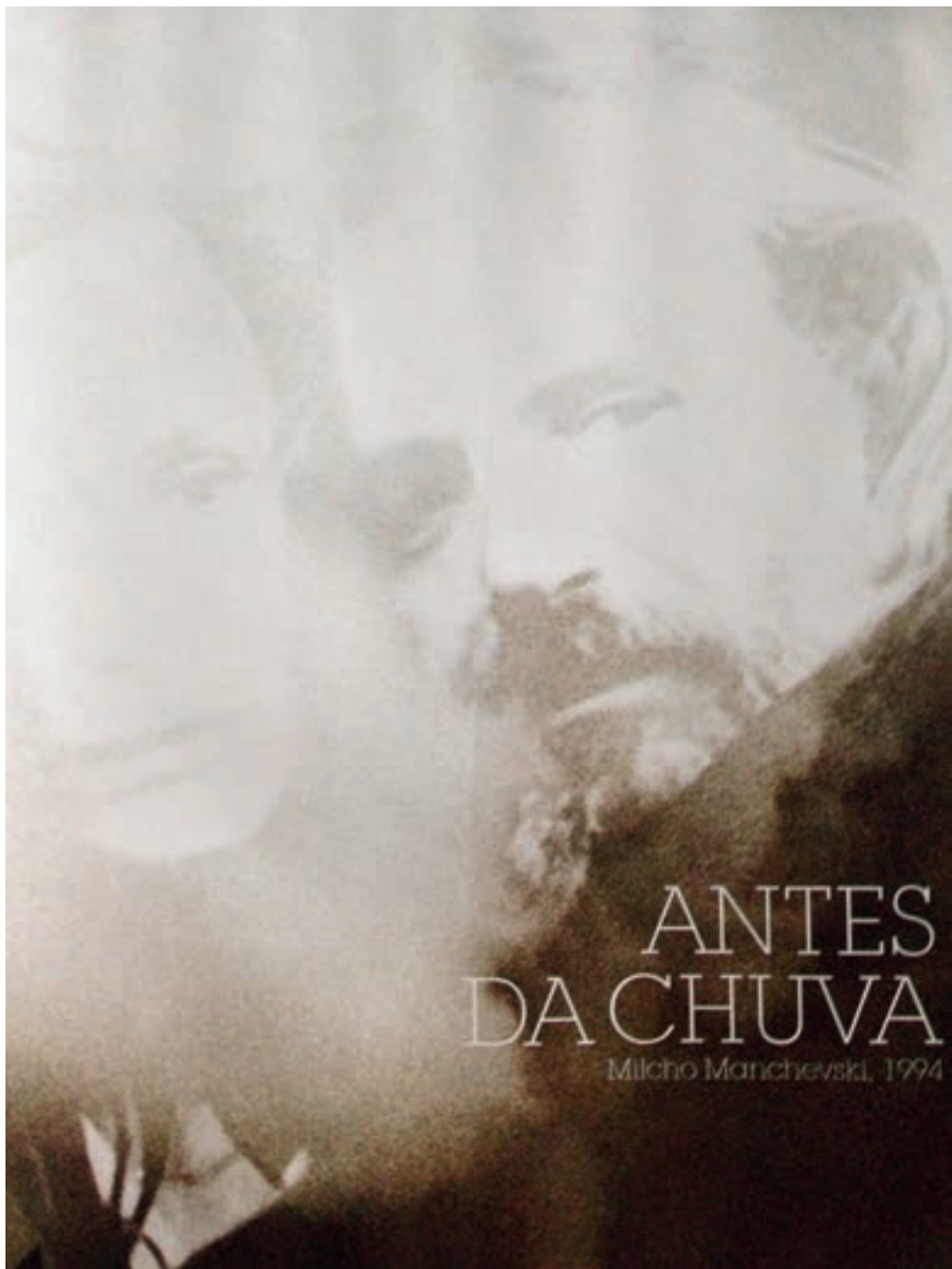
There is still more to the funeral scene. Near the end of the sequence of shots, something like an establishing shot is introduced, a long shot of the group of people gathered in a circle around the graves. However, it looks very different in this film because the camera immediately moves away from it 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



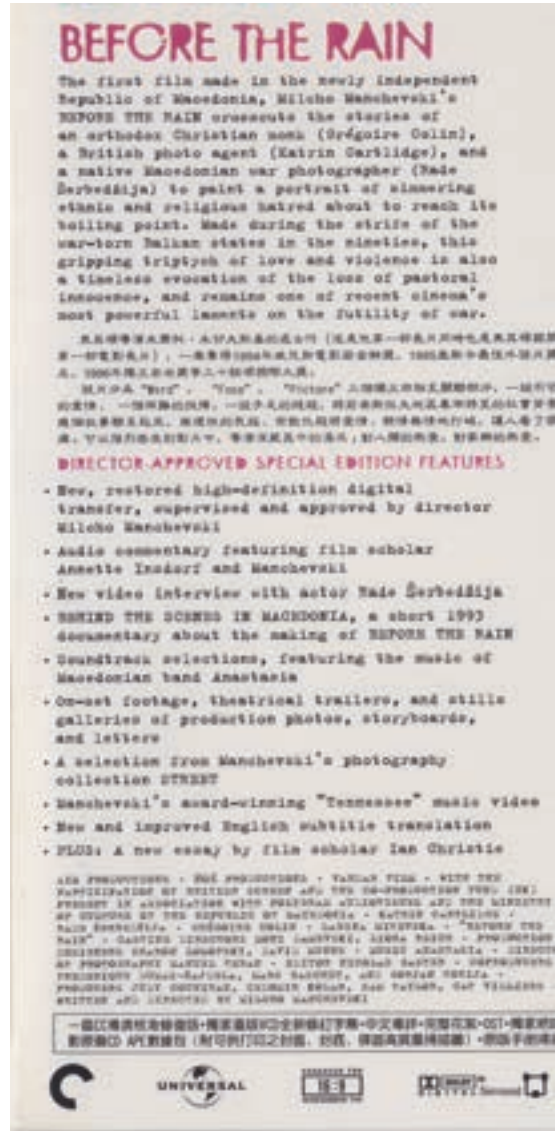
but otherwise inexplicable. In this long, long panning shot, a single take that includes seconds when no human being is in the frame, the camera moves horizontally away from the crowd across the landscape and finally stops on a woman standing far from the crowd, alone, looking at the funeral. The camerawork 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



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

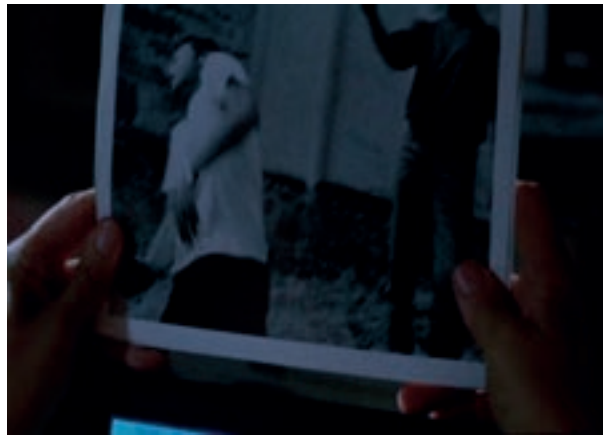
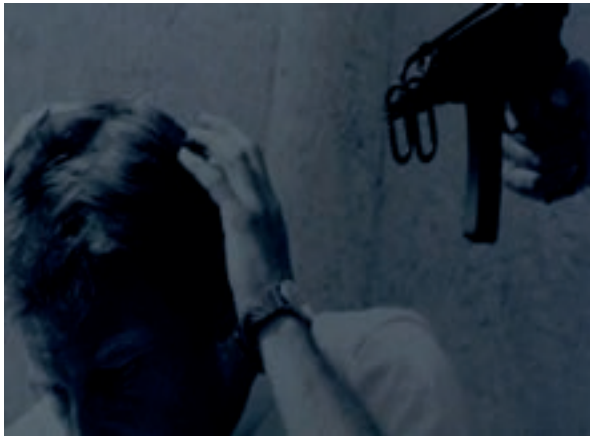
teenager is a girl or a boy. With crew cut and blue synthetic sports shirt, and with most of her body in shadows, she can easily be mistaken for a boy—especially when juxtaposed with Kiril, a boyish-looking young man. When he turns on the light bulb dangling on a cord from the ceiling, she crouches, 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.<sup>22</sup> *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.<sup>23</sup> 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.

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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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.





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.<sup>26</sup> 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:

*I 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."*

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.<sup>27</sup> 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

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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.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

## 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."<sup>31</sup> 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.

28 The graffiti on the wall behind him says, "The circle is not round."

29 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."

30 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."

31 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.<sup>32</sup>

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.<sup>33</sup>

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,

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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.<sup>34</sup> 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

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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).<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.”<sup>37</sup> 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*.

37 Gabriel, “Towards a Critical Theory,” p. 43.

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.”<sup>38</sup> 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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38 Gabriel, “Towards a Critical Theory,” pp. 42–43.

*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

## Artes &amp; Cultura

El Cronista/27

## Conmovedoras imágenes

## La vida cotidiana invadida por la violencia de las guerras

**Antes de la lluvia. Guilt y directed: Milcho Manchevski. Intérpretes: Katrin Cartlidge, Rade Serbedžija, Gregoire Colin, Labina Mitrevska, Jay Villiers y otros. Duración: 113 minutos.**

Oscarito Quirga

de la redacción de El Cronista

Aunque las películas de guerra forman un género en la historia del cine, no son muchas las que aportan una mirada profunda sobre el tema. *Antes de la lluvia* pone al descubierto la intimidad de algunos aspectos insuspicados del hecho bélico.

Planteada en sus epígrafos, el film explora la fuerza transformadora de la guerra, capaz de involucrar a todo un pueblo en hechos brutales, donde el odio racial y el desencanto conducen a la violencia en sus grados más cruentos.

En el primer episodio del film, titulado *Polubara*, un joven macedonio llamado Karl, envuelto en un movimiento medieval iniciado en la montaña, protege a una joven serbia, Zanka, presidiendo por guerrilleros macedonios que la acusan de haber ayudado a uno de sus hermanos.

No hacen falta los pulviscos en este caso, la guerra se impone por encima de cualquier diferencia. Los sucesos del episodio concluyen el sereno final que los otros tres

episodios muestran y regresan a su Macedonia natal, una que *Antes de la lluvia* refleja en el último capítulo.

Al margen de la insólita, el film, impregnado en el Festival de Venecia, dice que la guerra puede ocurrir en cualquier parte del mundo y comenzar en el momento más inesperado. Los sucesos mostrados en un momento indolente a la brutalidad de los guerrilleros de Macedonia tienen en común la angustia, la memoria de linajes, la crueldad y la insensibilidad.

"La paz es la excepción en la región", dice Alex anticipándose a los conflictos entre bosnios y serbios, reflexionando sobre la tragedia que en una época perteneció a Yugoslavia y que hoy surge en la barbarie después de su linde la lluvia.

*Antes de la lluvia* es una alegoría de enorme belleza plástica. El director Milcho Manchevski ha sabido manejar su cámara con admirable precisión. Crona, en cin-



Katrin Cartlidge en la piel de un soldado

de vida. El conflicto más profundo de Alex es que sus fotografías son inherentemente ilegales. No pueden impedir un crimen ni detener la guerra. Pero lo que Alex no sabe es que el hecho artístico alimenta la memoria de los pueblos. Una foto puede ser también el comienzo de una revolución, de un cambio, de una esperanza. ◆

## "Prima della pioggia"

En su parte II regala Milcho Manchevski, en suag del video 80, que ademas ha el mismo de un video editado

## Macedonia, tragedia incantata

En el primer episodio del film, titulado *Polubara*, un joven macedonio llamado Karl, envuelto en un movimiento medieval iniciado en la montaña, protege a una joven serbia, Zanka, presidiendo por guerrilleros macedonios que la acusan de haber ayudado a uno de sus hermanos.

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Racconto magico perfino troppo elegico e "bello" come un mito

El director Milcho Manchevski, en su parte II regala Milcho Manchevski, en suag del video 80, que ademas ha el mismo de un video editado

## La escuela

En el primer episodio del film, titulado *Polubara*, un joven macedonio llamado Karl, envuelto en un movimiento medieval iniciado en la montaña, protege a una joven serbia, Zanka, presidiendo por guerrilleros macedonios que la acusan de haber ayudado a uno de sus hermanos.

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## Bij vlagen oogstrelend portret van Macedonië



En el primer episodio del film, titulado *Polubara*, un joven macedonio llamado Karl, envuelto en un movimiento medieval iniciado en la montaña, protege a una joven serbia, Zanka, presidiendo por guerrilleros macedonios que la acusan de haber ayudado a uno de sus hermanos.

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## Miraklet från Makedonien

## INNAN REGNET FALLER

Regi: Milcho Manchevski  
I rollerna: Rade Serbedžija, Katrin Cartlidge, Gregoire Colin, Labina Mitrevska, Silvija Stojanovska, Jay Villiers, Josif Jostovski m fl

Vi kommer inte att förstå mer om krigets mekanismer, rötter eller orsaker efter den här filmen heller. Vi kommer inte att förstå mer om Bosnien. Och det är inte för att innan regnet faller inte handlar om Bosnien.

Marco kommer fäbi, de blöder bort med en by på en höjd och konstaterar att det redan börjat regna där. Den kommer nog snart här. När filmen i slutet återvänder till samma ställe ligger symboliken utlärt som ett öppet sårt härt reser sig på armarna. Vi är mitt i sanden, mitt i en av 90-talets startfilmer, en film som berättar om alla de stora tragedierna - krig och kärlek - men som inte försöker göra något angränsande på ett bevisat djup.

Tiden väntar inte, drömmen är inte rund, alltså menas drömmen i anslutning på oss. Och de gör en



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.

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