The Films of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet

Complete Retrospective
March – June 2019
The work of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub is considered to be one of the most unparalleled and remarkable oeuvres of modern cinema. It is therefore with great pleasure that the Goethe-Institut London presents the first complete retrospective of their work in the UK.

Over a period of three months, screenings of their films across different London venues and accompanying events will provide the opportunity to recognise the scope of their achievement and to discover different routes into their aesthetics and political concerns. Introductions, workshops and special presentations throughout the retrospective will allow to explore their films anew and revisit some of the literature, music and art on which their films are based.

The Goethe-Institut London has long been committed to showing the work of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub. They were our guests in 1990 during a series of selected screenings and 2015 saw the London premiere of new works by Jean-Marie Straub at the Goethe-Institut London. There have been recent major retrospectives worldwide, including at MoMA, Centre Pompidou and Akademie der Künste Berlin. The interest generated by these screenings as well as new publications about their work in English have allowed the films to become more available. We are most grateful to BELVA Film for helping us to present the films in new digital restorations and, wherever feasible, as new 35mm prints to experience the work in the best possible conditions.

We would not have been able to take on the endeavour of a complete retrospective on our own and would like to thank all our partners, the participating venues and our supporters, as well as our guests and other enthusiasts of the work of Huillet and Straub who have supported and encouraged us in presenting their unique work.

Melanie Bono
Head of Culture Department
Goethe-Institut London
Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub
Retrospective 1962—2018

Danièle Huillet (1936–2006, France) and Jean-Marie Straub (1933, France) met in 1954, and in fifty-two years of shared life and work directed one of the most distinctive, beautiful and uncompromising œuvres of modern cinema. Their films have consistently confronted the politics of post-war Europe, beginning with the rearmament of Germany, exposing layers of history in order to reveal the continuity of the violence of the past in the present. Their vast filmography, a sensual cinema of the eye and ear, is as rich as the many texts and documents that have often served as the basis of their films: music by Bach and Schoenberg, writings by Brecht, Hölderlin, Duras, Kafka, Pavese and Vittorini. They have often worked with forgotten or overlooked classical texts, giving them new life and political relevance. The films bring stories of resistance to the surface, examining relations of class and power, and proposing a Marxist critique of capitalism across linguistic and territorial borders. Created with intense rigour, beauty and enthusiasm, each of their films demands our full attention at every moment, reinventing cinema as something still surprising and necessary. They reflect Huillet and Straub’s creativity and generosity, their solidarity with the people and the communities with whom they worked, as well as their respect for language and nature. Critic Louis Séguin once wrote that Straub and Huillet: ‘... belong to a non-hierarchical and frontier-less clan of rebels, stateless persons and social misfits, and the challenge of their cinema matches this permanent irreducibility.’

Despite the importance and influence of their work, there has not been a UK retrospective of their films since the early 1990s. The retrospective will present the films of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, including all the feature films and the many shorts they directed together. It also includes the films Straub shot on his own after 2006, which reaffirm with equal strength the aesthetic and political principles that had guided their previous works.

The season follows different paths: firstly chronological, at other times woven around specific texts and authors, with special weekends dedicated to Hölderlin, Pavese, or Schoenberg, or to the role of theatricality and politics in relation to the work. Many of the films will be repeated throughout the three months of the season, sometimes in conjunction with special events, talks and screenings of films by other filmmakers that will be in dialogue with the films of Huillet and Straub.
### Programme

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For full event details and updates see the venue websites and www.goethe.de/uk

#### March

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<td>Season Opening</td>
<td>From Today Until Tomorrow, 1996, 35mm, 62 min.</td>
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<td>The Knife Sharpener, 2001, 7 min.</td>
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<td>Mon, 4 March</td>
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<td>Talk</td>
<td>'The senses have therefore become directly theoreticians in their practice':</td>
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<td>BFI Southbank</td>
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<td>The Intensive Materialism of Huillet and Straub</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8.30pm</td>
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<td>Machorka-Muff, 1962, 18 min.</td>
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<td>Not Reconciled..., 1964/65, 52 min.</td>
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<td>Wed, 6 March</td>
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<td>The Bridegroom, the Actress and the Pimp, 1968, 23 min.</td>
<td>Eyes Do Not Want to Close at All Times... (Othon), 1969, 88 min.</td>
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<td>Sat, 9 March</td>
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<td>Incendiary Fictions: Straub-Huillet and Screen Adaptation</td>
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<td>King's College London, Nash Lecture Theatre (K2.31)</td>
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<td>Machorka-Muff, 1962, 18 min.</td>
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<td>Every Revolution is a Throw of the Dice, 1977, 10 min.</td>
<td>En rachâchant, 1982, 7 min.</td>
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<td>Jackals and Arabs, 2011, 10 min.</td>
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<td>Sun, 10 March</td>
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<td>History Lessons, 1972, 85 min.</td>
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<td>Tue, 12 March</td>
<td>6.20pm</td>
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<td>Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach, 1967, 93 min. (Engl. ver.)</td>
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<td>Thu, 14 March</td>
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<td>Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg’s..., 1972, 15 min.</td>
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<td>Moses and Aaron, 1974, 105 min.</td>
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<td>Every Revolution is a Throw of the Dice, 1977, 10 min.</td>
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<td>Fortini / Cani, 1976, 83 min.</td>
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<td>Sun, 16 March</td>
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<td>History Lessons, 1972, 85 min.</td>
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<td>3.50pm</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>History lessons: Brecht, Straub-Huitett and the British context</td>
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<td>En rachâchant, 1982, 7 min.</td>
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<td>Mon, 18 March</td>
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<td>Class Relations, 1983, 127 min.</td>
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<td>Tue, 19 March</td>
<td>6.15pm</td>
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<td>En rachâchant, 1982, 7 min.</td>
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<td>Europa 2005, 27 October, 2006, 10 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed, 20 March</td>
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<td>Workshop + Screenings + Music Performance</td>
<td>'Mama, what are modern people?' Straub-Huillet's adaptation of Schoenberg's</td>
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<td>comic opera Von heute auf morgen</td>
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<td>Fri, 22 March</td>
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<td>The Master of the House, C. Th. Dreyer, 1925, 105 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat, 23 March</td>
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<td>From Today Until Tomorrow, 1996, 35mm, 62 min. + Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royal College of Music</td>
<td>5.30pm</td>
<td>Performance of Arnold Schoenberg's Phantasy for Violin</td>
<td>With: Martin Brady, Larson Powell</td>
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<td>with Piano Accompaniment, op. 47, Elizaveta Saul (violin) and</td>
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<td>Kumi Matsuo (piano).</td>
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<td>Sun, 24 March</td>
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<td>Too Early / Too Late, 1980/81, 100 min. (Engl. vers.)</td>
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<td>Günter Peter Straschek, Part I: Early Films</td>
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<td>Short films by G. P. Straschek, West Germany, 1966–72.</td>
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### April

**Sun, 31 March**  
ICA, Cinema 1  
**1:30pm**  
*From the Cloud to the Resistance*, 1978, 105 min.  
Intro: Redmond Entwistle  
*Dolando*, 2002, 7 min.

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**Sun, 6 April**  
ICA, Cinema 1  
**2:05pm**  
*These Encounters of Theirs*, 2005, 35mm, 68 min.  
Proposal in Four Parts, 1985, 40 min.

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**Fri, 12 April**  
Goethe-Institut  
**6:15pm**  
*The Return of the Prodigal Son – Humiliated*, 2003, 35mm, 64 min.  
*Incantati*, 2002, 6 min.  
*Dolando*, 2002, 7 min.

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**Sat, 13 April**  
Goethe-Institut  
**2pm**  
*Oh Supreme Light*, 2009, 18 min.  
*Cézanne. Conversation with Joachim Gasquet*, 1989, 35mm, 51 min.

### May

**Mon, 1 April**  
Birkbeck Cinema / Goethe Institut  
**11-5pm/7pm**  
Screening + Discussion  
Günter Peter Straschek. Part II: Film Emigration from Nazi Germany, 1-5, 1975, 5 x 58 min.  
With: J. Friedrich, V. Pantenburg, K. Rausch (tbc)

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**Wed, 1 May**  
Goethe-Institut  
**6.20pm**  
*This Land Is Mine*, J. Renoir, USA, 1943, 120 min.  
*By the Dyke Sluice*, P. Nestler, 1962, 13 min.  
*Itinerary of Jean Bricard*, 2007, 35mm, 40 min.  
*The Sixth of June at Dawn*, J. Grémillon, 1944–45, 60 min.  
*People of the Lake*, 2018, 19 min.

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**Wed, 8 May**  
Ciné-Lumière  
**6.15pm**  
*Cezanne. Conversation with Joachim Gasquet*, 1989, 35mm, 51 min.  
*Ah he!*, 2010, 21 min.  
*The Death of Venice*, 2013, 2 min.  
*Concerning Venice...*, 2013, 22 min.

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**Wed, 15 May**  
Goethe-Institut  
**5pm**  
*Fortini / Cani*, 1976, 83 min.
The films in the retrospective will be presented in newly restored digital copies and in new 35mm prints subtitled in English.
## Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub
Films in the Retrospective

Following Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub's own practice, the films have been dated according to their years of production, not their first public screening.

### Key for Venues in Event Details:
- BFI BFI Southbank
- BC Birkbeck Cinema
- CL Ciné Lumière
- CU Close-Up
- GI Goethe-Institut London
- ICA Institute of Contemporary Arts
- KCL King’s College London

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### Sat, 13 April, 4pm
Goethe-Institut

**Lecture**

*Stages of Violence. Antigone by Straub/Huillet, between Theatre and Film*

By Patrick Primavesi

The lecture will address the question of violence in Sophocles’s *Antigone*, its translation by Hölderlin, Brecht’s version of the play and Straub and Huillet’s film. It will include an analysis of stage rehearsals, performances and the film itself, in its specific relation to theatre and theatricality.

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### Sun, 28 April, 12pm
Goethe-Institut

**Presentations & Screenings**

*Straub and Huillet in Buti – Acting and Working Collaboratively*

Presentations and screenings will look at Huillet and Straub’s films based on texts by Vittorini and Pavese shot in Buti, Italy (1998 – 2010). Their collaborative work process and approach to text and theatre will be explored by filmmaker and scholar Romano Gueffi (“For a people who are missing”) and scholar Manuel Ramos-Martinez (“I Had Never Felt Such Joy Before”, Acting in the Cinema of Straub and Huillet).

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### Wed, 15 May, 6pm
Goethe-Institut

**Conversation & Screenings**

*‘Not today but yesterday and tomorrow’ – A Conversation on Italian Literature in the Films of Straub-Huillet*

With Gabriele Pedullà and Alberto Toscano

This session will explore how Huillet and Straub’s cinematic practice both transposed and displaced some of the political and aesthetic concerns of post-war Italian literature.

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### Thu, 16 May, 7pm
Whitechapel Gallery

**Artists’ Presentation**

*Border Struggles (of the Common Birds)*

Artists Silvia Maglioni and Graeme Thomson will present an evening of readings, screenings and conversations, drawing on excerpts from their new film in progress, *Common Birds*, to reflect on how the work of Huillet and Straub has informed the invention of cinematic forms and methods that test the boundaries of voice and language.

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### Sat, 1 June, 2.30pm
Goethe-Institut

**Workshop & Screening**

*The Aesthetics of Equal Distribution*

Led by Ute Holl

This workshop will discuss issues of migration and exile, law and media, resistance and ‘the missing people’ as raised in the film *Moses and Aaron* (1974), screened as part of this session, and extend them to the work of the filmmakers at large.
1962

Machorka-Muff

A metaphorically abstract dream, not a story', is how Jean-Marie Straub introduced his and Danièle Huillet’s first film, made in West Germany. The film presents the dreamlike reflections of the former Nazi major and newly promoted general Erich von Machorka-Muff, who comes to the West German capital to see his lover and to lay the foundation of the ‘Academy of Military Memories’. A scathing criticism of West Germany’s remilitarisation and the persistence of Nazi ideology and personnel after the war.

‘Machorka-Muff is the story of a rape, the rape of a country on which an army has been imposed, a country which would have been happier without one. What does it mean to make films in Germany, or rather, to make films against that stupidity, depravity, and mental laziness which, as Brecht remarked, are so characteristic of this country? Hyperion would reply that it signifies that one is willing to bleed oneself white. And to this I would add: it means that I will be unable to reach that wide public I want my work to have. But, as a Frenchman, what attracted me was the idea to make a film where we used music and orchestrations in the same rooms where Bach conducted his concerts.’ (J.-M. Straub, 1966)

1967

Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach

‘The starting point for our Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach’, wrote Straub, ‘was the idea to make a film where we used music not as accompaniment, nor as commentary, but as aesthetic matter...’ The film was Straub and Huillet’s first project, conceived in the 1950s. It is the result of years of research about the music and biography of Johann Sebastian Bach. The facts of Bach’s life are spoken by his wife, Anna Magdalena Bach, who reads from documents, letters, texts and other elements. The musical moments, performed by Gustav Leonhardt and various ensembles, were shot in single takes, in direct sound, and are presented according to the date of their composition, with period instruments and orchestrations in the same rooms where Bach conducted the music.
his music. Straub: ‘Bach is of interest to us for the same reasons
that he was of interest to Brecht. Brecht said: “Good music must
not raise the listener’s temperature.” He found in Bach his almost
ideal music, a music that always leaves the listener, the spectator,
cold and free to follow a line of thought, to use his head to follow
lines that go on or break off: a dialectical musical fabric.’

‘Direct sound is not an abstract principle for Huillet and
Straub. Their concern for the precise sound produced by
a given event is for them inseparable from a concern for
the precise, concrete gesture, thick with real history, born out
of a confrontation with matter. The Straubian actor does not
simulate. Imitating, pretending, do not belong to his/her
vocabulary – even in fiction, that doesn’t make any difference.
Making a gesture is too important a thing: the gesture has
to be heavy with all that gives it its meaning and form, its
individual and collective past. Chronik is a search for gestures
that are not authentic, original, auratic, but heavy with their
past confrontations with musical matter. Huillet and Straub
recognized in Leonhardt this same search for the precise
gesture demanded by the score and the history of musical
techniques: to them he was the guarantee that this search
would be inscribed on the screen through a collective work.’
(Benoît Turquety, ‘Ouverture, First Movement...’, 2012).

1968 Der Bräutigam, die Komödiantin
und der Zuhälter

‘That is a film in which the oppression of women is very clear.
That’s a subject that comes more from us. The construction
doesn’t come from anyone else. There are actually no sentences
in it that come from us. There are only texts from other people,
but the construction and the story come from us...’, said Huillet.
The Bridegroom... begins with a documentary shot of a Munich
red-light district at night to which all the other elements in the film
respond in a dialectical way: the music of Bach, the staging of the
play Pains of Youth (1929) by Ferdinand Bruckner, condensed by
Straub and performed by the actors of the Munich action-theater,

The Bridegroom, the Actress and the Pimp
West Germany, 35mm, 1.37:1, b&w,
23 min., In German. Written and directed
by Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub.
Texts: Ferdinand Bruckner, Krankheit der
Jugend (Pains of Youth), 1926, condensed
by Jean-Marie Straub; Juan de la Cruz,
‘Romance on the Gospel’, ‘Spiritual
Canticle’. Photography: Klaus Schilling,
Hubs Hagen. Sound: Peter Lutz, Klaus
Eckelt, Herbert Linder. With Irm Hermann
(Désirée), Kristin Peterson (Irene), Hanna
The text is a dialectical development, a respiratory rhythm, a white space. This suggests that theatre is everywhere where there is speech. And that beneath the surface of the political texts that seem least poetic – Saint-Just or Marx, for example – there lies the beat of the Cornelian contra bass. All accents are allowed except that of the Comédie-Française, that accent of camouflaged meaning, of authority. The framing here is done by words. The ceremonial inherited from tragedy, the emphatic gestures, have all been eliminated: here there is nothing useless, everything is to the point. The universality of the meaning is recaptured. Straub has travelled through time to rediscover Corneille. He has broken the link between tragedy and its literal historical meaning, established once and for all by rationalist culture ... In other words, he has restored tragedy's subversive dimension. His work is an extraordinary work of healing, of resurrection. For three centuries Othon has been the victim of a crime. Here is Othon restored to youth. Subversion is there, outside as well as inside. Now that the film is finished, one can see this. On the Palatine Hill in Rome in the year ‘69. This high ground plays a part in space and time. The scenic space is circumscribed by the automobile traffic of contemporary Rome: an imperturbable flow that gradually comes to seem a pure movement, like a river or lava flow. We hear this heavy traffic. Is there any place where one could read the text and not hear it? It would be a mistake not to hear the traffic in parallel with the text. Timeless, sacred space no longer exists. Corneille must be read now or not at all.’

(Marguerite Duras, ‘Othon’, 1971)
1972 Geschichtsunterricht

A young man meets a banker, a peasant, a lawyer, and a writer who lived through Julius Caesar’s rise to power — and a city that has survived it ... The film tells the original relations between commerce, democracy, capitalism and imperialism.’ This is how Straub described this film adapted from a small section of Brecht’s unfinished Roman novel. It is constructed in two movements: in the first one, long takes of contemporary Rome shot from a moving car offer a reflection on the city and its historical and social development (‘To understand the street, you must see the street’), said Straub. In the second one, a young German researcher engages in a series of dialogues set in Ancient Rome on the economic affairs and political opportunism that drove Julius Caesar to power. Straub: ‘Othon was also about Empire, but it dealt merely with the political games of a dominant clique, whereas here it’s not only about imperialism and questions of economy. It is about the origin of the capitalist system as it has been constructed against the Senate, as it functioned and developed. It is not by chance that Brecht was intensely reading Das Kapital when he was writing it.’

‘Especially with Brecht’s prose, which we had to sing in order to find its content, to know what the dynamic of the argument was and how it worked ... One must find the veins of the text. The veins in that marble block that is the text, be it a monologue or only a sentence. There are veins inside, as in a stone extracted from a quarry! These veins are the veins of the enunciation, of logic, etc. We need to know when it is best not to breathe, where you can breathe and where you should — and not in any old way.’ (J.-M. Straub, ‘Le chemin passait par Hölderlin’, 1993)

1972 Einleitung zu Arnold Schoenbergs Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielscene

In 1929 Schoenberg wrote the music for an imaginary film, subtitling the composition with the words ‘threatening danger, fear, catastrophe’. Straub and Huillet use this as a starting point for their Marxist and anti-imperialist essay. The film combines archival footage of the war and bombings in Vietnam, images of the dead of the Paris Commune and other documents, edited together with a reading in a radio studio of two historical texts: Günter P. Straschek reads a letter written in 1923 by Schoenberg to Wassily Kandinsky about what he sees as the artist’s complicity with the anti-Semitic policies of the German government and Peter Nestler reads an extract from Bertolt Brecht’s speech to the International Congress in Defence of Culture in 1935, condemning anti-Semitism and denouncing the inextricable link between fascism and the barbarism of capitalism.

‘The two images are images of power. Not the power of enunciation of the authors (Straub–Huillet) in front of their camera, nor the power of enunciation conferred by an ideological device (Straschek–Nestler), but the images produced by a bare power: that of repression and genocide, that could be signed by Thiers–Nixon. What makes Einleitung... as the authors say, “an agitation film”, is perhaps its order of exposure, the time that it gives us to restore these images to what they are, images taken from US power, taken from the other side. It consists of cleaning the images of every déjà-vu. It consists of bringing out (to evidence but also to banish, eradicate) from these images the power that has wanted them and wanted them to not even surprise us anymore. Therefore, the horror is no longer the eternal return of the Same in the guise of the Same (retro mode), but the intolerable present (Holger Meins, 1975). Each shot is a tomb for the eye.’ (Serge Daney, ‘A Tomb for the Eye’, 1975)
Excerpt from Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet by Jean-André Fieschi.*

For instance, a man would be seen struggling with a text, its material nature: meter, scanion, sound and sense. At grips with a language, neither his own nor of his time, but strongly actualized by these distances, their effect of strangeness, at first disquieting and later curiously familiar. Slowly being burned by the sun – not spotlights – his lips cracking, his skin reddening. His voice, his rhythm, the way it carries, all subjected to the rivalry of the wind. This discourse would be caught in a tight network of other discourses victorious over other resistances: fatigue, the sun, or again, the wind; or the murmur rising up from the town, its crowds or traffic; or yet again, the regular flow of a fountain.

And these discourses, these resistances, their fusion and clash; their web, tissue and texture would be inscribed in struggles for power, passions, interests, desires. Here could be read other forces, other struggles, other resistances: the fall of an Empire or impossible Love. In any case, history, that is, politics.

Brecht again (and for a long time to come): 'The dramatic aspect (the violence of confrontations) the passions (the degree of warmth), the surface covered by a character – none of this can be envisioned or conveyed separately from the functioning of society!'

A man could also be seen, for example, at grips with music or money. At grips with money and music (reality and desire). In any case with History, that is, again, Politics.

This cinema would show men at grips with what the cinema itself is at grips with: desire, work, money, politics. It would not show them the way a mirror does: that which already exists. But it would show the process itself: something existing, the trace of the struggle. Not only its lucidity but its spectre.

These beings at grips with work, with the sun, the wind, the text, desire, money, passions, fatigue, with history, would no longer be actors. But men, amateurs or officials, workers or idlers, peasants or writers, men and women, flesh and desire, confronting texts, materials, resistances and their own history. Struggling too, and naked in sun or rain. Here too the film would be a documentary.

It would no longer be a matter of telling stories, but of telling history: passion of all passions, narrative of all narratives.

So there would be History, men and women, and blocks – not scenes. Each film would be a game between blocks – of unequal duration – spaced far apart, where the spacing would play as well; where the spacing, its distance, the blank and the ellipse, the suppression of narrative articulations through which cinema ordinarily displays its infirmity – in short, the interval, as Vertov would have said, would be a figure. Where everything would be a sign: emptiness as well as fullness, words as well as silence, immobility as well as movement. Where the film would say that it was to be read, as reality is to be read so that it can be transformed. And there one would be, facing it as unarmed, or as armed, as in reality. Where what would be given to read, understand and transform would no longer be significations – fixed, arrested, dead – but relationships of material meanings.

Yet for all this the film would not be a pure metaphor or an aesthetic displacement of social relations: that would be too easy. And it would most vehemently repel the idea of passing for a model or for a giver of lessons.

But, instead, with its means, its aim, it would be the place of a transformation. Delivering no message but a sign, in its way, that the shock can begin, and here or by others be brought to its term.

At the most, the indication of this shock, the sign of the fissure, the euphoria of destruction (why not destroy? she says) which knows somewhere that it is the first stone. It is seen, which is already a great deal.

Cinema without flirtation – without origins, one might be tempted to say; but such an affirmation is no sooner risked than it would seem deceptive. Here too it is just the opposite: it is the business of works of rupture to reinvent their precursors. Have the films of Dreyer ever been seen – their violence, their desire, their aleatory and peremptory form?

These films, these acts, exist, fragile and insist lent. They are these blocks of amour fou: Machorka-Muff; Nicht versöhnt oder Es hilft nur Gewalt, wo Gewalt herrscht; Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach; Der Bräutigam, die Komödiantin und der Zuhälter; Les yeux ne veulent pas en tout temps se fermer ou Peut-être Rome se permettra de choisir à son tour: Geschichtsunterricht; Einleitung zu Arnold Schoenbergs Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielscene. They are signed by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet.
Moses und Aron

*Moses und Aron* is an opera composed by Schoenberg to his own libretto between 1930 and 1932. The third act remained unfinished. The libretto tells the story of the calling of Moses, who lacked the gift of oratory, to lead his enslaved people to the Promised Land, his conflict with his brother, Aaron, and the people's descent into idolatry and ritual sacrifice. The film offers a political reading of Schoenberg's work, focusing on the confrontation between Moses, Aaron and the choir, who, according to Straub, represent the people. The film makes visible the histories of colonialism, migration and exile, putting the emphasis on the struggle of the people against oppression and on the conflict between word and image ('Thus I too have fashioned an image, false, as an image must invariably be'). The opera was filmed live and in direct sound, with pre-recorded orchestral music, in the outdoor setting of the Alba Fucens amphitheatre in southern Italy. The film is dedicated to filmmaker and political activist Holger Meins.

'So in 1974 the film *Moses und Aron* keeps in sight the visible and audible history of colonialism and fascism, while opening up a perspective on the time in which Arnold Schoenberg wrote the opera, and on our present. In this way the migrant trail runs through the Moses complex. The decisive thing is that Straub and Huillet understand the historical procedure as a media one, as the exposition of productive differences. The difficulty isn’t in filming class situations but class relationships – as the work of Straub and Huillet could be summarised in general. Their solution is insistent: they coin ideas from extreme concretion. In the process of working on Schoenberg's opera they develop from this material a form of media historiography, which has to prove itself in the individual shots, the décor, the sound and the montage.' (Ute Holl, *The Moses Complex*, 2016)

Fortini / Cani

*Fortini / Cani* is the third part of a ‘trilogy on the Jewish question’ after *Introduction* and *Moses and Aaron*. It is based on Franco Fortini’s *The Dogs of Sinai*, a book on politics, identity and truthfulness in the period after the Six Day War of 1967. Fortini, a major figure in post-war Italian intellectual life, reflects on his own identity as an Italian Jew, a communist, and about the birth of fascism and the increasing anti-Arabic influence in Europe. Straub and Huillet film Fortini reading from his own text and images of landscapes filmed in the Apuan Alps, where years earlier atrocities against the partisans had been committed by the Nazis. Straub wrote that 'Fortini quotes every massacre, every village, but while he didn’t go there, we returned several times to each of these villages. It is a topographic and telluric cinema, with the Apuan Alps, these mountains of marble, as eternal as indifferent, implacable, exterior to the suffering and yet the theatre of the class struggle. And this is Fortini’s Marxist definition of communism.'

'It is some of the film's crucial images, which openly allude to a past that could also be a future *if someone will come to want it* (the pacified mountains, the blossoming oleander, the view of Florence, the hills of the ending), there is a continual exchange between “renunciation” and “promise”. Renunciation, *Entsagung*, is also converted into promise. The absence of man, where it is most absolute (because the voice too goes quiet, as in the sequence of the Apuan Alps) affirms the enormous presence of the dead; but not only of *those* dead, the victims of Nazi massacres. When the present is seen from outside the present, it becomes a place onto which past and future spirits can be projected.’ (Franco Fortini, ‘A Note for Jean-Marie Straub’, 1978)
‘The attitude of the poet in an epoch such as ours, when he is on strike in the face of society, is to set aside all the imperfect means that are at his disposal. Things exist, we don’t need to create them; we just have to grasp the relations between them; and it is the threads of these relations that form the lines of verse and orchestra.’

(Stéphane Mallarmé, ‘Enquête sur l’évolution littéraire’, 1891)

‘If once it was enough to have a bonfire to make it rain, or to burn a vagabond on one to save a harvest, how many owners’ houses need to be burnt down, how many owners killed in the streets and squares, before the world turns just and we have our words to say?’ (Cesare Pavese, The Moon and the Bonfires, 1950)

‘From the cloud (also Nefele, sitting on a tree at the beginning of the film), that is, from the arrival of the gods, or to be more exact, from their invention by men, to the resistance – almost immediate – of these against them, also to the resistance against fascism.’

This is how Straub described their film based on two works by Italian writer Cesare Pavese. The first part of the film is based on six conversations taken from Dialogues with Leucò, a book published in 1947, composed of conversations between mythical figures on mortality and the destiny of men and women after a time of oppression. The dialogues are shot outdoors in the Piedmontese landscape, set in an ancient time, and concern the relationship between God and men, the nature of sacrifice and the abuse of power. The second part takes place in the present and is based on another book by Pavese, The Moon and the Bonfires, published in 1950. The book tells the story of an emigrant who returns to his native village after the end of the War in search of the traces of the peasant life and landscape he once knew, only to be confronted by loss, violence, and the stories of resistance told by the partisans and of massacres committed by the Nazis.

Every Revolution Is a Throw of the Dice


KCL Sat 9 March, 2pm
BFI Thu 14 March, 8.50pm, NFT 3
CU Sat 18 May, 6pm

From the Cloud to the Resistance

Italy/West Germany/UK, 35mm, 1.37:1, colour, 105 min., in Italian. Written and directed by Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub. Text: Cesare Pavese, Dialoghi con Leucò (Dialogues with Leucò), 1947, La luna e i falò (The Moon and the Bonfires), 1950. Photography: Saverio Diamanti, Gianni Canfarelli. Sound: Louis Hochez, Georges Vaglio.

KCL Sat 9 March, 2pm
BFI Mon 18 March, 6.15pm, NFT 2
ICA Sun 31 March, 1.30pm, Cinema 1

1977 Toute révolution est un coup de dés

1978 Dalla nube alla resistenza
academic arrogance, as a bit less than a decadent or a latecomer from the countryside. It is against the current because it speaks about the resistance with a small "r", when the word, capitalised in its historical meaning, has been disgraced and nobody cares anymore about what "resisting" can possibly mean today.' (Franco Fortini, 'Controcorrente', 1979)

Too Early / Too Late is a diptych shot in France and Egypt concerning the relation between history, class struggle and landscape. As Huillet wrote, 'This is not "fiction", but what is called "documentary", even if this way of documenting is, I believe, new (though it has precedents: for example, La Sortie de l'usine Lumière) – no "restrictive" narration, no actors. What is recounted: struggles, revolts, defeats, delays and anticipations, statistics; what is represented: history, topography, geography, geology, light, lights, wind and clouds, land (transformed and worked by men), traces – erased or still visible – and sky (lots of sky). In the first part of the film, Huillet reads excerpts from a letter written by Friedrich Engels about the impoverishment of French peasants on the eve of the Revolution of 1789. In the second part, shot in the Egyptian landscape, the writer Bahgat Elnadi reads from his book on the history of anti-colonial resistance and class struggle in Egypt, which he co-authored with Adel Rifat under the pseudonym of Mahmoud Hussein.

Huillet, again: 'We were interested in seeing what traces remain today and what was swept away and left no trace. And in this regard, a topographical film: with camera and Nagra, with picture and location sound as the tools of an investigation.'

'The film is thus a diptych. One, France. Two, Egypt. No actors, not even characters, especially not extras. If there is an actor in Too Early / Too Late, it's the landscape. This actor has a text to recite: History (the peasants who resist, the land which remains), of which it is the living witness. The actors perform with a certain amount of talent: the cloud that passes, a breaking loose of birds, a bouquet of trees bent by the wind, a break in the clouds; this is what the landscape's performance consists of. This kind of performing is meteorological. One hasn't seen anything like it for quite some time. Since the silent period, to be precise.' (Serge Daney, 'Cinemeteorology', 1982)

1980/81

Too Early / Too Late


1982

En rachâchant

The short En rachâchant is based on Marguerite Duras's 1971 children's book Ah! Ernesto! about a determined nine-year-old boy who one day refuses to go to school 'because in school they teach me things I don't know', thus renouncing all forms of authority. The film, shot in black and white by the great cinematographer Henri Alekan (Beauty and the Beast, Wings of Desire), was, according to Straub, a preparatory exercise and instigator for their following film, Class Relations.

'It is an entomologist's film. We film Ernesto the same way Buñuel said we ought to film insects. He is an insect like any other, and insects are really important. For Rosa Luxemburg, the fate of an insect struggling between life and death on some corner, unbeknownst to all humanity, has as much importance as the fate and the future of the revolution in which she believed.' (J.-M. Straub, 'Rencontres...', 1995)
'Capitalism is a system of dependences,' said Kafka, and his unfinished novel The Man Who Disappeared a.k.a. Amerika, on which Class Relations is based, chronicles 'a world where a sense of justice has no place' (D. Huillet). The film was shot in Germany (with two sequences filmed in the United States) and follows the path of the young German bourgeois Karl Rossmann, who, forced by his parents to emigrate to America, an idealised land of opportunity, keeps finding himself involved in strange adventures, in situations of injustice and oppression, pushed around, defenceless yet still striving forward. 'Kafka, for us, is the only major poet of industrial civilisation, I mean, a civilisation where people depend on their work to survive. That's why there is this permanent fear of losing your job, there are traces left by the fact of having been afraid, and there is constantly misery that appears and is threatening,' said Straub.

'It's phantasmatic America, both true and false, torn between the real and the imaginary, does not cease to widen and contract – as if the rhythm of its spasmodic respiration was married to Karl Rossmann's constantly affirmed and constantly disappointed need for justice – between the park and the villa, the bridges, the harbour, the offices, the staircases, the bedrooms, Brunelda's sofa, the balcony where the young man hears about "politics" for the first time, and that river, in the very long final shot, whose meanderings and escapes offer not signs but the aleatory area of utopia.
Friedrich Hölderlin’s drama *The Death of Empedocles* is a tragedy on the death of the pre-Socratic Greek thinker and poet Empedocles of Acragas, composed in three incomplete versions from 1798 to 1799. The first act of the first version deals with the political dispute and banishment of Empedocles from the city and the second with the philosopher’s conflict with the gods, his argument about the value of life and his decision to end his life in the volcanic crater of Mount Etna. After eighteen months of rehearsals, the filmmakers staged this ‘oratorio without music’ in outdoor locations in Sicily using direct sound and the surrounding light. They edited four versions of the film using different takes of the same shots. All the elements at play in the film, voice, sounds, gestures, changing light and nature, combine to give this film its beauty and tension. Straub has often referred to the lyrical and delirious aspect of the text, a communist dream and poetic utopia, saying, ‘Away with information science, bureaucracy, management, atomic power plants, chemistry, machines, propaganda, sociology, political science. Let us try to start from scratch, before it is too late!’

‘I think the scandal of Hölderlin and of the film is that one attempts to avoid giving up anything, either in regard to the individual, or the subject as Hölderlin says, or the others, the people. That one doesn’t give something up in order to gain something else, but tries to keep everything. And that in a time where people let themselves be closed in and more and more, also with their feelings, with all their might ... Because one can sense that everything tries to close people in and to separate them from life, and that here just the opposite is being attempted: to open up and renounce nothing and neglect nothing or destroy in order to preserve something else.’ (J.-M. Straub, *Der Schatten der Beute*, 1987)
Cézanne: Conversation with Joachim Gasquet

Joachim Gasquet's 1921 memoir of his short-lived friendship with Paul Cézanne offers a valuable glimpse into the painter's late life and opinions about his own craft and that of other artists' work. The film was made out of the filmmakers' admiration for the painter's practice and ethos. Huillet and Straub read passages from the dialogues, and the film includes images of Mont Sainte-Victoire, which Cézanne painted several times throughout his life – 'Those blocks were made of fire, and there is still fire in them' – of his paintings, meticulously framed, photographs of Cézanne by Maurice Denis sequences from Jean Renoir's 1934 *Madame Bovary*, and two sequences from *The Death of Empedocles*.

'And then, mostly, the experience of Cézanne, will be to mix what we will film at Aix with the sound, which won't mean much in terms of duration, with something that I do not know if it is a filmic act, which is filming paintings. We must know how to film them. We must know if we have to refuse the mask that eliminates the frame and the wall, as Alekan wanted, and with whom we are going to work. Even if the frame does not please you, paintings do not just hang in the air, these paintings are always in dreadful or more pleasant museums, but they are always prisoners of a museum. And the prison, we should not show it, instead we must feel it.' (J.-M. Straub, 'Interview...', 1989)

GI Sat 13 April, 2pm
CL Wed 8 May, 6.15pm

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1988

Schwarze Sünde

Two years after *The Death of Empedocles*, Huillet and Straub filmed the third version of Hölderlin's verse drama, on a clearing on the foothills of Mount Etna under the burning sun of Sicily and with three of the same actors from the first film. We find Empedocles, already far from the people and the politics of the city, nearing his self-sacrifice, debating the conflict between the all-nurturing nature and the destroying impetus of civilisation, with his loyal disciple Pausanias and his former teacher, Manes. Straub: 'The Death of Empedocles is, as Jean Narboni said, a Film of Explosion. And the second one, Black Sin, is a Film of Implosion. This is also true for the politics. Politics is no longer in the events, it is in the character of Empedocles, it only remains as a memory, completely internalised.' Danièle Huillet, sitting on the dark volcanic earth, evokes the 'new world' and 'the hope, but also the threat that hangs over us'. Straub mentions, 'The sculptures at the beginning are by Ernst Barlach, an artist from Hamburg. The first is called *Mutter Erde* (Mother Earth). The second is called *Der Rächer*, the avenger. The first verse of the last fragment start by "New World". Then come the first thirty-seconds of the allegro from Beethoven's String Quartet [No. 16 in F major; Op. 135: "Muss es sein? / Es muss sein" [Must it be? It must be!]...'

'We have returned to this place, just like John Ford returned to Monument Valley. In *The Death of Empedocles*, there is no valley between our point of view and the mountain, in *Black Sin*, there is an enormous valley, we see it and can feel it. In the first there is a scenic idea, a theatrical stage, here it is something else. Let's say modestly that this is more like *Blind Husbands*, which was the only film that Stroheim was able to edit and belongs to him from start to finish. One would be a more theatrical film, and the other, maybe a film-film.' (J.-M. Straub, 'Interview...', 1989)

GI Fri 12 April, 6.15pm

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1989

Black Sin

West Germany/France, 35mm, 1.37:1, colour, 42 min., in German. Written and directed by Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub. Text: Excerpts of the third version of *The Death of Empedocles*, by Friedrich Hölderlin, 1798. Photography: Renato Berta, Jean-Paul Toraille, Giovanni Canfarelli. Sound: Louis Hochet, Georges Vaglio, Alessandro Zanon. With Danièle Huillet, Andreas von Rauch (Empedocles), Vladimir Baratta (Pausanias), Howard Vernon (Manes).

GI Fri 12 April, 6.15pm

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1989

Cézanne: Dialogue avec Joachim Gasquet

Joachim Gasquet's 1921 memoir of his short-lived friendship with Paul Cézanne offers a valuable glimpse into the painter's late life and opinions about his own craft and that of other artists' work. The film was made out of the filmmakers' admiration for the painter's practice and ethos. Huillet and Straub read passages from the dialogues, and the film includes images of Mont Sainte-Victoire, which Cézanne painted several times throughout his life – 'Those blocks were made of fire, and there is still fire in them' – of his paintings, meticulously framed, photographs of Cézanne by Maurice Denis sequences from Jean Renoir's 1934 *Madame Bovary*, and two sequences from *The Death of Empedocles*.

'And then, mostly, the experience of Cézanne, will be to mix what we will film at Aix with the sound, which won’t mean much in terms of duration, with something that I do not know if it is a filmic act, which is filming paintings. We must know how to film them. We must know if we have to refuse the mask that eliminates the frame and the wall, as Alekan wanted, and with whom we are going to work. Even if the frame does not please you, paintings do not just hang in the air, these paintings are always in dreadful or more pleasant museums, but they are always prisoners of a museum. And the prison, we should not show it, instead we must feel it.' (J.-M. Straub, 'Interview...', 1989)
1991
Die Antigone des Sophokles nach
der Hölderlinschen Übertragung für die Bühne
bearbeitet von Brecht 1948

‘In Antigone the violence is explained by inadequacy. The war against Argos derives from mismanagement. Those who have been robbed have to look to robbery themselves. The undertaking exceeds the strength available. Violence splits the forces instead of welding them together; basic humanity, under too much pressure, explodes, scattering everything with it into destruction.’ (Bertolt Brecht, Foreword to Antigone, 1948)

‘A film is most of the time for us an encounter with a place. When all these elements, the place (space), theatre (fiction), life (experiences) come together, a film is born (time).’ (D. Huillet) Antigone extended Straub and Huillet’s practice of textual archaeology: they interpret Friedrich Hölderlin’s German translation of Sophocles’ text, through Bertolt Brecht’s political reading of the play written in 1947–48. They set the film in the old theatre of Segesta in the highest peak of Mount Barbaro in western Sicily. Author Barton Byg wrote about the film that ‘the oblique placement of actors and camera in the ancient Teatro di Segesta allows the landscape, the trees and the stones to comment on the drama. The wind and sun intensify the visual effects... While World War II was Brecht’s contemporary reference, the Antigone of Sophocles after Hölderlin’s Translation Adapted for the Stage by Brecht 1948

Germany/France, 35mm, 1.37:1, colour, 100 min., in German. Written and directed by Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub. Text: Sophocles, Antigone, 411 BC, after Friedrich Hölderlin’s translation, 1800–03, adapted for the stage by Bertolt Brecht, 1948 - without Brecht’s prologue. Photography: Nicolas Eprendre, William Lubtchansky and Inna Lubtchansky. Sound: Louis Hochet, Georges Vaglio, Sandro Zanon. With Astrid Other (Antigone), Ursula Other (Ismene), Werner Rehm (Creon).

1994
Lothringen!

Huillet: Fiction is important for us, because when it is mixed with documentary, or a documentary situation, a contradiction is created and sparks fly. Fiction is very important, in spite of everything, to somehow ignite a fire.

Straub: I think what interests us is to show layers...

Huillet: Not to eradicate the traces but to build on them.

In fourteen shots – mostly descriptive panoramas of a region in northeast France many times invaded or annexed by the Germans as Imperial Territory – Lothringen! tells the story of an uprooted and humiliated people. Lothringen is the German word for Alsace-Lorraine, France, capital Metz. 1870, 1907, 1940 – mistreatment, displacement, exodus. The film is based on a novel called Colette Bauduche: Story of a Young Girl from Metz. The fragments of the novel used in the film are those related to history, of which the character Colette is the product (as is Straub, who was born in Metz and grew up under German occupation). A rich and condensed historical chronicle where fiction is an apparition of history, sharpening our senses and asking how a landscape or place is affected by the passage of time or history.

Lothringen! Germany/France, 35mm, 1.37:1, colour, 21 min., in French. Written and directed by Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub. Text: Maurice Barrès, Colette Bauduche. Histoires d’une jeune fille de Metz (Colette Bauduche: Story of a Young Girl from Metz), 1909. Photography: Christophe Pollock, Emmanuelle Collinot. Sound: Louis Hochet, Georges Vaglio, With Emmanuelle Straub (Colette Bauduche), Narrated by André Warynski (French) and Dominique Dosdat (French). Jean-Marie Straub (German).

GI Sat 13 April, 6.30pm
CL Mon 13 May, 6pm
1998

Sicilia!

‘Schoenberg knew that fashions can be poisonous. Poisonous. That they can spread out like poison gas. That people breathe in these fashions and are turned into cripples almost without knowing it. And that it is happening faster and faster. Each fashion lasts for a shorter period. They chase after one another.’ (J.-M. Straub, 1997)

Huillet and Straub offer a political reading of Arnold Schoenberg’s rarely performed one-act comic twelve-tone opera Von heute auf morgen from 1928–29. The opera’s libretto was written by Gertrud Schoenberg, the composer’s wife, under the name ‘Max Blonda’. This ‘domestic apocalypse’, as Hanns Eisler described it, is a critique of modernity and a commentary on the position of women in the last days of the Weimar Republic, in the guise of an apparently frivolous comedy of marriage. The film was shot in 35mm in a crepuscular and sharp black and white in a studio set reproducing a bourgeois family house, with reference to the films of Ernst Lubitsch or Carl Theodor Dreyer. The film was recorded in absolute synchronicity, in direct sound and mono, with the music performed live by the Radio-Sinfonie-Orchester Frankfurt, conducted by Michael Gielen.

‘The people in this opera who act, drink coffee and finally restore order to a tedious conflict with a tenor like a caretaker, appear through the music like the future occupants of the air-raid shelters, like the despairing should in the destroyed cities. All of this took shape in music before its time. Schoenberg did not intend that. Yet it is not what

1996

Von heute auf morgen

From Today Until Tomorrow


ICA Fri 1 March, 6.30pm, Cinema 1
01 Sat 2 March, 2pm

ICA Tue 23 April, 6.20pm, Cinema 1
ICA Sat 4 May, 2.15pm, Cinema 1

Calogero, the Knife-Sharpener:

Sometimes / one confuses the pettinesses of the world / with the offences of the world. / Ah! / If there were / knives and scissors, awls, picks and harquebuses, / mortars, sickles and hammers, cannons, cannons, dynamite!

The first part of a trilogy of films made from the works of Elio Vittorini, Sicilia! is adapted from the author’s anti-fascist novel Conversazioni in Sicilia (Conversations in Sicily), 1937–38. Photography: William Lubtchansky, Irina Lubtchansky, Marion Beve. Sound: Jean-Pierre Duret, Jacques Balley. With Gianni Buscarino (Silvestro), Vittorio Vigneri (Knife Sharpener), Angela Nugara (Mother), Carmelo Maddio (Man).

ICA Fri 1 March, 6.30pm, Cinema 1
ICA Sat 2 March, 2pm

ICA Tue 23 April, 6.20pm, Cinema 1
ICA Sat 4 May, 2.15pm, Cinema 1
Workers, Peasants


ICA Fri 26 April, 6.20pm, Cinema 1
ICA Sun 5 May 12.30pm, Cinema 1

This second and central part of Huillet and Straub’s Vittorini trilogy draws on the ‘characters, constellations and text’ of the author’s experimental Marxist and choral novel The Women of Messina (first published in the late forties and partially rewritten in 1964). Twelve men and women of all ages and from all over Italy come together in the aftermath of World War II, when the country regained its national and territorial unity. They make up a primitive community of workers and peasants that tries to erase not just the memory of the war but also the misfortune of the world, and to protect themselves against violence, misery and fear. These working-class men and women reunite in the midst of ruins and try to invent new relationships in their work and daily life. The group keeps a ‘register’, a kind of newspaper – as if to follow the proceedings of an investigation or a trial. The text has the dimension of a popular and choral work mirroring the collective reconstruction undertaken by the characters. The texts are recited from memory or read out loud by non-professional actors who are placed in relation to the natural scenery of the forest of the Buti region in Tuscany.

‘Memoria/Lectura: what was learned by heart by the actors and what they had to read. All the film is thought over like that: as if they had taken notes to justify what had happened several years after. They had everything written out and we chose to have them saying things they had memorised, and at other times to have them reading the texts as if they were a protocol, as if they were standing before a judge.’ (J.-M. Straub, ‘Scénario annoté d’Ouvriers, paysans’, Écrits, 2012)

‘Speech, in the poetic economy of the Straubs, is communist because it at the same time unites and opposes these two poetic registers: a lyrical register, which is the expression of the common as common, and a dramatic or dialectical register which is the expression of the common as divided or marked by division.’ (Jacques Rancière, ‘Sensible Speech’, 2003)
Short excerpts from *The Fire in the Mountain*, a conversation with Danièle Huillet by Helge Heberle and Monika Funke-Stern

From: Frauen und Film, No. 32 (June 1982), translated by Ted Fendt

Monika The distribution of your films is important to you. You go around with your films and talk about them. I feel that your silence is a form of denying auteur cinema and representation.

Danièle We won’t be able to talk about the films anymore when we’re dead. Film material is very sensitive and the negatives won’t last forever, but the films will outlive us for a certain amount of time and I hope that they will still speak to people. We talk about the films because in general the distribution system does not work anymore. Straub talks better than I do. I don’t know if he enjoys doing it. I think that one destroys a bit of the work that way.

Helge What do you mean by destroys a bit of it?

Danièle A film is work that you’ve carried through and Monika Funke-Stern

Helge In the interview you did with Karsten Witte, you say that you want to make films that can’t be understood through cinema, through film history, but that can be understood on their own.

Danièle But people see more news and sports on TV and the people I’m talking about also perceive the films best are the ones with no film culture.

Helge Does that mean they have no film culture?

Danièle But people see more news and sports on TV and the people I’m talking about also perceive the films best are the ones with no film culture.

Helge Does that mean they have no film culture? Today there is also TV...

Danièle But people see more news and sports on TV and the people I’m talking about also perceive the films best are the ones with no film culture.

Helge In the interview you did with Karsten Witte, you say that you want to make films that can’t be understood through cinema, through film history, but that can be understood on their own.

Danièle I'll interrupt only to say that ‘violence’ is not only violence with weapons. A strike is also a form of violence. Let’s take a utopia, the biggest utopia there is: that suddenly every intellectual, women and men, goes on strike and this shit society collapses. That would also be a form of violence that would essentially be bigger than every possible form of it.

Monika But you have shown the rudiments of alternative figures. The old Fähmel woman...

Danièle Yes, she stands for a kind of counterviolence, but it is destroyed. And the pressure is so strong that she is also destroyed. Not only the pressure of the war or of all time, but also the pressure she has to feel and experience as a woman.

...
themselves from. *The Return* is a new version of shots 40 to 46 and 63 to 66 of *Workers, Peasants*, focusing on the character Spine, a peasant, who returns to his community after fleeing during winter with a donkey and a pushcart. *Humiliated* tells the story of how the community was disrupted by the outside world, threatened by the forces of progress and self-interest.

A film is woven from feelings, stories and experiences. That which is transmitted by texts, not written by Danièle and I, but by others, doesn’t in any way impede; if anything, quite the opposite, what emerges is yet another layer for the fiction. The second section of *Operai, contadini* is the story of what could almost be described as a lynching. The storyteller is almost lynched. And then there’s the other side of the story, that is the love-story with Ventura and that is then linked to the community. It’s a love story that could only happen in a community, and for that reason is at once concrete and beautiful.’ (J.-M. Straub, ‘A Thousand Hills’, 2014)

2002

**Incantati**

‘What more can I say? What more can I say? …’

*Incantati* is a re-edited sequence from the end of *Umiliati*.

2003

**Une visite au Louvre**

Huliet and Straub return to Joachim Gasquet’s memoir here focusing on the conversations the writer had with Cézanne about painting and sculpture and collected in a series of regular visits to the Louvre in the winter of 1898–99. The words attributed to Cézanne become yet another text reworked by Huliet and read

2002

**Dolando**

A short film made during the production of *Umiliati*. Three shots of Dolando Bernardini, an actor in the film and also in *From the Cloud to the Resistance*, singing a capella verses from *La Gerusalemme liberata*, the epic poem written by Torquato Tasso (first published in 1581), followed by a new take of the last shot of *Workers, Peasants*. 
by a woman's voice (Julie Koltaï), telling us about Cézanne's love, understanding and criticism of the paintings of Tintoretto, Veronese or Courbet and the social implications of their art.

The film reflects Huillet’s concerns about the way works of art were exhibited, conserved and looked at in museums, suggesting through film another way of looking attentively at painting and sculpture.

‘Only, when the narrow-mindedness and the arrogance of a class and a century that believes itself to be “scientific” and more intelligent than prior centuries, and that is incapable of foreseeing the consequences and calculating the risks of its ventures in every domain is combined with the greed (or power) that leads Monsieur, for example, to consider the works of art brought together by Barnes as capital that must, by definition, return a greater value (and this goes for all the directors of state museums pushed by privatisation, which is the equivalent of vandalising common goods by the same bourgeoisie and by so-called promotional necessity); well, this is unrestrained pillaging and vandalising. We cut the banana trees to eat the bananas and, after us, the Deluge.’ (D. Huillet, ‘Quite a lot of Pent-Up Anger’, 1994)


Bia: If you had known humans, you’d understand. They’re poor worms, but everything with them is unexpected and a discovery. One can know the beast, one can know the god, but no one, not even we, knows the depth of their hearts. There are even, among them, some who pit themselves against destiny. Only by living with them and for them does one savour the taste of the world. (Cesare Pavese, ‘Mankind’, from Dialogues with Leucò, 1947)

Huillet and Straub return to the Dialogues with Leucò by Cesare Pavese, adapting the last five dialogues of the book, twenty-seven years after their film From the Cloud to the Resistance. Pavese’s book reimagines myth as the collective memory of a piece of history buried and distant, through a series of dialogues between mythical figures about mortality, love and the destiny of men and women. Every detail in these carefully composed sequences shot outdoors requires our attention as the film’s intensity emerges from the elements at play, from those bodies framed in nature and the forceful recitation of the non-professional actors, who reinvest the words of Pavese with a new and urgent meaning: ‘the future lives of mortals will be modelled upon the imaginative shape they give to their terror’.

‘Ultimately, about Pavese himself we couldn’t care less by the end of the film. What interests us are the good people who voice Pavese’s texts, what they do in life, how they say these texts, the problems they have saying what they say – which makes what they say all of a sudden no longer belong to Pavese but to the good people who say it – who at the outset had never heard of Pavese. The only interest that the text or what you call the culture has is that the person who wrote it did a certain work, he produced something which touched us and which subsequently has resisted – from which one can judge that he did his work well.’ (D. Huillet, 1979)

These Encounters of Theirs

Italy/France, 35mm, 1:37:1, colour, Dolby SRD, 68 min., in Italian. Written and directed by Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub. Text: Cesare Pavese, Dialogues with Leucò, 1947; the last five dialogues.


ICA Sat 6 April, 2.05pm, Cinema 1
GI Sun 28 April, 12pm

Europa 2005, 27 October is a ciné-tract, a pamphlet shot on video responding to the death of two young men – Bouna Traoré, 15, and Zyed Benna, 17 – electrocuted in the Parisian suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois when they were escaping from the police. Their deaths sparked three weeks of uprisings across France.
In two camera pans repeated five times, the film documents the dead-end location of this atrocity, thus making evident the violence and iniquity of the authorities. Though this short, their first film shot on digital video, is known as a work by Straub and Huillet, it has also been screened as an unsigned, anonymous ciné-tract. The video was commissioned by Enrico Ghezzi of Italian television as a ‘sequel’ to Roberto Rossellini’s Europa ’51.

Ten years later, in 2015, the two police officers who chased Bouna and Zyed were acquitted in a criminal court of the contradictory charge of ‘complicity in these deaths through their inaction’.

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2007 Itinéraire de Jean Bricard

‘See, I live over there. This year there was 40 centimetres of water in the house. Then you had willow bush, which during the war in ’43-44 you could hide in, to avoid capture by the Germans. In ’44, the year my uncle got caught ... My uncle was shot because for three weeks we had the Americans in Ancenis. The Loire was the frontier. The Germans were here on the left bank. Which made things tough. Some people were caught crossing the Loire by boat, because at night they used rowboats to get to the Americans. In fact we’re going to see the cross.’ (From the text of the film)

Based on the eponymous text by sociologist Jean-Yves Pettyau, Itinéraire de Jean Bricard is composed of long journeys along the Loire River, shot in silvery black-and-white. This is the place where Bricard grew up during the German occupation. Observations of the land and the water accompany Bricard’s narration, recorded by Pettyau in 1994, about the rich history of the region, from commercial fishing and farming in the 1930s, through the Occupation, the Resistance and its brutal suppression. The film is dedicated to the filmmaker Peter Nestler.

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2008 Le streghe, femmes entre elles

Circe: The mortal man, Leucò, has nothing immortal but this. The memory that he carries and the memory he leaves behind. This is what names and words are. Confronted with memory even they smile, resigned.

Leukothea: Circe, you too are saying words.

Circe: I know my destiny Leucò. Never fear.

Another film by Straub set in the forest of Buti in which two women recite the dialogue between the goddesses Circe and Leukothea. Circe evokes her encounter with the god Odysseus, discovering a yearning for humanity, a nostalgia for a mortal fate glimpsed for only one night.
2009

Shot in the wide video format of 16:9, the film begins with a black screen as we listen to the recording of the first and riotous 1954 performance in Paris of Edgar Varèse’s *Déserts*, composed for orchestra and magnetic tape. Sitting under the Tuscan sun on a piece of disused industrial farm equipment facing the valley of Buti, Giorgio Passerone twice reads the last lines from Canto XXXIII of Dante Alighieri’s *Paradiso*, *Divine Comedy*, as the camera pans back and forth through the landscape, with variations of intonation and light.

Jean-Marie Straub reads an excerpt from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s preface to the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* (1755).

2009

‘You must account for your life among men. Whether you have served them or harmed them.’

(Bertolt Brecht, *The Trial of Lucullus*, 1939)

In eight shots filmed in an apartment in Paris, Cornelia Geiser recites verses from Pierre Corneille’s two Roman tragedies about power and intrigue, *Horace* and *Othon*, followed by a reading of excerpts from Bertolt Brecht’s 1939 radio play *The Trial of Lucullus*, a powerful war-crimes recitative in fourteen short pieces (never broadcast and later turned into an opera by Brecht and Paul Dessau in East Germany). The play, which as Brecht described at the time ‘more or less reaches the limit of what can still be said’ in a time of oppression, summons a Roman General to stand trial for the crimes he has committed and the sufferings he has inflicted during his life. The reciter bridges these texts from different eras, using Ancient Rome as a parable to denounce all abuses of power and the emergence of imperialist and fascist rule. Cumulatively, it is not the rulers who are the main characters here, but the collective judgement of the oppressed on the oppressor.

2009

A short video made in support and solidarity with Joachim Gatti, a young filmmaker and activist seriously injured by a police ‘flash-ball’ during a peaceful demonstration in Montreuil, Paris.

Jean-Marie Straub reads an excerpt from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s preface to the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* (1755).

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2010

Orpheus: You say you are like a man. / Know then that a man does not know what to do with death. The Eurydice for whom I wept / was a season of life. / I was seeking much else down there / than her love. I was seeking / a past that Eurydice doesn’t know. / I understood it

The Inconsolable One

France/Italy/Switzerland, MiniDV, 4:3, colour, 15 min., in French. Written and directed by Jean-Marie Straub. Text: Cesare Pavese, ‘L’Inconsolable’
Among the dead / while I was singing my song, I saw / the shades become rigid and stare emptily, / the laments cease, Persephone hide her face, / the same shadowy-impassive one, Hades, lean forwards like a mortal / and listen. / I understood that the dead / are nothing anymore. (Cesare Pavese, ‘The Inconsolable One’, Dialogues with Leucò)

One of the most beautiful and profound of Pavese’s Dialogues with Leucò, retelling Orpheus’ return from the world of the dead: ‘Returning from the forest of shades, a quietly defiant Orpheus tells a Bacchante it was free will, not destiny, which compelled him to cast the fatal gaze on his wife Eurydice, recognising their love as a thing of the past and his own proper place in the world of living souls.’ The film was shot in the undergrowth of the Buti forest: Giovanna Daddi, the Bacchante, standing straight and Orpheus, played by Andrea Bacci, sitting on a rock, confront each other, never framed together, before challenging each other, reunited in the shot.

### 2011

#### Schakale und Araber

‘So finally the scissors – it’s time to stop!’ Huillet and Straub had planned to adapt Kafka’s short story Jackals and Arabs in the 1980s and to shoot the film in the Egyptian desert while filming Too Early / Too Late. The story is an animal parable about Arab–Jewish–Colonial relations, written in 1917 not long after the signing of the Balfour Declaration. Filmed on video in a Parisian apartment, two performers, Barbara Ulrich and Giorgio Passerone, forcefully recite the text, creating a tension matched by Straub’s incisive editing, cutting into the image like a scalpel. Andy Rector wrote that ‘This short video asks for not a moment of weakness from the viewer. The players on-screen use muscles never seen in the cinema before. As Brecht wrote of a demon mask: “What a strain it is to be evil”.’

#### La madre

The most terrifying of the dialogues written by Pavese, a conversation about fear, anger and hope. Meleager, sitting in the shade, and Hermès, here transformed into a woman, ‘the mother’, standing in defiance, illuminated by the sun, both isolated by the shot and intensely listening to each other. Pavese wrote in the introduction to ‘The Mother’ that ‘Meleager’s life was linked to a brand which his mother Althaea drew from the fire when he was born. She was a woman of strong mind, and when Meleager killed his maternal uncle in a fight over the boarskin, she flew into a rage, thrust the brand back into the fire, and let it burn.’
Montaigne recounts an incident that happened to him and succeeds, by and through this narrative, in showing us how an experience that is painful or threatening can be transfigured by the danger that lies in salvation.

A Tale by Michel de Montaigne

CU Wed 22 May, 7pm

This very short video consisting of a single, silent shot is Straub's response to a commission from the Venice Film Festival. An image from a photocopied page of Maurice Barrès' book The Death of Venice from 1916, with hand-written commentaries by Straub that redact certain areas of the Barrès text: 'THE DEATH ... of the cinematograph ... of the Mostra ... OF VENICE ...'

The Death of Venice
France, 2013, HD, 4:3, colour, 2 min., in French.

CL Thu 9 May, 6:30pm

Jacques: Françoise, I believe in you, as I have never believed in anyone in the world. / I believe you. / I believe in you even more than I love you, out of a kind of necessity,

Dialogue of Shadows
France/Switzerland, HD, 4:3, colour, 28 min., in French. A film by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet

CU Wed 22 May, 8:30pm

A man and a woman engaged in a dialogue, talking about their love for each other, separated by the frame as if talking across an abyss. Then, in the last take, we see the two of them close together, motionless. The text of the film originates in a short early novel written by George Bernanos, which Straub and Huillet wanted to bring to the cinema screen when they first met in the 1950s. The film is co-credited posthumously to Danièle Huillet.

Françoise: Who knows? Who can know?
Jacques: I'll know it.

À propos de Venise
(Geschichtsunterricht)

‘The uprooted who frequent Venice are, rather than mundane entertainers, natural melancholics or saddened people, ardent and disappointed souls. Indeed, could they inhabit such a place if they were not seeking the voluptuousness of sadness? However composite its origins made it, the society that submits itself to the action of such a rare climate must
’Kommunisten is the result of my insomnia … It was done on impulse. In the morning I told myself that we had to continue the film in one direction or the other. But first there is the text of Malraux from which I drew three flashes of a different nature and very different cinematographic genres: the black screen with the text about torture, the interrogation of the three prisoners and the reunion of the couple. I wanted to respond to these three flashes with blocks taken from our films and to try a mixture of genres, as Truffaut said. There are blocks – or movements, as they say in music,’ said Straub in 2015.

Kommunisten is a compilation bringing together a newly shot segment with sequences chosen from previous films by Straub and Huillet. It concerns ‘the forms of domination and violence of man on man’ as well as the forms of resisting them: from communist prisoners defying their fascist interrogators, Italian partisans fighting against the Nazi occupation to the anti-colonial resistance and class struggle in Egypt. The first sequence is based on André Malraux’s novel Days of Wrath written in 1936, about a communist writer named Kassner, who escapes a concentration camp and must live with the terror of its memory.

This is followed by other blocks selected from films Straub and Huillet made based on the texts of Elio Vittorini, Franco Fortini and Friedrich Hölderlin: The hope (Workers, Peasants, 2000); The people (Too Early / Too Late, 1980/81); The Apuan Alps (Fortini / Cani, 1976); The communist utopia (The Death of Empedocles, 1986); New World (Black Sin, 1988).

In the short film The Algerian War!, intended as a prologue to Communists, Straub reflects upon his own refusal to fight in the Algerian war in the 1950s, via a story written by psychoanalyst Jean Sandretto about a man, who, having fought in a war, is confronted by a ghost of his past. ‘I have come to kill you.’ Straub said, ‘I left because I had Algerian friends, and when the first grenade exploded in Algeria, I thought the Algerians were right. And then I had French acquaintances who came back from there with bowed heads and who were silent, and who we heard six months later had to participate in torture, which they did, or did not.’
Where Are You, Jean-Marie Straub?

France/Switzerland, HD, 4:3, colour, 15 min.

CU Wed 22 May, 7pm

People of the Lake


ICA Fri 1 March, 8.30pm, Cinema 1
CL Sun 12 May, 4.20pm

A lake is also a border, but out on the water this designation is lost: in the fishery, "the profession of free men", the Savoyards and Vaudois find themselves confreres, and if out loud we speak only of nets and fish, in silence we sometimes enter the Resistance...’ (Janine Massard, Gens du Lac, 2013)

People of the Lake, based on an excerpt from a novel by Swiss writer Janine Massard in which a man remembers his youth as a member of a fishing family on the Lake Geneva Vaudoise coast, the traffic on the lake during the World War II and the political upheavals in its immediate aftermath.

2015

L’ Aquarium et la Nation

The Aquarium and the Nation


CU Wed 22 May, 7pm

A reflection on history, the passage of time and the fate of man, the film is a dialectical assemblage of images, music, texts and documents: a shot of a fish aquarium, the orchestral version of Joseph Haydn’s Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross, a reading by psychoanalyst, film writer and sound editor Aimé Agnel of an excerpt from André Malraux’s last novel The Walnut Trees of Altenburg, published in 1948, and a sequence from Jean Renoir’s 1938 film La Marseillaise.

2015

Pour Renato

One sequence of Othon shot by cinematographer Renato Berta, a long-time collaborator in the films of Huillet and Straub, edited with stills from the shooting, made for a celebration of Berta’s birthday in April 1, 2015.

For Renato

Switzerland, HD, 4:3, colour, mono, 8 min.

BC Sat 25 May, 10am–5pm

2016

Où en êtes-vous, Jean-Marie Straub?

A domestic, personal video commissioned by the Centre Pompidou on the occasion of the 2016 retrospective of the films of Straub and Huillet.

CU Wed 22 May, 7pm
Other Films in the Programme

The retrospective includes a number of films by other filmmakers whose work relates to that of Huillet and Straub. These are documents and films that show them at work, shooting and editing their films. In addition, a few films will be shown to enter into a dialogue with the films of Straub and Huillet.

Huillet and Straub at Work / Films and Documents

The following films and documents will be shown at different times and venues during the retrospective, including at the Goethe-Institut Library. For programme additions and updates please check www.goethe.de/uk for details and updates.

Jean-Marie Straub und Danièle Huillet bei der Arbeit an einem Film nach Franz Kafkas Romanfragment Amerika (Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet at Work on a film based on Franz Kafka’s Amerika)
Harun Farocki, West Germany, 1983, 16mm [digital], colour, 26 min.
The film shows Farocki, under Straub’s direction, rehearsing for his role as Delamarche in the film Class Relations (1983).
Wed, 1 May, 7:30pm, Close-Up

Filmtip: Der Tod des Empedokles
(Filmtip: The Death of Empedocles)
Harun Farocki, West Germany, 1987, 16mm [digital], colour, 7 min.
Farocki talks to Andreas Rauch, who plays Empedocles in the film by Straub and Huillet.
Sat, 19 May, 8pm, Close-Up

Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet at the University of Geneva following a screening of The Death of Empedocles
Production: École supérieure d’art visuel, Geneva; Cinema/Video Workshop of François Albera. Photography: Pascal Magnin. Subtitles: Sally Shafto, Switzerland 1987, 42 min. With François Albera (Off), Jean-Marie Straub, Bernard Böschenstein, Balthazar, Danièle Huillet, Alessandra Lukinovitch (Off), and some of the 700 audience members (Off).
Schwarze Sünde – Dreharbeiten auf dem Ätna (Black Sin – Shoot on Mount Etna)
William Lubtchansky, 1988, video, 120 min.
An insightful document of perseverance captured by the great French cinematographer William Lubtchansky.

Empedokles auf dem Ätna (Empedocles on Mount Etna)
A sound-only rendition of the film Black Sin, with the voices of Andreas von Rauch, Vladimir Baratta, Howard Vernon, Danièle Huillet.

Huillet and Straub at the Goethe-Institut London, 1990
Sound recording of the filmmakers in conversation with Julien Petley following the first London screening of The Death of Empedocles.

Où gît votre sourire enfoui?
(Where Lies Your Hidden Smile?)
Pedro Costa, France/Portugal, 2001, MiniDV, colour, 104 min.
A loving tribute to Huillet and Straub filmed as they were editing the second version of Sicilia!
Thu 25 April, 6.20pm, ICA, Cinema 1

Six Bagatelles
Pedro Costa, France/Portugal, 2003, MiniDV, colour, 18 min.
Six unused scenes from Pedro Costa’s Where Lies Your Hidden Smile?
Thu, 25 April, 6.20pm
Sat, 4 May, 2.15pm, ICA, Cinema 1

Verteidigung der Zeit (In Defense of Time)
Peter Nestler, Germany, 2007, DigiBeta, 24 min.
An introduction to and portrait of the life and work of Straub and Huillet directed by their longtime friend, the great documentarian Peter Nestler.
Sat, 25 May, Birkbeck Cinema, 10am–5pm

Other Films in the Programme

Du skal ære din Hustru (The Master of the House)
Carl Theodor Dreyer, Denmark, 1925, 35mm [digital restoration], b&w, 105 min, silent.
Dreyer’s domestic comedy, in which a female housekeeper cunningly and hilariously outwits a bullying husband.
Fri, 22 March, 7pm, Goethe-Institut

This Land is Mine
Jean Renoir, USA, 1943, 35mm [digital restoration], b&w, 120 min.
An openly polemical parable set in the midst of World War II. Charles Laughton plays a timid middle-aged schoolteacher who is drawn into the Resistance, standing up to the Nazis.
Sun, 12 May, 2pm, Ciné Lumière

Le 6 juin à l’aube (The Sixth of June at Dawn)
Jean Grémillon, France, 1944–45, 35mm, b&w, 41 min.
Grémillon wished to ‘establish the most exact record of the state of Normandy’ and the brutal effects of the war on the land and the people.
Sun, 12 May, 4.20pm, Ciné Lumière
Am Siel (By the Dyke Sluice)
Peter Nestler, West Germany, 1962, 35mm [digital restoration], b&w, 12 min.
Peter Nestler’s first film, made in collaboration with Kurt Ulrich, is a portrait of a small and quiet seaside village in East Frisia in Germany, seen from the perspective of an old dike sluice.

Sun, 12 May, 4.20pm, Ciné Lumière

Les Antiquités de Rome
Jean-Claude Rousseau, France, 1989, 16mm, colour, 105 min.
‘Thou stranger which for Rome in Rome here seekest / And nought of Rome in Rome perceivst at all’, poem by Joachim Du Bellay (Translation Edmund Spenser, 1591)

Sat, 18 May, 8.30pm, Close-Up

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Venues

For ticket prices, booking information and updates
please visit venue websites.

BFI Southbank (BFI)
Belvedere Road
South Bank
London SE1 8XT
T +44 (0)20 7928 3232
E box.office@bfi.org.uk
www.bfi.org.uk

Birkbeck Cinema (BC)
Birkbeck Institute for the Moving Image (BIMI)
43 Gordon Square
London WC1H 0PD
E bimi@bbk.ac.uk
blogs.bbk.ac.uk/bimi

Ciné Lumière (CL)
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King’s College London (KCL)
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www.whitechapelgallery.org

Above: Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub
on the shoot of Unisoli. Photograph by Dimitri Haulet.

Back cover: From the original script of Class Relations:
a hand sketch by Jean-Marie Straub. The sequence in
the captain’s cabin. Positions of the people in the room:
(Kas)sierer (engl. cashier), (Cap)tain, (O)nkel (engl. uncle),
(K)arl, (H)eizer (engl. the stoker). Movements of the people
in the room; Camera settings. Bottom right: sequence
of camera settings listed by number.