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A CINEMA OF RESISTANCE

P. ADAMS SITNEY ON THE FILMS OF
JEAN-MARIE STRAUB AND DANIÈLE HUILLET

MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS since Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet made their first work together, and a decade after Huillet's death, the husband-and-wife filmmaking duo known, in short, as Straub-Huillet are having something of a belated moment: Miguel Abreu Gallery's Sequence Press is publishing a volume of their collected writings, translated and edited by Sally Shafto; the Austrian Film Museum in Vienna has just published a monograph on their work, edited by Ted Fendt; and the Museum of Modern Art in New York is mounting the first complete retrospective of their films (May 6–June 6), organized by Joshua Siegel. In the pages that follow, film scholar P. Adams Sitney provides an overview of "the Straubs'" complex and uncompromising oeuvre, while critic James Quandt takes the measure of the filmmakers' 1999 masterpiece, *Sicilia!*

Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, *Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach* (Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach), 1968, 35 mm, black-and-white, sound, 93 minutes. Johann Sebastian Bach (Gustav Leonhardt).

THE FILMS of Jean-Marie Straub (1933–) and Danièle Huillet (1936–2006) are works of exquisite beauty, startling originality, and exceptional rigor, and they constitute a testing ground for any possible theory on literature's essential relationship to cinema. No other filmmakers have attempted to bring to the screen such a distinguished array of texts—Kafka, Pavese, Hölderlin, Brecht, Vittorini, Dante, Corneille, Schönberg, Sophocles, Mallarmé, Montaigne, Cézanne—and none have demonstrated such independence from the traditions of adaptation.

Straub-Huillet's persistent and uncompromising oeuvre—some thirty films, long and short, from *Machorka-Muff* of 1963 to *Europa 2005, 27 Octobre* of 2006 (the last film the couple completed before Huillet's death) —constitutes the most massive and the most diverse array of modernist narrative cinema, even though its authors profess to care little for modernism. And although literature, art, and music have been central to their practice, it is the political force of their films that matters most to them. Yet they have consistently explored radical strategies without operating under any illusions that formal radicalism has political efficacy. As Straub insisted in an interview with the political activist Joel Rogers in 1976:

In Paris nowadays nobody talks about anything but the deconstruction of cinematic language. . . . It's indispensable, but not sufficient, a "necessary but not sufficient condition.". . . I don't fetishize the cinema at all. I think of it as an instrument, a tool. In History Lessons *[1972], the film does not consist really of those parts of it that would interest someone like Michael Snow, for example. Above all, the film has a* subject. *And the reflection on the "language"—I'll use that term although I don't really believe in it—actually, reflection on the instrument, and the methods you use in the cinema, are only interesting because in* History Lessons, *for example, it is the story of a crisis of conscience. . . . You have to have methods of dividing. Dividing not only the public, but also the ways that you choose, the instruments that you choose. But if it's only to divide cinema, to divide itself,* that *is not very interesting. That's like the serpent biting its tail.*[1]

Every critical attempt to support and elaborate the political meaning of Straub and Huillet's films that I have read has been banal and reductive, erasing the extraordinary mystery that makes their films so fascinating and so compelling. For despite what they have sometimes said to interviewers, it is not the Brechtian distanciation, nor the breathtaking ellipses, nor the amateur actors with incongruous accents, nor even the

flat recitation of texts, nor even the combination of all these elements, that gives Straub-Huillet's films, in their wide range of styles, their uniqueness. Even the predominance of antifascist or ecologically visionary texts among those they have chosen to adapt—or, rather, tangentially refract—hardly can account for their achievement, for other, excruciatingly dull filmmakers have tried all of these strategies. Perhaps Straub-Huillet's *Die Antigone des Sophokles nach der Hölderlinschen Übertragung für die Bühne bearbeitet von Brecht 1948* (The Antigone of Sophocles After Hölderlin's Translation Adapted for the Stage by Brecht 1948, 1992) offers a clue to their "political" aesthetics. The inherent refusal to resolve the moral/political dilemma at the core of Sophocles's tragedy comes to us with full force in the film *because* they eliminated any seductiveness from the spectacle. One sometimes gets the impression that they were forever challenging themselves to find texts that made complacent resolutions less and less amenable, and then to offer them up to cinema so nakedly that their skeletal structure could not be eluded.

Most of the elements of the Straub-Huillet signature were in place even in the four films they made before 1970, during the decade in which they lived in Munich—*Machorka-Muff*; *Nicht versöhnt oder Es hilft nur Gewalt, wo Gewalt herrscht* (Not Reconciled, or Only Violence Helps Where Violence Rules, 1965); *Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach* (Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach, 1968); and *Der Bräutigam, die Komödiantin und der Zuhälter* (The Bridegroom, the Actress, and the Pimp, 1968)—but it wasn't until they relocated to Italy in 1969 and shot *Les yeux ne veulent pas en tout temps se fermer ou Peut-être qu'un jour Rome se permettra de choisir à son tour* (Eyes Do Not Want to Close at All Times, or Perhaps One Day Rome Will Permit Herself to Choose in Her Turn, 1970; commonly referred to as *Othon*) that they definitively moved beyond the frontier zone where ambitious cinema might have a chance at commercial success. None of their contemporaries in France (Godard, Rivette, Resnais, Varda) or in Germany (Kluge, Herzog, Fassbinder, Schlöndorff) were prepared to abandon conventional feature-film expectations so early. (Hans-Jürgen Syberberg was the exception, in this and in all else.) The six films (two shorts and four features) they made over the following decade—from *Geschichtsunterricht* (History Lessons) to *Dalla nube alla resistenza* (From the Cloud to the Resistance, 1979)—were all exceptionally demanding in their rigor and uncompromising in their eschewal of entertainment.

Henceforth, their cinema became even more unconventional: They often issued their films in several versions, including filmed rehearsals. After Huillet's death, Straub simplified his production, ultimately giving up 35 mm for digital mini and, finally, HD video. The style the couple had perfected—characterized by long takes, a static camera (occasionally supplemented by simple movements, like their signature pans), direct sound, and the recitation of texts by amateurs—allowed for a smooth transition. In both formats we find the persistent attention to archaic vestiges of empire and suffering: ruins, monuments, and costumes that blatantly offer no more than a nod to the conventional representation of historical eras, contributing to the palimpsest of temporal layers that extends to the films' musical quotations. Thus Straub and Huillet quickly emerged from the contexts of the French Nouvelle Vague and the Neuer Deutscher Film in which their films were initially received. Although they were seldom seen as Italian filmmakers, no native filmmakers working in Italy in the otherwise bleak 1980s made more significant films than they did.

Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, *Machorka-Muff,* **1963**, 35 mm, black-and-white, sound, 18 minutes.

STRAUB WAS BORN IN LORRAINE when it was part of France, but during the annexation he had to learn and speak German at the age of seven; Huillet was from Paris. After film school in France, they relocated to Germany so he might avoid French military service. There they began making films. Both the eighteen-minute *Machorka-Muff* and the hour-long *Not Reconciled* were based on works by Heinrich Böll—a short story and a novel, respectively—and both examine the persistence in postwar Germany of particular psychologies and power relations that flourished under the totalitarian regime. (*Machorka-Muff* was among the first German films to do so.) As Paul Coates wrote of *Not Reconciled* in his underappreciated book *The Gorgon's Gaze*:

The film broadcasts itself as unreceived—as the sign of a blockage, impregnated with its [German] audience's psychosis. Straub deliberately fractures the novel, eliminating its whimsical and anecdotal features, for they embody a spirit of Versöhnung (reconciliation) with a public he sees as still guilty, unrepentant, and hence undeserving of forgiveness. . . . It differs from all other "filmed literature" in its refusal to assume the place of the book, to which one has to return in order to decipher the events it shows as pure, incomprehensible surface.[2]

Not Reconciled remains one of the most remarkably elliptical and tightly condensed narrative films ever made. The complexity of its layering of time, the way it fuses the postwar present with the prewar years in Germany, and even with the Wilhelmine era, has driven many viewers, myself included, to follow Coates in turning to Böll's novel (*Billard um halb zehn* [Billiards at Half-Past Nine, 1959]) to unpack the story line.

But that narrative, which traces three generations of architects, is so fragmented in *Not Reconciled* as to be nearly unfathomable on a first viewing. The power of the film instead accrues from its rigorous style and brilliant use of architectural detail. An eloquent circular pan of an ordinary street in Cologne at first seems to be following a young girl as she playfully runs down the block, but it leaves her halfway through its arc, halting only when a youth named Schrella, a victim of fascism who has just returned to Germany and stands talking to a different girl before a doorway, comes into frame. He tells her he was looking for where the Schrellas lived, and she replies that no one by that name ever lived there. The antidramatic sweep of the camera poignantly underlines the poetics of absence that defines this work—and that will pervade most Straub-Huillet films to come. Such dedramatization also marks a later scene that would be the climax in a conventional adaptation of the novel: The aged Johanna stands on a balcony observing an offscreen parade, trying to decide which of the rehabilitated Nazi politicians to shoot. The camera tracks a little closer as her husband enters the shot, advising her on various candidates for assassination, and tracks back as he exits, just as she shoots an unseen figure to her right. The filmmakers cut to the grandson of the elderly couple as he shows his fiancée an underground Roman ruin, uncovered during the war when his father demolished the abbey that had been *his* father's greatest architectural achievement. Viewers familiar with German architectural history would know that the facade of the Cologne Cathedral, seen in the background of the balcony on which Johanna stood, was itself partially reconstructed after the church had been damaged during the Allied bombing of the city.

Accompanying the panning shot are the sounds of street traffic, the heavy steps of the running girl, and then inarticulate background voices vying for our attention as Schrella talks to the girl. The Straubs, unlike most European filmmakers, never dubbed their dialogue, insisting on direct sound, and they never attempted to filter the background noise from the speech of their central characters. In the balcony scene and following, we similarly hear street sounds as the old couple talk and, later, the hollow echoing of footsteps in the underground site, held long after the young couple have left. The use of direct sound is even more astounding in their next film, *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*, given that this historical drama is largely a series of real-time performances of J. S. Bach's harpsichord music by Gustav Leonhardt (acting the role of the composer) and Christiane Lang-Drewanz (the pianist and singer who played Bach's titular second wife), as well as of chorales sung by the Hannover Boys Choir.

The three-part title of the twenty-three-minute-long film *The Bridegroom, the Actress, and the Pimp* reflects the work's three divisions, which allude, ironically, to the origins of cinematic forms: The first is a long traveling shot (as exemplified by the Lumière brothers), taken at night from a car, of a street on which prostitutes wait for customers. The second is a montage of snippets from a stage performance of Ferdinand Bruckner's 1926 play about sexuality and prostitution, *Krankheit der Jugend* (Pains of Youth), all shot from the same off-center camera position, the style roughly corresponding to the narratives of Georges Méliès. The third and final section dramatizes the marriage of a prostitute to an African American GI, who then takes her home, where she kills the pimp who was waiting for her there—an homage, of sorts, to the chase sequences in the melodramas of D. W. Griffith. The documentary, the theatrical narrative, and the melodramatic modes cohere only in terms of the theme (prostitution) and the fact that the actors who play the pimp and the prostitute appear in both the second and third parts.

The most interesting part of the film is its conclusion, which presents the wedding ceremony in one long take, shot off-center to recall the filming of the play. The marriage rite, an extended performative utterance by the officiating priest speaking in the liturgical mode, demonstrates the transformative power of nondramatic speech—the very mode of declamation that will come to characterize Straub-Huillet films. The next shot is a semicircular pan following an automobile along a tree-lined road. The car comes to a stop at a set of postwar houses as ugly as the modern church where the wedding took place. The groom, escorting his bride from the vehicle into her home, recites passages from the poetry of San Juan de la Cruz. The ensuing execution of the pimp is antidramatic nearly to the point of comedy: The woman takes his pistol and shoots him, as if with a popgun, then proceeds to a window to watch the wind in the trees as we hear Bach's *Ascension Oratorio*, a passage of which had been heard over the second half of the film's opening tracking shot.

This image of trees rustled by the wind celebrates the fleeting beauty of present time, and it is an image that recurs in many of the couple's subsequent films. Nearly every one they made (including those Straub made by himself after Huillet's death) involves a complex layering of temporal zones. At first, this meant hyperbolic versions of the more conventional schema of flashbacks, evoking concrete historical situations. Beginning in the early '70s, Straub and Huillet began dissecting costume dramas and stage dramas. Architectural ruins played key roles from the start, in films such as *Othon* and *Moses und Aron* (Moses and Aaron, 1975), as did commemorative monuments—the statue of Julius Caesar in *History Lessons*; the Communards' Wall in Paris's Père Lachaise Cemetery, in *Toute révolution est un coup de dés* (Every Revolution Is a Throw of the Dice, 1977)—often filmed in contrast to the wild vegetation of parks, woods, or mountainsides. "Every book, every film, every object that comes down to us from the distant or the near past, may be regarded as a document of its own time," Gilberto Perez observed in his study *The Material Ghost* (1998). "Straub and Huillet's films are consciously made as documents of their own time and set in a kind of dialogue with documents of earlier times . . . as well as in a dialogue with future times, the times when audiences will be watching the film."[3]

Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet on location during the filming of *Moses und Aron* (Moses and Aaron), 1975, Alba Fucense, Italy, August 1974. Photo: Bernard Rubenstein.

At the beginning of their collaboration, Straub and Huillet determined to make the nearly plotless film based fundamentally on Bach's music that would eventually be realized in the form of *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*. Soon after, they planned to film Schönberg's incomplete opera, *Moses and Aaron*. But before they could muster the means to do it, they made the fifteen-minute essay film *Einleitung zu Arnold Schoenbergs Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielscene* (Introduction to Arnold Schönberg's "Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene," 1973), which fuses Schönberg's eponymous musical composition (the score to which bears the laconic instruction "Threatening danger, fear, catastrophe"), his indignant letters to Kandinsky refusing Bauhaus protection as a Jewish "exception," Brecht's indictment of fascism as a function of capitalism, stock footage of American planes loading and dropping napalm bombs on Vietnam, and newspaper headlines announcing the exoneration from war crimes of the architects of Nazi gas chambers.

The collaged elements in the film mainly point to a reconciliation between the mutually hostile positions of Brecht and Adorno with respect to the moral obligations of art. In their refusal of doctrinaire didacticism, Straub and Huillet often even exceed Adorno's prescription for hermetic, autonomous works of art, which, he argued, are, under the logic of consumerist capitalism, inherently political—indeed, more purely so than overtly "committed" art, of the sort called for by Brecht. Straub's frequent praise of John Ford's films as models of political cinema is anything but a defense of Ford's American triumphalism. Rather, he and Huillet found in Ford's avoidance of a "message" a genuinely "Marxist" cinema wherein the pure representation of historical situations is left open to the spectator's interpretation.

There are no concrete allusions to historical events in Straub and Huillet's next film, *Moses and Aaron*, the most unconventional opera film ever made (and to my mind the greatest). It is as well a rigorous exfoliation of the types of shots available to a film that would maintain a vestige of dramatic continuity while systematically eschewing any gesture to secure viewers' identification or engagement. The work is framed by two scenes, each composed of a single shot. In the opening, we see Moses from behind his left shoulder for more than four minutes and hear him responding to a chorus representing the unseen Burning Bush of Exodus 3. (Where Schönberg suggested a pluralizing of the voice of God by using a chorus of six voices, Straub and Huillet identified the voices of the people with that of the bush [*vox populi, vox dei*].) Finally, the camera slowly rises, drifting away from Moses, over the low walls of a Roman amphitheater in ruins; it keeps rising as it pans left, revealing the arid vegetation of the location and recording the sky's change from pale blue with cumulus clouds to ominously overcast before resting for about two minutes on twin mountain peaks now ambiguously located either behind or in front of the prophet—for the arc of the shot may indeed have encompassed 360 degrees. The final shot comprises all of act three: Beside Lake Matese, with Mount Miletto in the background, we see Moses standing staff in hand and Aaron bound on the ground with two soldiers standing over him. The camera tracks in on Aaron immediately, then, after two minutes, pans up to frame Moses alone for the final speech, nearly two and a half minutes in length.

If we accept Straub's claim, the singular qualities of the opening ten-minute-long shot must have been a

consequence of the locations where the filmmakers found themselves rather than a preplanned exercise fusing music and landscape in a cinematic expression of theological transcendence:

We shot [Moses and Aaron] *in the Roman amphitheater of Alba Fucense, near Avezzano, in Abruzzi. But we weren't looking for an ancient theater. What we wanted was simply a high plateau, dominated, if possible, by a mountain. . . . In the course of this research, we didn't see one plateau, no matter how beautiful, that was good for the sound, because when[ever] we found ourselves on a plateau, everything was lost in the air and the wind. And, if there was a valley, we were assaulted by the noises from below. . . . And in the end, we saw that to film in a basin, in our case the amphitheater, was better for the images also, because we had a natural theatrical space in which the subject, instead of being dissolved, was concentrated.*[4]

Although almost the entire film was shot in the amphitheater, no cut links the spatial arrangements of Moses, Aaron, the chorus, or the other figures of the Hebrews according to expectations. Frequently shooting down from the upper tiers of the theater, the filmmakers pan between individuals or groups and cut across the conventional axes of eyelines. Even in depicting biblical miracles, Straub and Huillet eschew the most elementary cinematic illusion: For the transformation of Moses's staff into a snake, we see the prophet alone in a lengthy shot before the camera suddenly tracks back as Aaron enters and grabs his staff. Only after Aaron, alone in a different shot, throws the staff offscreen do we follow, in a third shot, a snake crawling on the ground for more than a minute. Ever since Méliès, filmmakers have used stop-motion to depict miracles of this sort—but not Straub-Huillet. Again, when Moses is suddenly cursed with leprosy, the filmmakers cut directly from a shot of the chorus to a close-up of his infected hand, which forecloses on the trick effect. Later, Aaron pours blood from a jug, and subsequently pure water from the same jug, without any trick to show the blood changing to water. Then the filmmakers cut to two sweeping pans of the Nile at Karnak. (These are the only images that situate the film in Egypt.) Even when Moses abolishes the golden calf with his prophetic word, the filmmakers merely end a shot of the idol with a whiteout to represent the supernatural event.

By placing the opera in a natural and historical setting, Straub and Huillet undermine the ineffable transcendent dimension of Schönberg's scenario; the great opening shot suggests that Moses may be addressing a weather god, or deriving his abstract, transcendent God dialectically by negating a primitive nature god. The Roman amphitheater in ruins anachronistically asserts that a "divine" promise of eternal empire must be false. The snake is manifestly real; the leprous hand false; the leap from the water jar to the Nile is a purely cinematic trope, a gesture without counterpart in the opera or the Bible; the destruction of the calf is nothing more than a standard cinematic marker of transition.

Aaron poured blood that was purely symbolic; in many of their subsequent films, the landscape has been saturated with the real blood of massacred peasants, revolutionaries, and Resistance fighters: In *Fortini/Cani* (1976), Franco Fortini reads from his book on Palestine, *I cani del Sinai* (The Dogs of Sinai, 1967), while we see Italian sites where civilians and members of the Resistance were gunned down by German soldiers; the nine reciters of Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* (1897) sit in a circle in Père Lachaise near the mass grave of the final victims of the 1871 Commune; *Too Early, Too Late* (1981) pairs texts by Friedrich Engels about French peasantry and Mahmoud Hussein about the failed 1952 Egyptian revolution with footage of the places to which the two voice-over narratives refer.

Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, *Moses und Aron* **(Moses and Aaron), 1975**, 35 mm, color, sound, 105 minutes.

Moses and Aaron was the turning point in the cinema of Straub-Huillet from urban conflicts to rural landscapes. The masterpieces of this new mode, to my mind, are *From the Cloud to the Resistance* and *Der Tod des Empedokles; oder: wenn dann der Erde Grün von neuem euch erglänzt* (The Death of Empedocles, or When the Green Earth Will Glisten for You Anew, 1987), both shot in Italy. Two books by Cesare Pavese provided the sources for the former: *Dialoghi con Leucò* (1947), a collection of twenty-six dialogues between Greek gods, heroes, and monsters on the nature of sacrifice and violence (from which the filmmakers chose six), and *La luna e i falò* (The Moon and the Bonfires, 1950), a novel in which an Italian immigrant to America returns to Piedmont after World War II to learn of the tragedies of the German occupation and the brutal suppression of the Resistance. The usual affectless speech attains a level of perfection here, as the succinct precision of Pavese's words resonates against the rich fecundity of the landscapes, with their dazzling fluctuations of light and shadow. The long passage in which Oedipus and Tiresias, riding in an oxcart, fall silent after a sustained and probing dialogue, so that we hear without distraction the creaking and rumbling of the wooden wheels on the unpaved road—the matter of their conversation resonating in our minds—is among the most eloquent in the history of the art.

Apparently, Straub and Huillet edited four versions of Hölderlin's first draft of the drama *The Death of*

Empedocles. (Two years later, they would shoot *Schwarze Sünde* [Black Sin, 1989] from the third draft of the poet's text.) By filming the play in the environs of Mount Etna, the filmmakers have deflected the drama from a tragedy about the persecuted and rejected prophet-philosopher to a dialectic between gorgeous, archaic language and the vibrant play of light and wind in the stunning Sicilian landscape. The film ends on an idyllic image of green hills with slow-moving clouds over Etna in the background as Empedocles recites his farewell speech. After the long, incongruous shots of actors with diverse accents, dressed in togas, speaking the most sublime poetry in the German language, this finale asserts a Romantic fusion of mortal Being with the natural world: The vegetation is a deeper green than any seen earlier in the film; the white cloud to the upper left of the frame highlights the blue sky over the mountain peak in the center. Where Hölderlin's text presses the noetic power of language to conjure visions of both an archaic and a future utopian world, Straub-Huillet's combination of image and sound reveals a utopian present.

The even more wildly ambitious short film *O somma luce* (Oh Supreme Light, 2010) dares to attempt an ironic transformation of the final canto of Dante's *Commedia*, recited and sometimes read by Giorgio Passerone, sitting on a chair, in the Italian countryside. After seven minutes of looking at a black screen while we hear Edgard Varèse's *Déserts* (1954), we see and hear the Italian film scholar and author of a book on Dante wearing his signature red scarf. Twice the camera pans away from him to the surrounding hills, as if declaring that Dante's ecstatic vision of the summit of Paradiso exists to enrich the material world visible to cinema. It is Straub's Lucretian testament.

Similarly, in *Une visite au Louvre* (A Visit to the Louvre, 2004)—a series of static images of paintings Cézanne admired, accompanied by the reading of a text by the poet Joachim Gasquet, recounting the painter's impressions of them—Straub and Huillet had the genius to put a shot of trees along the Seine trembling in the breeze between paintings by Tintoretto and Ingres. Later, following the sentence "I am Cézanne," spoken over an image of Courbet's *Burial at Ornans*, 1850, they give us a two-minute-long circular sweep of a forest rivulet and vegetation, the only sound that of running water and birds. No film has ever represented the tension between cinema and painting more brilliantly.

Kommunisten (Communists, 2014) may be the closest Straub has come to an autobiographical film. It moves from an offscreen inquisitor in a nondescript interior (interrogating two men about their activities for the Communist Party in the '30s) to a present-day couple gloriously framed at a window overlooking a landscape in mild climate and, from there, first to a rehearsal in the woods that had been recorded when he and Huillet were preparing to shoot *Operai, contadini* (Workers, Peasants, 2001); second to a long static take of an Egyptian factory from *Too Early, Too Late*; third to slow back-and-forth pans over landscapes from *Fortini/Cani* and a few static shots of Fortini reading from *The Dogs of Sinai*—footage also borrowed from *Fortini/Cani*. Finally, a shot of the Italian countryside with Etna in the background (Hölderlin's German providing the voice-over) yields to a (greatly truncated) scene from *Black Sin*, in which Huillet, sitting on a wooded hillside, performs the final chorus of the third draft of *The Death of Empedocles*, a hymn to a "New World," where a revolutionary savior must come to make humanity accept nature's gifts.

The French critic Serge Daney shrewdly identified "resistance" as the essence of the cinema of Straub-Huillet: resistance to history, to cinematic conventions, and to audiences.[5] Straub resisted self-representation, autobiography, and any personal references throughout his career, yet in *Un conte de Michel de Montaigne* (A Tale by Michel de Montaigne, 2013), while rigidly maintaining this principle, he ineluctably succumbs to an oblique declaration of his personal history. Montaigne's words—read by Barbara Ulrich seated indoors before the elegant grate of a fireplace, or over a black screen or a shot of a bronze statue of the Renaissance writer, the shadows of shimmering leaves on it—take on a personal resonance, for the great essayist's reflection on the nearness of death found its way into Straub's cinema after he had been hospitalized in his eighties and, of course, after he endured his wife's death. Ulrich, his new collaborator/ amanuensis, here comes to represent a form of restitution and resistance to loss—and to the imminence of Straub's own death.

"Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet" travels to the Cleveland Institute of Art Cinematheque; Gene Siskel Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; Harvard Film Archive, Cambridge, MA; International House, Philadelphia; Tate Modern, London; TIFF Cinematheque, Toronto; UCLA Film & Television Archive/Los Angeles Film Forum; University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; dates TBD.

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NOTES

1. Joel Rogers, "Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet Interviewed: *Moses and Aaron* as an Object of Marxist Reflection," in *Jump Cut*, December 1976, 63.

2. Paul Coates, *The Gorgon's Gaze: German Cinema, Expressionism, and the Image of Horror* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 215–16.

3. Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 310.

4. Jean-Marie Straub in "Direct Sound: An Interview with Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet," in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, eds. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 151.

5. Serge Daney, "*Une morale de la perception ('De la nuée à la resistance' de Straub-Huillet)*," in *La rampe: Cahier critique 1970–1982* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma/Gallimard, 1983), 123–29.