



Où gît votre sourire enfoui? (Pedro Costa, 2001)

Oscar Pedersen Begyndelsen på latter og ømhed – En samtale med Pedro Costa

OP *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?* udkom i 2001. Beskæftigede du dig med Huillet og Straubs film inden da, f.eks. ved at vise deres film eller skrive om dem?

PC Jeg skrev aldrig om dem eller deres film. Det var måske den skjulte årsag til, at jeg gerne ville lave en film om dem, med dem... For at gøre op med den måde, deres film var blevet beskrevet på, som var skadelig og fuldkommen forbigik filmenes enkelthed. Jeg ville genindføre vigtigheden af deres film med et andet sprog... I slutningen af 1970'erne, måske var det i begyndelsen af 80'erne, var jeg i samme omgangskreds som de tre vigtigste straubianere i Portugal: Alberto Seixas Santos, João César Monteiro og João Bénard da Costa. Det var en tid kendetegnet ved dets mange sammentræf: João Bénard var meget aktiv og viste film på Gulbenkian – alle de klassiske amerikanske film: Han lavede fantastiske programmer om 30'erne, 40'erne og 50'ernes film. Cinemateca Portuguesa eksisterede ikke dengang. Han købte mange filmkopier, lavede nogle gange dubletter;

han var en discipel af Henri Langlois i den forstand. Paulo Branco begyndte også sin fantastiske karriere som producent på det tidspunkt. Nogle unge cinefile stiftede *M*, et fremragende filmtidsskrift, der indeholdt tekster om Eisenstein, Godard, Oliveira, Cordeiro/Reis, Strauberne. Nogle af skribenterne fra *Cahiers du cinéma* var her også, i Lissabon. António Reis, Seixas Santos og João Bénard havde inviteret dem til at lave nogle workshops på den dengang nyoprettede filmskole – folk som Jacques Aumont, Marc Vernet og Pascal Bonitzer. Cahiers-ugen var virkelig en stor mulighed for at se samtidens store film. De to hovedkræfter på det tidspunkt var Godard og Straub. Og så var der Chantal Akerman, Jacques Rivette, Raúl Ruiz og Marguerite Duras. Og inden for egne landegrænser var der Manoel de Oliveira, Margarida Cordeiro og Reis. Robert Kramer flyttede også til Portugal i tiden heromkring. Jeg kan huske, at der var fulde huse til Gulbenkian-visningerne. Det er utroligt at tænke på nu: Jeg så Straub og Godards film projiceret på et 30×15m lærred i et 1000-sæders auditorium. Det kommer aldrig til at ske igen... Meget af det, jeg ved om film, udsprang fra denne tid.

Jeg var heldig at være i Lissabon i den periode: jeg så allerede en del film, jeg skulle til at begynde på filmskolen og var meget optaget af musik. Der var en vis sensibilitet i luften. For mig blandede Straub-filmene sig med den tids musik. Jeg gik ind i biografen og derefter ind på mit værelse med mine venner og lyttede til Buzzcocks, Wire osv. Det hele var meget spændende. Filmene var spændende – det, de foreslog; deres form; menneskerne, der lavede dem og var omkring dem; ordene og pædagogikken. Det var fem år efter revolutionen. Al den sorg og en følelse af fiasko. Portugal forblev et fattigt land. En drøm, der ikke blev til virkelighed... Første gang Jean-Marie og Danièle kom til Portugal var omkring 1979, hvor de præsenterede deres film på Goethe-instituttet. Det var der, jeg så mine første Straub-film i biografen. Inden da havde

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jeg set og elsket *Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach* (1968) på tv en påskedag... Det var tider...

OP Mange filmskabere rejste til Portugal i revolutionsårerne 1974-76, heriblandt Robert Kramer, Glauber Rocha, Thomas Harlan, Daniel Edinger, Michel Lequenne og kollektiver som Oficina Samba og British Newsreel Collective. Nogle blev, andre rejste væk igen. Da Huillet og Straub ankom et par år senere, var de så tilknyttet denne kreds af filmskabere?

PC En af dem, de var mest interesserede i, var João César Monteiro. Jeg kan huske, at i tiden omkring *Klassenverhältnisse* (1984) var João César i gang med at udvikle et projekt om Marquis de Sade, og han ville gerne arbejde sammen med hele holdet fra *Klassenverhältnisse*. Der var en gensidig kærlighed mellem dem. Jeg tror, at Jean-Marie og Danièle havde nogle problemer med Kramers tilgang, teoretiske uenigheder. De var også en smule kritiske over for Oliveira. Det skyldtes klasseforhold... Danièle plejede at sige: "Han er ikke tvunget til at bære de mange filmdåser, på samme måde som vi er." Men de beundrede ham også. De bar filmdåserne, fordi de valgte at være deres egne producenter. De kritiserede voldsomt deres medfilmskabere, når det kom til produktionsanliggender. Det er noget af det, jeg har taget med mig: Produktion betyder noget, og den måde, du håndterer det på, vil have stor betydning for din films form, for ikke at tale om indhold. Deres liv og film var en hyldelse til kærligheden og livet, og de gik aldrig på kompromis. Man ville ikke se dem til fester i Cannes, men de var heller ikke 'freaks', tværtimod. Danièle arbejdede bare så meget... Hun var til stede til visningerne, interviewene og middagene, men så var hun også væk, hun skulle se til hundene og kattene. Jean-Marie var mere reserveret, men kunne godt lide at

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tale, han kunne godt lide en god diskussion, han kunne godt lide at blive konfronteret. Jeg er dog sikker på, at han var en glad mand, han bar ikke rundt på had, i modsætning til mange af de bitre folk i filmbranchen. Det var også det, jeg ønskede at vise med min film: jeg ville genindføre nogle sandheder om deres arbejde og liv, vise deres vitalitet, deres sensualitet, selv deres humor: for en gangs skyld at hævde, at de havde en enkel, direkte tilgang til film – at de ikke var radikale bæster, som næsten alle kritikere proklamerede. De var mennesker, der elskede denne verden, og som konstant reagerede og gjorde oprør, de reagerede på uretfærdighed, på ting, der ikke var helt rigtige. De var på vagt, det lå i deres natur. På tysk er “Straub” når en hund eller kat rejser børster... De reagerede på uretfærdighed, på ting, der var for vage. De gjorde, hvad de kunne, for at udrydde vaghed fra enhver filmproduktion.

Da min film udkom, blev jeg en slags forbindelse til dem... folk spurgte mig om dem. Men ofte på en lidt for hurtig måde. Hvordan havde de det? Hvordan kunne de overleve ved at lave film på en sådan måde? Og jeg var ret rystet over uvidenheden og arrogancen, da vi afholdt samtaler efter min film i de franske *ciné clubs*... en filmjournalist spurgte: “Hvordan var det at arbejde med Straub-brødrene?” Det er en uretfærdig verden. En verden, som afviser dem, som aldrig anerkender deres film. Og den totale glemsel vil snart komme, og deres film vil kun blive vist i nogle få fangehuller...

Men for bare et par måneder siden var jeg i Barcelona for at vise *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?*, *Sicilia!* og *Chronik* i Filmoteca. Efter visningen havde jeg en samtale med Esteban Riambau, direktøren for Filmoteca, og det var meget rørende. Salen var propfyldt. Der var omkring 400 pladser, og størstedelen af publikum var under 40 år. Esteban fortalte mig, at Straubernes film aldrig var blevet vist i Spanien. Ikke en eneste film var blevet udgivet, og der var kun blevet afholdt nogle få ukomplette retrospektiver gennem årene. At se så mange unge mennesker,

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der gerne ville se deres film, var meget rørende. Der skete noget under disse visninger. Måske skyldtes det det mulighedsrum, den dristighed, som Huillet og Straub skaber i deres film. Det rækker ud over filmene selv. Under de diskussioner, der fulgte efter visningerne, hørte jeg ikke nogen afvise filmene eller deres form, hvilket ellers ikke er unormalt. Der var et fælles ønske om at reparere, at vende tilbage til nogle af de ting, vi har mistet i filmkunsten – at vende tilbage til andre former for forhold til verden. Jeg kan huske, at en ung fyr talte om, at han aldrig havde set naturen så lys som i disse film. Og det er sandt; den er siden forsvundet. Det handler om en bestemt synsvinkel, et blik...

Kort efter visningerne i Barcelona blev *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?* og *Sicilia!* vist her i Lissabon, i Paulo Brancos biograf. Endnu en gang var der helt fyldt, 300 mennesker, et meget ungt publikum. Vi havde en tre timer lang samtale, Paulo havde villet lave den visning i lang tid; han tilhørte det øjeblik, Huillet og Straub kom fra. Han var en af dem, han har produceret og distribueret så mange film. Og nu er vennerne væk, Jean-Claude Biette, Serge Daney... det var en bevægende visning. Den gav mig en lille smule håb og styrke.

Jeg kan huske sidste gang, Jean-Marie og Danièle besøgte Portugal. På det tidspunkt kendte jeg dem, og de var meget glade. De havde været på tur rundt i Portugal med Seixas Santos. Jean-Marie var meget nysgerrig på det geologiske landskab i Alentejo-regionen, dets råhed og tørhed. Han sagde: “Hvis jeg ikke dør i Italien, vil jeg gerne dø i Alentejo.” I sidste ende skete ingen af delene.

OP For nylig genså jeg de film, du og Fitoussi har lavet om Strauberne. Danièle Huillet fremstår som den samme person i begge film. Hun er fokuseret, taler kun, når det er nødvendigt, og ellers er hun i baggrunden,

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hvor hun organiserer tingene. Straub synes derimod at være to forskellige personer. I din film fremstår han som en skuespiller, lidt af en performer. I Fitoussis film er han relativt stille. Selvfølgelig var han nødt til at være stille, da de i Fitoussis film er på optagelserne af *Sicilia!*, men jeg vil gerne høre dine tanker om dette.

PC Renato Berta, som har skabt mange film med Danièle og Jean-Marie, fortalte mig engang, at de nogle gange var nødt til at tage fat i Straub for at få ham til at falde til ro, han var så begejstret. Jeg var der et stykke tid, da de optog *Operai, contadini* (2001), og jeg lagde mærke til, at Straub altid gennemlevede øjeblikket med skuespillerne, han mimedede og gentog teksten lydløst, han ønskede altid at... være tættere på, måske. Jeg brugte også en måned på at se dem øve. Jean-Marie var meget opstemt, nogle gange var han lidt til besvær, endda lidt sentimental. Danièle var der for at holde Jean-Marie tilbage. Danièle var meget præcis og meget stærk. Hun arbejdede intensivt for at nå ind til essensen. Med hans hjælp. Og det var det smukkeste ved dem. At de var to. Som Jean-Marie sagde: "Det fungerer kun på grund af hende." Og hun ville sige: "Det er hans idéer. Jeg er her bare for at vise ham vejen." Det får mig til at tænke på historien om første gang Danièle så Jean-Marie i metroen og tænkte: Den fyr har brug for hjælp...

OP Huillet og Straub tog mange noter under prøverne og produktionen af deres film. Medbragte de dette i redigeringsrummet, eller lod de det ligge for bare at *være* med filmmaterialet?

PC Jeg tror ikke, de brugte det i klipningen. Robert Bresson udtrykte det bedst: at skrive, optage og klippe er alle selvstændige øjeblikke. Når du skriver, er det begyndelsen, du er i gang med at formulere idéer, og du ved ikke, om de vil

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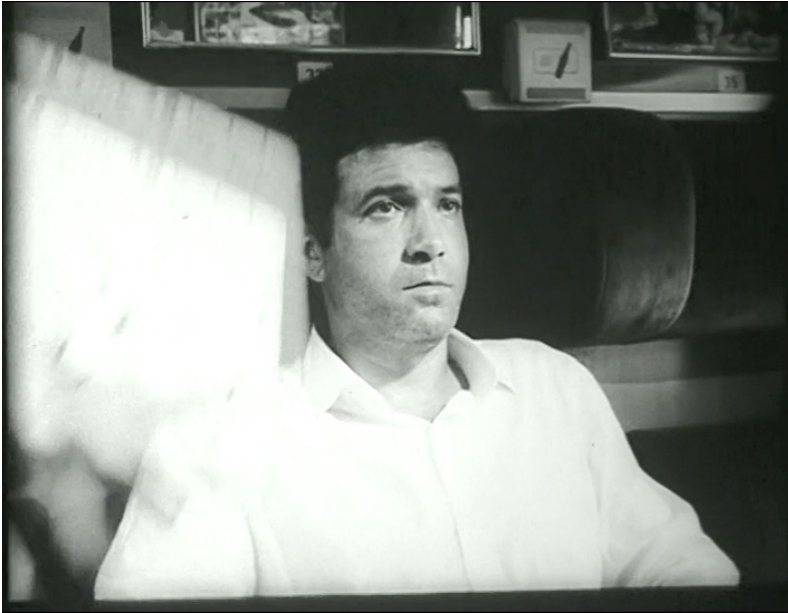
fungere. Når du er på optagelse, glemmer du det skrevne. Og at redigere indebærer, at man fuldkommen omorganiserer sin oprindelige idé. De var de mest bressonianske af alle filmskabere. Kun materialet betød noget, med dets bevægelse, spænding og indre rytme – der var ingen teori involveret. Jean-Marie plejede at kalde det 'høsten'. "I dag var høsten god, vi fik samlet til tre kurve. I går kunne vi kun fylde halvanden." Det hele udsprang af deres praksis. De kom fra en meget præcis måde at redigere menneskelig bevægelse på. Chaplin. De kiggede og så og studerede materialet med deres øjne. *Regardez, regardez, regardez!* som Danièle siger i filmen. Noterne blev lagt til side. Jean-Marie skrev og noterede selvfølgelig i alle de farvede øvetekster, og Danièle tog masser af noter under produktionen, og hun plejede også at skrive breve til holdet. Det var de smukkeste og mest hjælpsomme produktionsnoter, man kunne forestille sig: Kære den og den, vi ser frem til at modtage dig den 13. omkring klokken syv om aftenen. For at komme hertil skal du tage den eller den vej. Det er hurtigere at køre via A4, men hvis du tager M1, er der en smuk kirke, du bør besøge. Tag nu ikke for lang tid, for vi skal virkelig i gang med at indspille. Hvis du kan, så prøv at se springvandet på vejen. Hvis du skal stoppe for at spise, så spis på den eller den restaurant, og så videre.

OP Du indspillede *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?*, mens Huillet og Straub redigerede tredje version af *Sicilia!* Hvordan oplevede du deres arbejde med de forskellige versioner af deres film?

PC Til min overraskelse var det skuespillerne, der interesserede dem mest. Skuespillerne var folk, der aldrig havde hørt om Huillet og Straub, og som måtte finde tid mellem arbejdet på apoteket eller natarbejdet på fabrikken.

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De var fascinerede og interesserede i denne mærkelige form for arbejde. Og det var ikke på grund af penge eller berømmelse. Og de blev alle sammen venner. De arbejdede på teksterne i månedsvis. Da Danièle og Jean-Marie skulle redigere filmen og gennemgå optagelserne, var de så beundrende over for skuespillernes præstationer. Det var altid et helvede for dem at vælge mellem de mange *takes*. Jeg brugte meget tid på at tale med dem om det, vi talte også om det i forhold til Vanda og Ventura. Det påvirkede nemlig også min arbejdsmetode. Jeg er mindre optaget af andre værdier, billedmæssige, kompositoriske... jeg ser bare disse mennesker arbejde... så hårdt, 5, 15, 50 gange. Og jeg beundrer dette arbejde så meget. Det var altså disse mange forskellige *takes*, der fik Danièle og Jean-Marie til at lave forskellige versioner af filmene. Der var selvfølgelig også en økonomisk fordel forbundet til dette. De kunne tilbyde forskellige negativer, masterkopier, til de forskellige produktionslande. Den første version var på det landsprog, hvorfra de modtog finansiering. *Sicilia!* er en italiensk film, så den første version er italiensk. Derefter lavede de en version til Tyskland og en tredje version til Frankrig. De bedste *takes* blev lagt ind i den første version. Men de var ikke videnskabsfolk, så måske endte de bedste *takes* i den anden eller tredje version. Alle versioner af *Sicilia!* er forskellige. Timingen er anderledes, varigheden ligeså. En af versionerne er to minutter længere end de andre. Måske fik de idéen fra Renoir. For eksempel fra de forskellige versioner, Renoir lavede af *The Golden Coach* (1952). I et interview sagde Renoir, at han foretrak den engelske version, fordi Anna Magnani ikke kunne tale engelsk, så hun talte fonetisk. Og den indsats, det arbejde, hun lægger i udtalen, er så fantastisk. Accenten er fuldstændig vanvittig, og det tilføjer et lag til filmen. Jeg mener, at *Elena et les hommes* (1956) blev optaget på to sprog. Han optog den først på engelsk, derefter på fransk. Det gjorde Danièle og Jean-Marie ikke. Sprogene kom til udtryk i Danièles

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undertekster. Danièle og Jean-Marie havde flere anvendelige takes og ønskede ikke at spille dem.

OP Du nævnte Godard tidligere. Holdt Huillet og Straub sig opdateret med hans film?

PC Ja, beundringen var gensidig. Danièle var meget begejstret for Jean-Luc. Den aften, min film havde premiere på tv-kanalen ARTE, ringede Anne-Marie Miéville til hende og sagde: "Vi ser den nu, Jean-Luc og jeg, og vi føler os mindre ensomme." Jeg tror, Godard hjalp dem en del i svære tider. Også økonomisk. Alle bekræfter, at Godard var en meget generøs mand. Men der var også en vis rivalisering mellem dem... Jean-Marie sagde altid, at de skulle være så forskellige som muligt... Danièle plejede at sige, at Godard brugte 50 år på at tale om sig selv. Hun mente, at han begrænsede sig selv, og at man er nødt til at træde ud af sig selv. Det var netop det, de formåede at gøre. Deres overbevisninger fastholdt dem på dette spor. Godard begyndte altid med filmenes form. Og formen ville så arbejde med sig selv og begynde at tænke. Jean-Marie og Danièles tilgang var næsten den modsatte; de startede med idéer og overbevisninger og arbejdede derefter på en form. Det var derfor, filmkunsten var så spændende i begyndelsen af 80'erne: Godard og Huillet/Straub befandt sig på hver sin side, men alligevel dækkede de hele spektret af horisonten. Selvom de kom fra den samme klassicistiske tradition, var de hinandens modsætning – og supplerede hinanden på samme tid. Sidst, men ikke mindst, en væsentlig faktor: Straub og Godard var fælles om en vis pædagogik. En pædagogik, som de producerede, som de tvang frem. Engang reflekterede vi over disse film og filmkunsten generelt, vi var afhængige af det, blev næret af det. Jean-Marie, Danièle og Jean-Luc var ikke kun de bedste kritikere, men også de bedste lærere. Det var de på et tidspunkt, hvor der også

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var nogle andre betydelige mennesker, der skrev “professionelt” i magasiner og aviser. Hvis du i dag vil læse noget interessant om en film, finder du det ikke i mainstream-medierne... I dag skal man grave dybt for at finde Cristina Fernandes og hendes blog eller Andy Rectors ting, for eksempel. Andy er en overlever. En eminent iagttager, som gør modstand og reagerer på film i en særlig form. En sand følgesvend for nutidens filmskabere, måske et af de sidste eksempler på den slags mennesker, filmmediet plejede at skabe, en, der elsker så højt, at han er nødt til at forlænge filmoplevelsen. Hélas... det er forbi, kritik, diskussioner, det findes ikke længere. Jean-Marie og Danièles film har brug for vores tanker, har brug for en konstant parallel tænkning. Kritikken plejede at være ledsagere til disse film, til denne periodes filmbevægelse. Dengang var det nødvendigt med pædagogikken, vi længtes efter disse idéer, disse associationer, på skrift, mundtligt, alt det arbejde, som Jean-Marie og Danièle, Godard, Reis, Rivette, Jean Rouch har gjort... Jeg tror, det endte med dem. Denne pædagogiske side af deres praksis var vigtig for deres film. De var store instruktører og store prædikanter. Første gang jeg så Jean-Marie Straub, tænkte jeg: “Den mand er en forkynder i en western-kirke.” Ligesom Joel McCrea i Tourneurs *Stars in My Crown* (1950): “Hear me now!”

OP Var Huillet og Straub interesserede i din måde at arbejde med digitalkameraet på, mens I indspillede *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?*

PC Danièle og Jean-Marie accepterede mig på grund af mit lille kameras “usynlighed”. Vejen dertil var meget bizar. Da Janine Bazin og André S. Labarthe inviterede mig til at lave filmen til *Cinéastes de notre temps*-serien, foreslog de, at jeg selv kontaktede Danièle og Jean-Marie. Vi vidste alle, at de ikke ville bryde sig om at blive filmet. Og det er helt forståeligt. “Vi er ikke superhelte,” plejede de at sige. De brød sig ikke om at

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efterlade spor, deres film var mere end nok. Desuden hadede Jean-Marie film om film. De er nemlig altid rundet af den samme kliché: et interview med filmskaber, filmskaber går drømmende rundt i Paris eller Berlin, et uddrag af en af hendes eller hans film... “Hvis du er kommet for at overtale mig,” sagde Jean-Marie, “til at gå en tur i skoven eller tage metroen for at posere og tale om kunst, så kan du godt glemme alt om det!” Jeg svarede: “Selvfølgelig ikke,” selv om jeg ikke anede, hvordan jeg skulle gribe filmen an... Jean-Marie konkluderede: “Du vil ikke finde nogen kunstnerisk hemmelighed ved at filme os!”

Tiden gik, og så ringede Labarthe pludseligt: “Jeg tror, de er blevet overbevist.” Så tog jeg til Paris. Jeg havde hørt, at de ville klippe en tredje version af *Sicilia!*, og jeg tænkte, at jeg kunne filme det daglige arbejde i klipperummet. Jeg var ret sikker i mit arbejde med mit lille kamera. Danièle så lettere mistænksomt på det og sagde: “Men ingen lys, og kom ikke for tæt på, jeg er ikke en hest!” Jean-Marie mumlede: “Vi har hørt, at du er en diskret sjæl.”

Senere fortalte Labarthe mig, at Jacques Rivette havde hvisket dem mit navn. Rivette var deres nære ven, og Rivette kunne godt lide mine film... Han havde lige set *No Quarto da Vanda*. Han havde fortalt dem, at jeg arbejdede med et lille kamera, uden lys, alene. Så Jacques Rivette beroligede dem, og jeg tror, jeg fortalte dem, at dette lille kamera kunne opfange og analysere små ting, som et mikroskop, det kunne optage små øjeblikke, som klipningen af et skud... intime ting, det kunne filme tanker. Eller som Godard ville sige, det kunne filme tankernes udfoldelse. Mens filmen udfolder sig, udfoldes tænkningen. Så det er derfor, denne film blev mulig. Og, som altid, gennem seriøst, hårdt arbejde. Og mens vi arbejdede, lærte vi hinanden at kende. Og vi blev venner. Det var begyndelsen på en masse latter og ømhed.

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Lissabon, 15. april 2023

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The Beginning of Laughter and Tenderness

– A Conversation with Pedro Costa

OP *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?* was released in 2001. Did you engage critically with the cinema of Huillet and Straub before that, for example, by showing their films or writing about them?

PC I never wrote about them or their films. And that's perhaps a secret reason why I agreed to do a film about them, with them... to avenge a lot of bad writing, which had been harmful to their reception and ignorant of its simplicity. I wanted to reinstate their films and their importance in a different way...

In the late 70s, or very early 80s, in Lisbon, I was around the three main Portuguese Straubians: Alberto Seixas Santos, João César Monteiro, and João Bénard da Costa. It was a time of great coincidence: João Bénard was very active, showing films at the Gulbenkian Foundation, all the classical American cinema, and extraordinary programs of the 30s, 40s, and 50s. The Cinemateca did not exist then. He bought prints, copied some; he was a disciple of Henri Langlois in that sense. Paulo

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Branco also began his amazing production streak at that moment. Some young cinephiles created *M*, a great film magazine that featured texts on Eisenstein, Godard, Oliveira, Reis/Cordeiro, and the Straubs. Some writers from *Cahiers du cinéma* were here as well, in Lisbon. António Reis, Seixas Santos, and João Bénard had invited some of the Cahiers people to do workshops at the then brand-new national film school – people like Jacques Aumont, Serge Daney, Marc Vernet, Pascal Bonitzer, etc. And the Cahiers Week was truly a great chance for us to watch contemporary films. The two main forces at that time were Godard and Straub. And then there were Chantal Akerman, Jacques Rivette, Raúl Ruiz, and Marguerite Duras. And closer to us, Manoel de Oliveira, Margarida Cordeiro and Antonio Reis. Robert Kramer was about to move and work in Portugal.

I remember there were full houses at the Gulbenkian. It is incredible to think of it now: I saw Straub and Godard's films projected on a 30×15 m screen in a 1000-seat auditorium, sometimes full... It will never happen again... Most of my learning came from this exciting moment.

I was lucky to be in Lisbon at this time, already watching films, about to go to film school, and being very into music. There was a certain sensibility in the air. For me, the Straub films mingled with the songs of that period. I stepped into a film and then into my room with friends and listened to Buzzcocks, Wire, etc. It was very exciting. The films were exciting, their proposals, their forms, the people around them, the words, and the pedagogy around them. This was five years after the Revolution. With all the grief and feeling of failure. Portugal remained a poor country. A dream that did not come true... Jean-Marie and Danièle came to Portugal around 1979 to present their films at the Goethe Institute. It was there that I saw my first Straub films on a screen. I had seen and loved *Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach* (1968) on public TV on Easter Sunday... Those were the days....

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OP Many filmmakers came to Portugal during the years of revolution: Robert Kramer, Glauber Rocha, Thomas Harlan, Daniel Edinger, and Michel Lequenne, among others, and groups like Oficina Samba and British News-reel Collective. Some stayed, others left. When Huillet and Straub arrived a few years later, were they affiliated with this scene of filmmakers?

PC One of the guys they were most fond of was João César Monteiro. I remember around the time of *Klassenverhältnisse* (1984), João César was developing a project about Sade, and he wanted to work with the whole technical crew from *Klassenverhältnisse*. There was a shared fondness between them. I think Jean-Marie and Danièle had quarrels with Kramer about theoretical issues. They were also a bit critical of Oliveira. It was rooted in class relations... Danièle used to say, "He does not have to carry the load of film cans as we do." But they had a certain admiration for him as well. They carried the load because they chose to be their own producers. They fiercely criticised their fellow filmmakers on production matters. This is one of the ideas I still carry: production matters and how you deal with them will determine much of your film's form, if not content. The Straubs' lives and films glorify love and life; they never compromised. You wouldn't see them at parties in Cannes, but they were not freaks either; on the contrary. Danièle worked so much... She would be there for the screenings, interviews, and dinners, but she moved quickly; she had to see to the dogs and cats. Jean-Marie was more aloof, but he liked to talk, he enjoyed a good discussion, he liked to be confronted. But I'm confident he was a happy man; he didn't hate, unlike many of those bitter guys in the film business. That's also what I wanted with my film: to put back some truths about their work and their lives, reclaiming their vitality, their sensuality, even their humour. For once, to claim that theirs was a simple, direct approach

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to cinema, they were not the radical beasts that almost all critics proclaimed. They were people who loved this world and were constantly reacting and rebelling, responding to injustice, to things that were not quite right. They were alert; it was their nature... "Straub" in German means raised hackles on a cat or dog... Responding to injustice, to things that were not quite right, to things that were too vague. They did everything they could to expel vagueness from filmmaking.

After my film, I became a sort of link... people asked me about them. But often in a too-quick fashion. How were they? How could they survive doing films in this manner? And I was pretty appalled with the ignorance and the indifference when we had discussions, after my film, in film clubs in France... One film journalist asked, "How was it to work with the Straub brothers?" ... It's a very unfair world. A world that refuses them, that never acknowledged their films. And oblivion will come soon, their films only to be screened in a few dungeons...

However, just a few months ago, I was in Barcelona. We showed *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?*, *Sicilia!* and *Chronik* at the Filmoteca. I did an after-screening conversation with Esteban Rimbau, the director of the Filmoteca, and it was very moving. The room was packed. Around 400 seats, most of the audience was under forty. Esteban told me that the Straubs were never shown in Spain. Not one film got released, and only a few partial retrospectives were held throughout the years. Seeing so many young people wanting to see their films was very moving. Something happened at these screenings. Maybe the possibility, the audacity that Huillet and Straub bring with their films. It goes beyond cinema. During the discussions that followed the screenings, I did not hear any refusal of the films or their forms, as I sometimes do. There was a shared wish to repair, to go back to things we've lost in cinema, to other kinds of relationships with

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the world. I remember a young guy talking about never having seen nature as bright as in these films. And it's true; it has since disappeared. It is a point of view, a gaze...

Shortly after the screening in Barcelona, *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?* and *Sicilia!* were screened again, here in Lisbon, at Paulo Branco's cinema. Again, packed, 300 people, a very young crowd. We had a three-hour conversation; Paulo also felt he had wanted to do that screening for a long time; he belonged to that moment. He is one of them, having produced and distributed so many films. And now the friends are gone, Biette, Daney... it was a moving screening. It gave me a little bit of hope and strength.

I remember the last time Jean-Marie and Danièle came to Portugal. At that point, I knew them, and they were very happy. They had done a small tour around Portugal with Seixas Santos. Jean-Marie was very curious about the geological landscape of the Alentejo region, its roughness and dryness. He said, "If I don't die in Italy, I would like to die in Alentejo." Ultimately, neither happened.

OP I recently revisited the films you and Fitoussi did on the Straubs, respectively. In both films, Danièle Huillet appears the same: she is focused, speaking only when necessary, and otherwise, she is in the back, organising things. Straub, on the other hand, seems to be two different people. In your film, he resembles an actor, a bit of a performer. In Fitoussi's film, he is relatively quiet. Of course, he needed to be quiet as they were filming *Sicilia!* but I would like to hear your thoughts on this.

PC Renato Berta, who made many films with Danièle and Jean-Marie, told me that sometimes they had to grab Straub to sustain him and quiet him down in his excitement. I was there for a while when they were shooting *Operai, contadini*

(2001), and I saw Straub always living the moment with the actors, miming and repeating the text silently, always wanting to... be closer, maybe. I also spent a month watching them rehearse. Jean-Marie was exalted, sometimes a bit inconvenient, even a little sentimental. Danièle was there to restrain Jean-Marie. Danièle was very concise and very strong. She worked intensively to get to the essence. With his help. And that was the most beautiful thing about them. That they were two. Like Jean-Marie said: "It only works because of her." And she would say, "It's his idea. I am just there to guide him." It makes me think of that story about the first time Danièle saw Jean-Marie in the metro and thought: this guy needs help...

OP They made extensive notes during the rehearsal and production of their films. Did they carry this into the editing or leave it behind to simply *be* with the material?

PC I don't think they used it in the editing. Bresson expressed it the best: writing, shooting, and editing are all autonomous moments. When you are writing, it's the beginning, you are formulating ideas, and you don't know if they will work. When you are shooting, you forget the writing. And then editing means completely re-ordering your original idea. They are the most Bressonian of filmmakers. Only the material counted, with its movement, tension, and inner rhythm – no theory involved. Jean-Marie used to call it the harvest. "Today, the harvest was good; we got three baskets. Yesterday, we just had one and a half." It was all derived from the praxis. They came from a very precise way of editing human movement. Chaplin. They just watched and looked and studied the material with their eyes. *Regardez, regardez, regardez!* like Danièle says in the film. The notes were put aside. Of course, Jean-Marie wrote and noted all those coloured

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rehearsing texts; Danièle took lots of notes during production, and she also used to write letters to the crew. They were the most beautiful and helpful production notes you could imagine: Dear so-and-so, we will be expecting you on the 13th around seven in the evening. To get here, you take this or this road. It is quicker to take the A4, but if you take the M1, there is a beautiful church you should visit. Don't be too long because we really must shoot. If you can, try to see the fountain on the way. If you have to stop to eat, eat at this restaurant, and so on.

OP When you recorded *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?* it was during the editing of the third version of *Sicilia!* What was your experience with them as they were working on the different versions of their films?

PC To my surprise, their centre of interest was the actors, truly. People who had never heard of Straub, who had to find time between working at the pharmacy or in the factory at night. They were intrigued and interested in this strange kind of work. And it was not because of any money or fame. And they became friends. They worked on the texts for months. When Danièle and Jean-Marie got to the editing and saw the rushes, they admired the actors' performances. It was always torture for them to choose a take. We talked a lot about it, we also spoke about Vanda and Ventura. And it happened to me, too; I care less about other values – pictorial, compositional. I am just watching these people work... so hard, 5, 15, 50 times. And I am in awe of this work. This led them to make different versions of the films, using the different takes in different versions. Of course, there was also an economic side to this. They could offer different negatives, masters, to their different production countries. Their first version was in the country's language from where they received the funding. *Sicilia!* is an Italian film, so the first version is Italian. Then a second

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version to Germany and a third version to France. The best takes go into the first film. But they were not scientists, so maybe the best ended up in the second or third version. All versions of *Sicilia!* are different – different timing, duration, and so on. One is two minutes longer. Maybe they got the idea from Renoir – for example, the various versions of *The Golden Coach* (1952). In an interview, Renoir said he preferred the English version because Anna Magnani couldn't speak English, so she spoke phonetically. And the effort, the work she does is so amazing. The accent is completely crazy, and it adds a layer to the film. On *Elena et les hommes* (1956) Renoir shot in each language, I believe. He did one take in English, and then in French. Danièle and Jean-Marie didn't. The languages were expressed in Danièle's subtitles. Daniele and Jean-Marie had several usable takes and did not want to waste them.

OP You mentioned Godard earlier. Did they keep up with his films?

PC Yes, the admiration was mutual. Danièle was very fond of Jean-Luc. The night my film premiered on the broadcast channel ARTE, Anne-Marie Miéville called her and said: "We're watching, Jean-Luc and I, and we feel less lonely." I think Godard helped them a lot through hard times. Even financially. Everybody confirms that Godard was a very generous man. But there was also some rivalry between them... Well, Jean-Marie always said they had to be different in every way... Danièle used to say that Godard spent 50 years talking about himself. She thought he limited himself and that you have to step outside of yourself. They always did exactly that. Their convictions kept them steady on that track. Godard begins with form. And the form would work itself and begin to think. Jean-Marie and Danièle's approach was almost the opposite; they

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started with ideas and convictions and then worked on a form. That's why cinema was so exciting at the beginning of the 80s: we had Godard and Huillet/Straub on opposite sides yet covering the whole spectrum of the horizon. Even if they came from the very same classical tradition, they were each other's opposite and, at the same time, complementary. Last but not least, one crucial factor: Straub and Godard shared and produced and provoked a certain pedagogy. We used to *think* about those films and cinema, we relied on it, we were nurtured by it. Jean-Marie, Danièle, and Jean-Luc were not only the best critics but also the best teachers. And at that time, there were also some considerable people writing 'professionally' in magazines or newspapers. Today, if you want to read something interesting about a film, you won't find it in the mainstream media... Today you'll have to dig deep to find Cristina Fernandes and her blog or Andy Rector's things, for example. He's a bit of a survivor. A brilliant observer who resists and reacts to film in a different form. A true companion for filmmakers working today, maybe one of the last examples of what a kind of human cinema used to create, one who loves so much he has to prolong the film experience. Hélas... it's over; criticism, discussion, it's gone. Jean-Marie and Danièle's films need our thoughts, a constant parallel thinking. They used to be companions to these films, to that movement. We needed that pedagogy; we longed for those ideas, those associations, in writing, orally, all the work done by Jean-Marie and Danièle, Godard, António Reis, Jacques Rivette, Jean Rouch... I guess it ended with them. This pedagogical side of their practice was important to their films. They were great directors and great preachers. The first time I saw Jean-Marie Straub, I thought, "This man is a preacher in a western church." Just like Joel McCrea in Tourneur's *Stars in My Crown* (1950), "Hear me now!"

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OP Did they ever express interest in your way of working digitally when making *Où gît votre sourire enfoui*?

PC Danièle and Jean-Marie accepted me because of the 'invisibility' of my small camera. Through a very bizarre route. When Janine Bazin and André S. Labarthe invited me to shoot the film for the *Cinéastes de notre temps* series, they suggested I contact them. We all knew Jean-Marie and Danièle wouldn't like to be filmed. And it's completely understandable. "We are not superheroes," they used to say. They didn't like the perspective of leaving traces behind them; their films were more than enough. Furthermore, Jean-Marie hated films on films. It is always the same cliché: an interview with the filmmaker, the filmmaker walking dreamily in Paris or Berlin, an excerpt of one of their films... "If you have come here to convince me," Jean-Marie said, "to take a walk in the woods, or take the subway, to pose and talk about art, I won't do it!" I replied, "Of course not," even though I didn't have a clue about how to go about it... Jean-Marie concluded, "Filming us, you won't find any artistic secret!"

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Time passed, and then André Labarthe called again, "I think they are convinced". So, I went to Paris. I had heard they would edit a third version of *Sicilia!* and I thought I could film their daily work in the editing room. I was pretty confident in the work with my small camera. Danièle looked puzzled and said, "But no lights, and don't come too close, I'm not a horse!" Jean-Marie mumbled, "We've heard you are a discreet soul."

Later, Labarthe told me that Rivette had whispered to them a word about me. They were close friends, and Rivette liked my films... He had just seen *No Quarto da Vanda*. He told them I worked with a small camera, without lights, alone. So Rivette calmed them, and I guess I told them

that this small camera could grasp and analyse small things, like a microscope, record small events, like the cutting of a shot... intimate things, it could film thoughts. Or, as Godard would say, it could film thought in action. While the film unfolds, thinking unfolds. So, this is why this film became possible. And, as always, through serious, demanding work. And while working, we got to know each other. And we became friends. It was the beginning of a lot of laughter and tenderness.

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