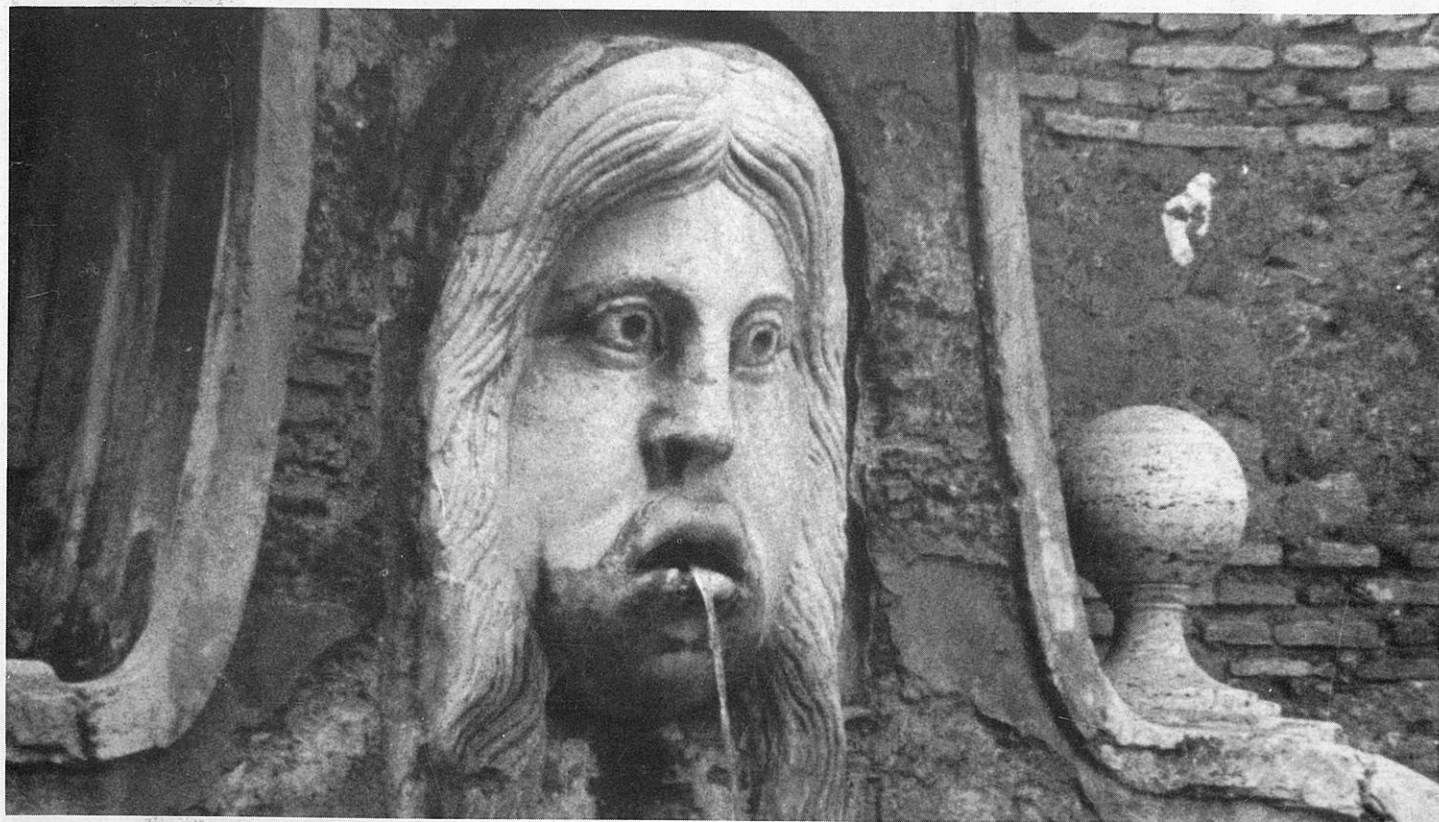


# Enthusiasm



# Enthusiasm

No. 1, December 1975  
UK and Eire £1.20  
Abroad \$3.00

Published and edited by  
Andi Engel, assisted by  
Pam Engel.

Cover Introduction to Arnold  
Schoenberg's *Accompaniment  
to a Cinematographic Scene*  
(Shot 1) and Portrait of  
Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle  
Huillet by Digne Meller  
Marcovicz

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Our thanks to Hans-Peter  
Böffgen, Danièle Huillet,  
Robin McMillan, Digne Meller  
Marcovicz, Leo Mingrone,  
Sebastian Schadhauer for the  
use of stills, as well as to the  
British Film Institute (Vertov,  
Notorious), Connoisseur (Le  
Petit Soldat), Contemporary (2  
ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle,  
Toni).

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Forty-five years ago Dziga  
Vertov made his film  
Enthusiasm, which has been  
called 'the first consequently  
and programmatically formu-  
lated sound film'. The choice  
of this name for the magazine  
has several built-in reasons.  
One of the central discussions  
will be about the relationship  
of image and sound because,  
although our eyes have  
developed considerably in the  
appreciation of images, our  
ears are still very conservative.  
Further, we want to be nearer  
to the film-maker (to begin  
with, a strong reason for  
publishing a film magazine is  
the wish to overcome the fear  
of making films oneself) and  
by informing about how a film  
had to be made, help to  
understand what it is or  
signifies. To achieve this we  
will concentrate on interviews,  
statements, documents, scripts  
and reports.

Another direction pointed to  
by the choice of Vertov/  
Enthusiasm is that this  
magazine is not much  
interested in industry-produced  
films, B-pictures, genre,  
melodramas or whatever all



Robin McMillan

these fashionable little boxes  
are called. We will promote  
those who work today without  
compromise and who push  
forward the development of  
film-making, like Straub/  
Huillet, and inform about  
those of the past who have  
done the same, like Vertov,  
without whom we would still  
be completely in the grip of  
the industry.

One field seldom covered in  
film magazines is that of  
distribution/exhibition which  
is, of course, an integral part of  
film-making and which will be  
looked at in Enthusiasm.

## Notes

In future issues, the front section of  
the magazine will be enlarged to  
include letters, short reports,  
information about projects, etc. In  
short, we want to get a discussion  
going because, although it might  
look more like a book, this is meant  
to be a periodical, and a periodical  
needs the contact with and support  
of its readers, or it is dead.

However, in the first issue we did  
not want to give the impression  
that the magazine is anything but  
what it is, i.e. a newcomer. So there  
are no contributions from readers  
yet but when they come the front  
pages of Enthusiasm will be given  
over to them.

About the price: if we sell every  
copy we just break even, without  
paying a single contributor or  
translator.

The stills from the Straub/Huillet  
films are frame enlargements, and  
although they haven't the crispness  
of American promotion stills, they  
document a specific scene and do  
not just give an impression.

Gregory's speedy translation of  
Danièle's French notes on his  
Work Journal enabled us to bring  
out the first issue in '75. We were  
pleased about this and would like  
to thank him for it. There is a  
picture of Gregory on page 39.

With the exception of Gregory's  
own text, everything in this issue  
had to be translated. This meant  
that a compromise had to be reached  
to try to preserve literary style  
without losing clarity; as they say:  
*Les traductions sont commé les  
femmes: lorsqu'elles sont belles,  
elles ne sont pas fidèles, et lors-  
qu'elles sont fidèles, elles ne sont  
pas belles.*



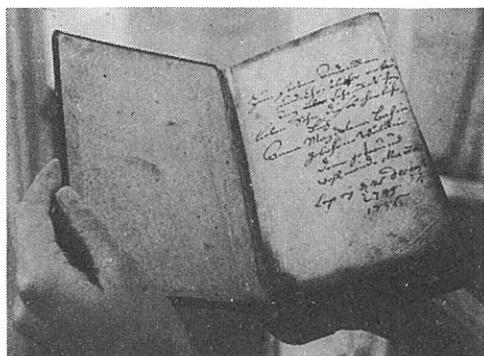
# Andi Engel talks to Jean-Marie Straub, and Danièle Huillet is there too.

Part one of this interview was recorded in London, February 1969, in German. It was transcribed by A. Engel, very faithfully translated by Arne Bors and published first in 'Cinemantics' No. 1, January 1970. It had a printing number of 1500, and is now out of print. John Mathews published two more good issues and a monograph: *The Mediate Future*, whose second (of three) parts reads: *Goodbye to all art. Good that. 'Cinemantics' was certainly the liveliest, most interesting of the film mags published in London since the war, and if it were still around, there would be no need for 'Enthusiasm'. Anyway, this version of the first part of the interview has been edited and some (slight) mistakes corrected.*

Part two was recorded in Edinburgh, end of August 1975 during the International Edinburgh Film Festival, which had invited both the Straubs and us. We shared a flat with them during the festival. Again it was made in German, transcribed and translated by A. Engel.

Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub, and Andi Engel in Edinburgh, August 1975.

Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach (Shot 104).



Approx. £20,000. Hubert Schonger, a West-German producer.

During the 2nd World War most of the art treasures which had been on display in Berlin's museums were sent for protective storage against bomb attacks either to the east (Silesia) or to the west (Rhineland and Lower Saxony). After the war the state of Prussia was dissolved by the allies and these collections were kept by the towns (Tübingen, Marburg, Celle) and exhibited there under the heading 'Sammlung Preussischer Kulturbesitz', as officially the previous owner, Prussia, was no longer in existence. Now, however, some of these pieces etc. have been sent back to (West) Berlin.

UFA stands for Universum-Film AG the huge production, distribution and exhibition monolith which Alfred Hugenberg had built up during the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany, with finance from the 'Deutsche Bank'. A successor organisation survived the end of the war, and is now again one of the leading West-German cinema chains, but nothing more.

Walter Kirchner of 'Neue Filmkunst' the persistent 'art' film distributor and owner of a small chain of art-houses in West-Germany.

Pallas was a fairly good distribution company, set up, I think, with finance from the French occupation forces, and therefore mostly handling French films. In that period (and to a lesser degree still) the West-German distributors were in fact also producers, because they gave advances or guarantees which enabled producers to raise the money or more money. 20,000 DM are approx. £4000.

Neither Pallas nor Filmaufbau exist any more.



Pam Engel

Andi Engel In 1958 you went to East Germany and visited various towns connected with Bach.

Jean-Marie Straub Eisenach, Arnstadt, Erfurt, Weimar, Dresden, Leipzig, Mülhausen . . . yes, and not only because of the towns, which in the end are not shown in the film. It was there I understood that one couldn't make the film in the original surroundings at all, because these have been altered in the nineteenth century. The Thomas school, where Bach lived for thirty years, was torn down around 1900. The Thomas church in Leipzig was altered by an organ in a horrible neo-gothic style . . . and at the same time I spoke to people, such as Neumann from the Bach Archive in Leipzig, and we started collecting manuscripts. The things you see in the film we found in the State Library, Unter den Linden, East Berlin, and in the Bach Archive — we copied them on microfilm, ten times as much as we left in the film. Danièle accompanied me now and then and in between went to Paris to get some money. In the meantime I went to see Böll. It was like this: we were in Paris — basically we could have made the film in 1959. It might nearly have worked out that . . . we were short of 100,000 marks. If we could have found 100,000 cash, then Schonger would have risked the rest. Originally we had calculated it at 400,000, which it finally came to. We had finished the script back in '58, and then I was looking for someone who — I thought it was necessary to take the texts from the eighteenth century — who could have helped me modernise the texts a bit without completely killing the language. And then I got to know someone in Paris, who was a friend of a certain Böll. I hadn't read anything by him yet, and went to see him. Böll then read the texts — in the meantime I had been to Tübingen and Marburg where most of the manuscripts and scores which are not 'over there' are contained in the Prussian Kulturbesitz — then Böll read them and thought he wouldn't change a thing . . . he suggested I should put 'to appeal' in place of *vozieret* — two little things — and he said, 'I find it very good, I wouldn't change a thing in it'. Then I took heart and fought for it, determined to keep this language. But that was of course the difficulty, as it still is now, because everybody told me, nobody can understand that, and then I slowly realised that it was an essential part of the film . . . it isn't really a cultural film about Bach, but a film where the language is just as important as a journey of discovery in his mind, as important as the music itself.

A.E. Maybe we could go back to your first film.

J.-M.S. Yes, well then it came to nothing in '59. In that year we sent it to Bonn, and later, when things went wrong, in '59 . . . that is why I went to UFA in '58 . . . I tried everything from the small distributor to UFA. The only thing I achieved then . . . Schonger only shrugged his shoulders, and that was not very wise, because now we have received nothing more from Kirchner — now the film exists. There was a certain Ehrhart at Pallas in Frankfurt, and he knew Abich. Abich was very interested in the film and tried time after time. Abich was from Filmaufbau in Munich, and he's now the television director in Bremen. Anyway, through Abich I met Ehrhart, and we had long discussions; he told me, '20,000 mark guarantee from the distributors and we will take on the publicity ourselves'. They would have brought out the film in a big way. He had even read the scenario properly, and thought, 'We won't risk more than 20 in distribution guarantee, but the film is of enough interest to us, because it might just be a success'. Then Ehrhart crashed into a tree in Switzerland and then the Pallas company slowly went bankrupt. Then later Abich tried Bavarian television — they had a series called 'Portraits of Musicians' — they would have to tell us how it should be done before they could even think of financing it: then they showed us a thing where Rossini was preparing *tournedos* and then Abich said, 'They are not really the sort of people we want'. And so we were sitting there, and it didn't come to anything after all

Trades Union newspaper published in the Rhineland, where Heinrich Böll lives.

DEFA stands for Deutsche Film AG and is the East-German state film company in charge of production, distribution, and exhibition.

Rob Houwer, West-German director and producer.

Straub had left Paris 1958 to escape being sent to Algeria as a soldier to repress the uprising of the Algerian people. He was, of course, declared a deserter, and only in Autumn 1970 was allowed to return to France without risking prison.

Renoir's *Toni*.



'Every detail, every second of each shot makes *La Nuit du Carrefour* the only great French thriller, or rather, the greatest French adventure film of all.'  
J.-L. Godard

with TV. In the meantime I had read a short story by Böll in 'Welt der Arbeit' called 'Bonn Diary' . . . no, that was later. At first I read a book of his called 'Billiards at Half Past Nine', and I liked that, and immediately wanted to turn it into a film. This was the second project. The first film we made, *Machorka-Muff*, is really the third project. By now the Ministry of Culture in Düsseldorf, a certain Frau Schmücker, had rejected a grant four times. Now DEFA said it was clearly a documentary, and too expensive as a documentary, while at the same time we received a letter from Schmücker, saying it was clearly a fiction film, and according to the rules they wouldn't finance any fiction film. This was a bit of a joke . . . because later they financed *Brot der frühen Jahre* for instance. Then I wanted to film 'Billiards at Half Past Nine' and handed it in again, with Schonger as producer once more — I handed it into Bonn and it was rejected — at the end seventeen people were reading the script in Bonn . . .

A.E. This version of 'Billiards' is not the same as the one you made later?

J.-M.S. It is.

A.E. But you told me, the first time we met in Munich, that the only thing you did when you still couldn't start shooting was constantly cut out scenes that weren't absolutely necessary.

J.-M.S. Yes, that is true. And then, as it came to nothing again, then even Houwer . . . that was the last person I tried when Bonn and Schmücker had refused again. That was in the beginning of 1960. Then suddenly everything went faster, as our impatience grew and grew.

A.E. Sorry to interrupt you all the time. Were you already in Munich then?

J.-M.S. Since the end of '59. At that time we just couldn't find any money, we had to marry — we wanted to — then we took this flat in Munich, towards the end of '59. Until we had reached the stage where we could have married, and then couldn't . . . it was April 1960. We then had to go to the Registry Office and sign a statement that basically we weren't married at all . . . under no circumstances did we have the right to a civil marriage and so if children came along, I would have to adopt them because the French authorities refused to grant the necessary papers. So the last one was Houwer . . . he even read it quite thoroughly. He is one of the few who did read it properly. He even said he found it exciting right through to the last quarter, but there somehow it wasn't exciting any more, and he would rather like to make it. 'Did I insist on original sound?' and I said: 'Yes. Well, what does one do when one is actually shooting? All they do is talk — one just can't film people who move around without saying anything — that is simply boring.' 'Well,' he said, 'if it is like that, then I will have to think it over until after Easter, and then I'll give you my answer.' That was during the Easter week. And after Easter Monday I phoned him and he said, 'No, not with original sound. You are going to come to me afterwards and say you are not happy with the sound and you want post-synchronisation, that will cost me twice as much.' Then I said, 'If you like I'll sign here and now that I won't be unhappy and that if I don't like the sound you can do anything you want with the film', and he said, 'No, and besides, I won't have any time, I have an order from the Ministry of the Interior, and it's essential that I be there, when you are shooting'. I said, 'Yes, but you have von der Heydt' — but that was shortly after *Marchorka-Muff* — I have just jumped a bit — where we used him as production manager, and got along with him quite well. 'Yes, I know him all right, but I would still like to be there. Without me there you won't make the film.'

A.E. When you were taking a strong position about original sound in the beginning of the 60s . . .

J.-M.S. Yes, they all thought I was crazy.

A.E. Where did you get your assurance to film with original sound at all cost?

J.-M.S. The films which at that time made the strongest impression on me, such as *Man Aran*, relied precisely on sound, and on original sound.

A.E. Were the Leacock films in existence at that time?

J.-M.S. Well I hadn't seen any. I remember I read about Leacock, the first time . . . that was in 'Télérama', after *Not Reconciled*, then two of his films were shown in Paris, *Eddie Sachs* and . . .

A.E. You should be quite pleased today, because when someone like Polanski after *Rosemary's Baby* says that 'he doubts whether one can make films at all without original sound . . .'

J.-M.S. That is my position, but Rossellini did it too, and Renoir in particular. The most beautiful films in existence are the first sound films by Renoir, not only because they speak so beautifully with a southern French accent, but because of the fact that it is original sound. For me one of the ten most beautiful films is *La Nuit du Carrefour* by Renoir, the thriller taken from Simenon's novel, . . . anyway the film is one of the best thrillers in existence . . . in that I agree completely with Godard.

A.E. But there were technical reasons. They couldn't post-synchronise.

J.-M.S. No, they could always post-synchronise. Only they had to record the sound optically while shooting. That is why you notice the cuts so strongly . . . they could not mix and correct afterwards . . .

A.E. How could they have post-synchronised then?

J.-M.S. They could have shot in a studio using optical sound . . . of course not lip-sync.

A.E. As in *Blackmail* — Anny Ondra only moves her lips, while another girl shouts the text. But afterwards they couldn't change anything.

J.-M.S. But this sound of the first talkies remains for me the best that has ever been done. A film like *Man of Aran* was one of the things that made the strongest impression on me. And *Toni* and *La Chienne* and again *La Voix Humaine* or *Miracolo* by Rossellini. In *La Voix Humaine* you can hear the dolly moving. That is very beautiful. Not if one does it systematically, like the stupid intellectuals who say: 'I will

let people hear the dolly, so that they remain conscious of being in the cinema.' I don't follow that. But if it is there and comes in by itself, then one shouldn't hide it. The idea of using original sound . . . with the Bach project I became convinced of the necessity of original sound, since there I understood that it only made sense if you recorded everything together with the picture. And the other projects grew out of the Bach film.

A.E. Could we talk about *Machorka-Muff*?

J.-M.S. Well, before I went to Houwer as the last one with the idea for *Not Reconciled* I had read 'Bonn Diary' and at that time Witsch didn't have the rights and so Böll could simply give them to me. Then there were the important elections in Germany. Böll had published that story in 'Welt der Arbeit' the day before the elections, the ones that consecrated rearmament. I liked it very much, not because I wanted to make a film of it. I believe one can't make a film of any book — because one films something about a book, or with a book, but never of a book — one films always from one's own experience. A film lives and exists only when it is based on the experiences of the so-called director. The reason I wanted to make a film about it at once was precisely my first strong political feelings, as I was still a student in Strasbourg, and which I still had. That was my first bout of political rage — exactly this story of the European defence community, i.e. the fact that Germany had been rearmed — the story of a rape. That is to say, the only country in Europe which, after a certain Napoléon, the first gangster in the series, had the chance to be free. This chance was destroyed. I know for a fact that in Hamburg people threw stones at the first uniforms, i.e. people didn't want them, they had had enough of it.

A.E. How did you pay for *Machorka-Muff*?

J.-M.S. *Machorka-Muff* cost exactly 30,000. Rather expensive, because we didn't receive the uniforms from the Federal Army, but had to have them made.

A.E. In 35 mm?

J.-M.S. Yes, yes, and also with original sound, except for the streets in Bonn, since I had been persuaded that it would be cheaper, without it. That was the reason I swore never to film silent again, unless it was a film that would demand it. This decision dates from this time, when I let myself be persuaded by Krüttner that it would be cheaper and would go quicker and only in the street in Bonn . . . shooting silent. And I did it and afterwards I regretted it because then I had to go down to Bonn when the fine cut was ready, and on every spot where the camera had been, I held up a microphone to record the noises and I found out how annoying it is to post-synchronise a film and just how meaningless it is. Because there was also the sentence on the Petersberg, which had to be post-synched — that was the Bonn complex, where the girl says: 'That's how I feel every time I'm a bride', and also the sentence in the *Münster* in Bonn, 'your eighth (husband) will be a general' — true, it didn't take much time, half a day in the studio, because I had been shooting as if I had been recording sound as well, i.e. exactly the same time as would be needed to make it synchronous, but then I found out how boring it is. At that time they also wrote in 'Der Spiegel' that I would go into film history because I had gone to Bonn to record the tramways, they should be the same in Munich or anywhere. But that isn't true, the sound is very different. First they aren't the same kind of cars and carriages, and the sound on a corner in Bonn is not all the same as on a corner in Munich.

A.E. This is the usual opinion that the sound is just an illustration of the picture. Something a man makes in the back room with two pieces of tin.

J.-M.S. Exactly. Because they don't believe in film . . . and so in cinematography, the 'matter' — the 'matter' as in the pictures by Cézanne, which is so laid-on — they deny this simply because they don't know that it is a complex of image and sound, and not an illustration of the sound by the image or an illustration of the image by the sound. Well we got twenty from Atlas, since in the meantime we had tried to get a distribution guarantee from Atlas for the Bach film, and Eckelkamp didn't want that — he would have done it if we had been filming with Karajan. I said that was out of

Approx. £6000

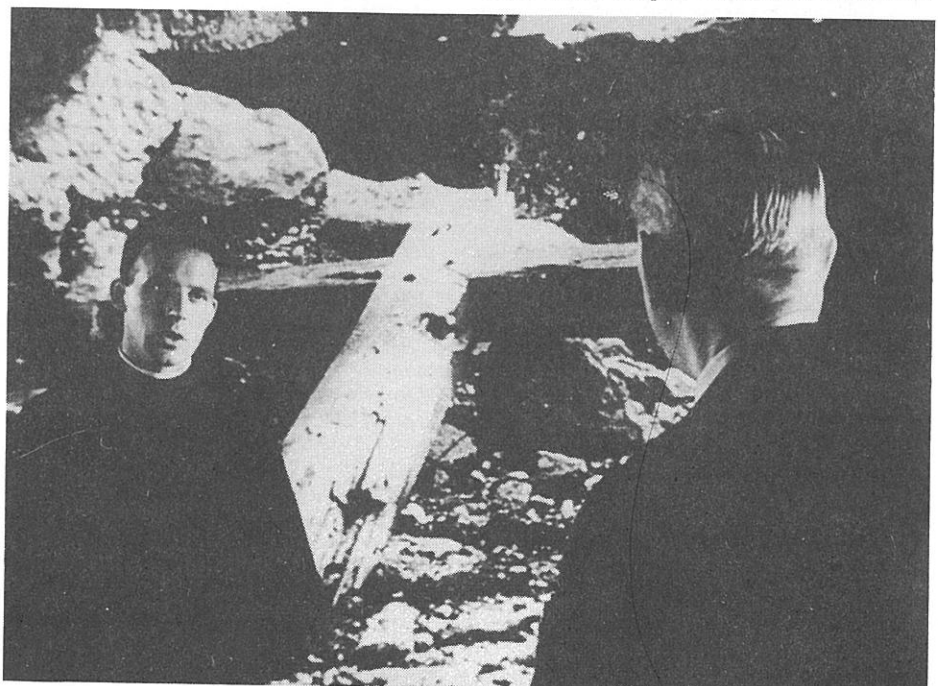
Walter Krüttner of 'Cineropa' a production company in Munich.

*Machorka-Muff*: Renate Lang (Inniga von Zaster-Pehnnunz) and Erich Kuby (Erich von Machorka-Muff).



Approx. £4000. Atlas Film was then the leading 'art' film distribution company, very well known because its owner, Hanns Eckelkamp, a cinema proprietor from Westphalia, had the knack to promote his films well, helped in no small way by his little presents to journalists. Strangely enough he choked so to speak on his biggest success, *The Silence* by Ingmar Bergman, because that was such a phenomenal financial success that afterwards he bought every film he could lay his hands on and could never repeat this success and went bankrupt. He still has his cinemas though, in the name of his wife, of course.

*Not Reconciled*: Martin Trieb (Abbot) and Heinrich Hargesheimer (Heinrich Fähhmel) in Shot 76.



As far as I know the only back-projection in any of the Straubs' films.

the question — I knew exactly whom I wanted for the principal character, and Karajan doesn't play the harpsichord. And then at the same time I brought him the little scenario for *Machorka-Muff* and he had also received the scenario for 'Billiards at 9.30' directly from Böll, who tried to help us. However he said, 'It is too expensive. I won't make it. Who will pay for the blowing-up of the abbey?' He hadn't read it and had simply not noticed that we didn't have to show the explosion at all. And then suddenly there was a man sitting in the corner when I came personally to see Eckelkamp for the first time — it was a certain Heiner Braun, as I learned later, and Eckelkamp didn't have any time at all; I just pushed the ten pages of the little scenario for *Machorka-Muff* on the table and he was picking it up all the time and then he'd be called away to the telephone and then he'd come back; in the meantime the silent person had read it, then Eckelkamp comes back and the person says to him, 'You should do it. Do make it. It's rather funny.' That was Heiner Braun. Then Eckelkamp said, 'I'll give you 12,000 distribution guarantee for the film', because I had said I wanted Kuby as principal actor. It was quite a lot for a short film for Eckelkamp at that time and we wanted to produce the film with Abich. Then I quarrelled with the production manager, a certain Krause — I was at his mercy, since Abich was more often in Bremen, and this Krause later embezzled money from the company, and thus helped them go broke. And with this man — I realised that — I couldn't work. Looking for a place to live I met by chance Krüttner. He said, 'I'll produce it'. And then Krüttner took over. Krüttner did one good thing — he made Eckelkamp go up from twelve to twenty. Even though Eckelkamp in the meantime had become nervous. And before he went as high as twenty he sent me a certain Schleiermacher, who was not a bad person, to tell me he wouldn't do it after all, because it would cost too much. And so I said, 'But you promised me twelve', then he said, 'Yes, like this, not like that'. In the meantime he had read the little scenario himself. And then I said, 'Either I do it or no one does. You promised, one has to learn in this country that a film is made by a single person, otherwise it is not interesting. So Eckelkamp should either make the film himself, or leave it to me. In any case I won't be talked into anything.' And then Schleiermacher went back quite defeated and brought Eckelkamp around. And then it was increased to twenty. And the remaining ten we had to find ourselves from many different and even very small sources. And in the last minute we had to find another 1000 because of blackmail from Krüttner — the girl we wanted lived in Paris at that time . . . I knew that even before we got the idea of using her as she was the sister of the girl I had planned to use and finally did use for *Anna Magdalena Bach*. As we were looking for someone then for Inniga von Zaster-Pehnunz in *Machorka-Muff* the face of the sister of Christiane Lang, whom we had known for years, occurred among the faces of people we knew, and others. Once she had shown us home movies in her house and said, 'This is my sister. She works at the embassy in Bangkok.' It was in Frankfurt we saw this. Then this person from the home movie came to my mind again, and I phoned Christiane Lang and said, 'Where is your sister?' 'She's now in Paris with NATO'. She wanted to have the part and even got one week's leave, but she had to show them the little scenario and they said, 'Of all things you have to make an anti-war film'. Now came the blackmail from Krüttner. He said, 'No, I won't pay for the trip. There are enough girls in Munich who can replace this Lang.' And I said, that I wanted her and no one else. As I already knew her voice as well — she had accepted, had got her leave and I wanted her at all cost. Then we had to scrape together another 1000, i.e. 11,000 in all which we had to get together for Krüttner. Right from the start Krüttner had made me sign that I would have to renounce all fees for writing the scenario, directing and cutting and then it came to a quarrel. Eckelkamp came to the cutting-room and said, 'Where is my satire? The film is too long.' And then good old Krüttner joined Eckelkamp, and we had to take the cans home with us at night so that nothing should happen in the cutting-room until we had boxed the film through. And it was entered for Oberhausen, and was rejected. And then Eckelkamp said, 'As Straub has not fulfilled what was expected of him the short film *Machorka-Muff* will not be included in the Atlas programme'. But a year later he showed it anyway.

A.E. I remember you had wanted it as a short in front of a western.

J.-M.S. I thought they would never accept that. I meant it seriously. I had really made the film for the people who come to town on Friday or Saturday to go to the pictures and because of that the FSK cleared the film after three weeks and then only for adults eighteen years and over. These sixteen-year-olds shouldn't see the picture. And on top of that it was not cleared for holidays, which is a joke when you see what is accepted now. A similar film would just have been banned in France. Here it came through, because old Eckardt, who plays the prelate — honorary president of the Association of German Film Clubs — was ringing the censor all the time, because he was waiting to see himself in the film. And they told him, 'No, no, there were hard arguments. The film's going to be banned.' Then I learned six months later that they had sent the film to Bonn, but then something happened that would not have happened in France, where they would just have banned the film. There they have censorship and so forth — it's really bad — they would have banned the film, but then people in the film clubs would have asked for it . . . here it was the other way round, here even good people in Oberhausen, whose names I don't want to reveal — quite well-known left-wing intellectuals, came to me and said, 'This film must not be shown'. I said, 'Why not?' 'We will look ridiculous, we left-wing intellectuals, and we wouldn't get any more grants from Bonn if you make films like that.' That was the time these people were still fighting for their plans. Then I came to know Gierke, and tried to have him as a producer for *Not Reconciled*. After nearly everything was settled he lost his head after he had asked me, 'What have you done before this?' I said, 'Just a short film'. 'What's the name of this short film?' '*Machorka-Muff*.' 'Oh, I know that one', and then leapt to his feet. I asked, 'How come you know the film?' 'Well, in certain circles there was a lot of talk.' 'What circles?' 'In Bonn . . . it's out of the question. I'm an old officer. I'm still an old officer.' That's how it is.

A.E. Was the film ever shown in Germany before a feature film?

J.-M.S. Yes, but unfortunately not with a western. Atlas would have shown the ideal combination, a lot of people would have seen it with *The Silence*, people went there without choosing. Then they coupled it with a film called *French Dressing*, sub-titled

Heiner Braun of 'Neue Filmform' a distributor of 'art' films in Munich. Committed suicide.

Erich Kuby, well-known German, rather aggressive author.

Detten Schleiermacher, film-maker and producer.

FSK roughly translated Voluntary Selfcontrol (of the West-German film industry), in other words, the censor.

A group of young film-makers called the 'Oberhausener Gruppe', because they had published a manifesto at the Short Film Festival of Oberhausen in which they made a case for the financing of a 'new German cinema' by the state. In the long run it seems they got what they wanted, because the majority of the films now made (Fassbinder, Wenders, Kluge, Syberberg, etc.) would not exist without state and/or TV finance.



Godard's *Le Petit Soldat*.

*Machorka-Muff*: Erich Kuby.



Try it in French, and the film was so badly received that it disappeared. They gave in only after one-and-a-half years because some people supported the film and said, 'Why isn't this film distributed?' 'The sound was bad.' I always asked, 'What's the matter with the film?' 'The sound is bad.' Then I discovered that they referred to Kuby when he reads the commentary, 'My old girl friend, Inniga von Zaster-Pehnunz, of new nobility but from an old family, her father was created a peer by Wilhelm the Second, two days before he abdicated, but I have no hesitation in considering her as an equal' — he sits on the bed, he is really talking and it can't be called a commentary, because it is commentary that is not spoken as in cultural films — it is spoken naturally. Then they say, 'His lips don't move properly'. Then the film was paired with *The Last Laugh*, but *The Last Laugh* was of course *besonders wertvoll*. And *Machorka-Muff* was only *wertvoll*. So the theatre owners threw it out. The main film was open to anybody twelve years and over. 'But only older people go to see it', they said; but in the end, only the younger ones came. In that way the film was thoroughly exiled into the ghetto of art films — and everything was all right. It was a good coupling, I was pleased when it came on with *Le Petit Soldat*, but that was with subtitles, in the Atlas season, only a one-week show in the art cinemas in the biggest towns. Then I heard it had been transferred from *Le Petit Soldat* to *Alexander Nevski*.

A.E. Houwer withdrew because he thought *Not Reconciled* would be too expensive.

J.-M.S. So there we were sitting around. Danièle then made a very strict budget and we discovered that we could make the film in two parts. Namely two-thirds in one go. In fact that's how we did it. In six weeks around August '64 we shot the first two-thirds and at Easter we made the last third in three weeks, a total of nine weeks. Because we had different actors in the last third — the past — nothing could go wrong. Danièle had calculated that we could make the first two-thirds for fifty, then we could show this two-thirds in the naive hope that a distributor would come on the scene and pay for the last third, as well as copies and cutting. That was very naive of us, we hadn't received enough beating yet to know that it was hopeless to show just this. And then we collected 50,000 and that carried us for one-and-a-half years. There was one who was a dentist, I went to school with him in France, but he isn't exactly loaded with money. He also has four children. Another one writes books — a history professor — he wrote a book about 1848 in France and earned some good money. Some money from Godard too and some money from Danièle's mother, money from Nestler, who earned a little bit of money acting . . . and a further two people in Germany — who don't want to have their names mentioned — and in this way we arrived at 50,000 marks cash — which we put behind bars in the postal savings bank . . . and with that money we went to Cologne to shoot. And in this way we were able to pay people and transport. Then we thought it is still not enough . . . it will only be enough if someone comes with us and gives us material on credit, i.e. camera, dolly, since we had to pay cash for the film stock. Then we got credit from Kirchner at Bavaria. Kirchner left us, but they allowed me to put off payment for a year. Then Sachtler joined us, with whom we had worked already on *Machorka-Muff* and said, 'I'm so rich, kids, I'm going to move my company and all, and just to save taxes I'll lend you the blimped Arri and I'll work with you for nothing'. Two years later he came and wanted his fee, although the film until then hadn't made any money. Then he did join us and in the meantime he has also got his money, 10,000 for camera and so forth.

A.E. You shot everything in exteriors and mostly around Cologne?

J.-M.S. Yes. Exactly 45 different locations, and even if only one hotel occurs in the film it consists of four different ones, three in Munich, one in Cologne.

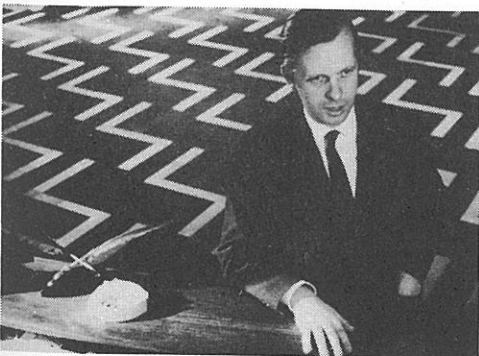
A.E. How often do the characters appear?

J.-M.S. Each character appears only twice. The old woman and her husband appear when they are old and as — Danièle is the old woman when she's young and the old

The category 'especially valuable' or 'valuable' carries either full- or part-entertainment tax relief with it, and so is supposed to guarantee the distribution of shorts and 'difficult' features. However it means in reality that shorts and 'difficult' features without such classification do not get any commercial distribution. The Straubs always had difficulties with this body, and only two of their films got full tax relief, *The Bridegroom*, the *Comedienne*, and the *Pimp and Moses and Aaron*, and part-tax relief for *Machorka-Muff* and *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*, and those only after second submission of the films. However, the climax of their bad relations with these stalwarts of reaction and good taste came when they felt they had to defend BRECHT! against Straub, re History Lessons.

Approx. £10,000. The documentary film-maker Peter Nestler, who because of incredible antagonism from West-German TV left Germany and now works for Swedish TV (see Introduction).

*Not Reconciled*: Heiner Braun (Nettlinger) in Munich hotel (Shot 32).



man is then the one with the beard, the son of the old one in real life. That is, the son of the old man in real life plays the older man as young man in the film. Schrella is then Thüna and he is shown as an eighteen-year-old. He was a boy we found on a school playground on the outskirts of Cologne. And Harmssen is the same way, as a forty-year-old man and as an eighteen-year-old boy — he was another boy from another school from the other side of Cologne.

A.E. But you couldn't possibly shoot the film with only fifty.

J.-M.S. We shot two-thirds and then we made a rough cut. We made the film for seventy-two in all. But then we had to wait another four months to get the money we still needed.

A.E. How many people took part in the shooting?

J.-M.S. For the Bach film there were more people but for *Not Reconciled* we had one camera operator, one camera assistant, two sound technicians, two studio workers. For the Bach film we had three — one is an electrician, the other is more like a carpenter, then the two of us, and then a so-called production manager. For the Bach film we had in addition two women in charge of the costumes, one man for the wigs . . . it's a pain in the neck to make a film with wigs, particularly with children, they are always fighting with each other. And three people for the camera, as we had the Mitchell, and with that one person has to load and load and load. And the second man always put the camera in place and took care of the travellings and the movements, and the cameraman himself never looked through the camera — was only concerned with the lighting.

A.E. When you made the Bach film you had someone who had worked with Ophüls?

J.-M.S. The sound director was the one who had made *La Ronde* with Ophüls, and the sound assistant too, who was really older than him, but who joined us because they are friends — he insisted on having him there. Sometimes he is sound director alone. He was sound director for *Les Honneurs de la Guerre*. But first of all he had worked as assistant for Pagnol. The assistant director recorded the sound optically on Renoir's first films. The other had made *Le Bonheur* with Varda, and some other commercial films, such as with Lautner. That was really quite valuable. He was no musician, the director of music recording, but just a man who had tremendous experience with films, through both good and bad films. He was very calm and friendly. He displaced and moved the microphone by the millimetre. Between each take we listened with Leonhardt and made corrections. The small one, who set up the camera with me, had worked on *L'Avventura* as camera assistant and the one who worked as loader had been an assistant on *Deserto Rosso*, and the cameraman himself made *Partner* for Bertolucci.

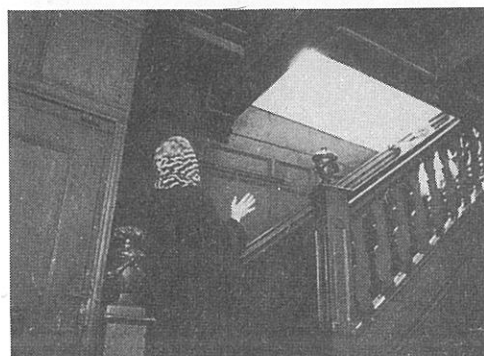
A.E. In *Partner* there are some very beautiful compositions which remind one of the Bach film.

Louis Hocet and Lucien Moreau. Saverio Diamanti worked on *L'Avventura*, Giovanni Canfarelli on *Deserto Rosso*, and Ugo Piccone on *Partner*. All three worked again on *Moses and Aaron*.

Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub during the shooting of *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*.

Hitchcock's *Notorious*.

*Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*: Gustav Leonhardt and Anja Fährmann in Shot 100.





J.-M.S. The reason is this — this has to be said, people should know this, it isn't just to go ahead and film — the reason is that Bertolucci, like me, used the Mitchell for the first time. It's the tool that determines the film; the film that I want to make now, it will be determined by the tools, and the other way round, I would like to make it because there are certain things I would like to do which I can do neither with the 35 blimped Arri and even less with a Mitchell although the Mitchell is the best camera in the world, you can do certain things with the Mitchell, really precise pans and travellings that is what I wanted for the Bach film. I needed the Mitchell for the things I wanted to do in the Bach film, but it can also work the other way that a camera, if one doesn't have a fixed conception from the start, let us say — I don't like that because for me the person himself makes the film — but in style in an external sense, as one says in Germany, the tool, the camera determines the film. Just the same as one can't cut a film that has been made with original sound in the way one cuts a film that has been shot silent. When one shoots silent one can make different cuts than when one shoots with sound. With sound one hears the footsteps and people are there, even before they are in frame, one hears their steps, and one can't allow oneself to do what Louis Malle does or even worse Jean Herrman.

A.E. Kirchner then brought out *Not Reconciled* for a while.

J.-M.S. It ran for three weeks in the Theatiner in Munich, at first following the comedy with Witsch. The film was ready just before the Berlin festival. I wrote a postcard to Böll, 'The film is ready now' — I would even have gone to Cologne just to show him the film, as he hadn't seen it till then and maybe he still hasn't. He only saw the rough cut of the first two-thirds. We knew very well what was in store for us, it will be bad in Berlin. Unfortunately I didn't have any choice: I knew it would be very difficult to find a distributor, or maybe I wouldn't find one at all. So then I thought the only solution is a festival. That was Berlin. I wrote a postcard to Böll, saying, 'I'm coming', but he answered at once, 'I have neither the time nor the desire to watch films'. So I went to Berlin with the film. It was rejected by the official selection committee, and then Patalas and some others, who at that time didn't like the film, had a twinge of conscience. They thought, 'Now we will have the comedy with *Machorka-Muff* once more. Somehow or other he liked something in the film — that has to be said — he didn't quite reject it, and arranged for it to be shown outside the festival. On the poster it said 'New narrative structures in cinema', and below that in small letters *Not Reconciled*. Nobody knew what that was — only the initiated. They didn't even know if it was a film or a lecture . . . and then there was this discussion. The film was rejected by ninety per cent of the German critics, and Witsch said, 'Destroy it'. And then we disappeared to do the sub-titles, because Roud wanted the film for New York and London. We could only do this work in Geneva, where we could stay with a friend. It wasn't in order to escape, as has been said. And then people who hadn't quite liked the film started defending it, such as Roos. Witsch finally said, 'Yes, you can take the film around the art cinema circuit, but you can never show it on TV'.

A.E. Your reason for filming *Machorka-Muff* was, to put it simply, your anger at rearmament, and your hope that one can really present a problem that is essentially simple in a simple film to a simple audience. What was your reason for making *Not Reconciled*?

J.-M.S. Yes, there are several points there, questions which I have always asked myself, that is why the novel interested me, otherwise it wouldn't have interested me at all. At first I was always asking myself in France what happened to this or that person — I had friends who had participated in the Algerian war and who returned quite changed and destroyed — the same question occurred in the film, the other way round, when I came to Germany, in the streets — has this person taken part in the war, from Moscow to Cap Gris-Nez or somewhere like that and that was one question and then there was the question which I had asked myself even a long time before: How was it really in Germany with this they called Nazism? Did it suddenly one day fall down from heaven or did it grow in society for a long time? There must be some continuity — history doesn't make such jumps; or what has become of a country that did not liberate itself from fascism, but where the liberation came from outside or what has become of a country where there has not been a revolution? The French Revolution wasn't much, but at least it was a mixing-up of classes, but in Germany they haven't even had that. And then I was pleased to be able to make a film about a middle-class family which acquires political consciousness, although to a limited degree as they are middle-class and hence can only acquire a limited consciousness. And the fact that one still lives in a Wilhelminian society in Germany and that there is this continuity, and also about violence. But Böll couldn't quite stomach all this. They said, 'You have exploited Böll to make something Brechtian'. They were really furious, but now the film has come on quite well. I noticed it in Frankfurt, where the Bach film is still a long way off from going well. For instance, four weeks ago in Frankfurt there were six-hundred students there, a full house. Then Straschek invited us down there, friends of his took over the Filmstudio, they seized power, and there we were with the four films and *Machorka-Muff* is going nearly too well — they applaud and suddenly during *Not Reconciled* they suddenly start applauding when they hear 'Long live dynamite' — where people two years ago had asked, 'What did he say?' They didn't even hear it. I think a film can only succeed if it touches people in questions they ask themselves. It is exactly like film-making, now something has changed in Germany, let's say simply moved, not to overstate it, and then there is a climate where a film can reach the audience directly — before it was something alien. Also, the thing which interested me was to make a film about Nazism without mentioning the word Hitler or concentration camps but such things that a middle-class family suspected or wanted to suspect. To respect all those rules of the game. Art is a game, one makes the rules oneself, and suggests them to the audience and the audience accepts the game or not, only when one has made rules does one play the game otherwise one has to invent new rules. It ran for three weeks in the Theatiner, rather good. Kirchner didn't have fewer people there than for his usual films. Not so many of the regular visitors came, but then there came people with bicycles, they were grumbling because the bicycles were lying around, and then one week in Cologne and one in Bonn and one in Berlin, and from time to time and also before I took the film to maybe twenty film-clubs.

Enno Patalas, German film critic and film historian, then editor of 'Filmkritik' and now director of the Munich Film Museum.

Johann-Caspar Witsch, German publisher of Böll's novel, 'Billard um halbzehn'. First he told Straub 'to move to some promised land and to leave me alone', then he wanted *Not Reconciled* burned. Quite a lot of people and newspapers mentioned '1933'. So he benevolently changed it to a demand for its 'destruction'. Finally he relented under pressure. A nice man. He is dead now.

Hans-Dieter Roos, film critic and editor of 'film'; the mag and its editor are both dead now.

*Not Reconciled*: 'One still lives in a Wilhelminian society in Germany' (Shot 11).



Günter Peter Straschek, film-maker and author (see Introduction and back cover). Filmstudio is the film society of Frankfurt University, which used to publish a mag also called 'Filmstudio' with similar line to 'Movie'.

A.E. Let us maybe skip the severe problems you had in finding money for the Bach film. I met you in '67 in Berlin during the festival. You had bought your first roll of Kodak, and went to East Germany.

J.-M.S. Three days before shooting started we still hadn't got the money. We then took a risk — we thought that if we don't make it now while I have the permits it would have taken another three months until I could have gone there again to film this facade of the town hall in Leipzig with my cameraman from DEFA, although the financing of the film was still not secured. First because the meeting of the Kuratorium had not approved the 150 and second because we still needed 100. Seitz only wanted to make the film on the condition that it wouldn't cost him a penny. First because he is like that and second because he was already bankrupt at that time although it had not yet been made official. And we filmed this and were thinking that maybe it won't come to anything this year and if it hadn't come to anything everything would have fallen to pieces, since all the contracts were already signed.

A.E. You had hired the musicians?

J.-M.S. Yes, not we, but a company called Music House. They went bankrupt later on. Seitz took over all the contracts. But the signature of Seitz didn't appear on them — otherwise everything would have been put back one year. These musicians are only free three times a year, otherwise they are engaged at various places. And at the last minute Baldi phoned me from Rome, three days before we travelled up there, one week before the final preparations in Hamburg and Stade, Baldi phoned and tried to put pressure on Seitz 'Tell Seitz that I' — his contribution was also Kodak film stock — 'Tell Seitz that I won't pay that'. Then there would only have remained the costumes, wigs, three camera-people, the Mitchell. He phoned me because he had heard, I don't know through whom down there in Rome, that Seitz had received the 150 from the Kuratorium three days before, and thought that he had more money than he needed. Seitz told me, 'It is out of the question, we will wait for another year, if we have to.' That's how it was the whole time. Then I phoned Godard and said, 'Is it possible to find money for the film stock? Otherwise it will fall to pieces at the last minute.' He said, 'I have at my disposition now one million old francs — 8000 marks — that's the best I can do'. And then I learned from Kückelmann that the so-called author automatically receives 15,000, which doesn't go to the producer. Then I put everything on the table at Kodak and said, now you must make sure that the stock arrives on time in Hamburg. They had already got it from London to Stuttgart, and from Stuttgart it was on its way to Hamburg. And Kodak was waiting for the money from Rome. All the time I phoned and asked, 'Has the money arrived?' 'No chance.'

A.E. Why had the stock arrived from London?

J.-M.S. That was American stock from Rochester. All of it four-X. For *Not Reconciled* we had only double-X. For *The Bridegroom* we had a mixture of double-X and four-X.

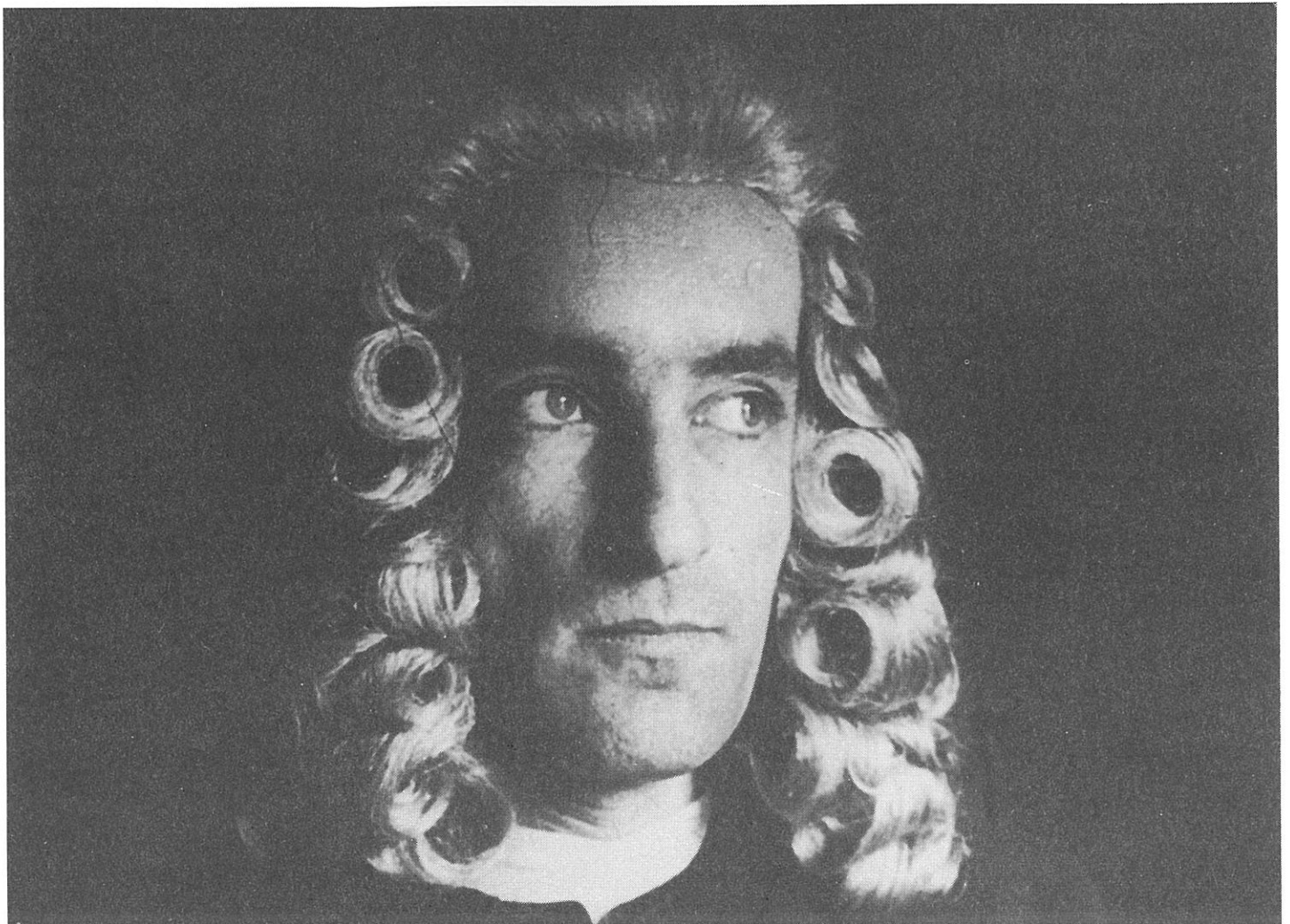
A.E. How long did the shooting last for the Bach film?

*The Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film was an organisation which gave state aid for short and feature film production in the form of substantial premiums for scripts. 150.000 DM is approx. £30.000.*

*Approx. £1500.*

*Dr. Norbert Kückelmann, then secretary of the grant-giving body, see above. Now a film-maker.*

*Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach: Gustav Leonhardt (Bach) in Shot 90.*



J.-M.S. From the 20th August to the 14th October '67. The cutting copy was ready before Christmas. The first copy was ready by the beginning of January.

A.E. How much do you usually throw away?

J.-M.S. For the Bach film we had made a contract, about 50,000 metres because I didn't want any surprises. We thought that we might often have to do retakes: when a musician coughs at the end of a five-minute take, then all one can do is throw away the material. And with our experience from *Machorka-Muff* and *Not Reconciled* we thought that 30 would be enough. 30,000 metres for a film 2700 metres long, let's say ten times as much. But maybe we would need more than 30, because of the music, and we managed to settle this on paper with Seitz and the Italian: we would let 30 go to Hamburg and reserve 20,000 more, which we wouldn't have to pay for. And in the end we shot 28,500 metres, and the film is 2700 metres long, which makes a ratio of exactly ten to one. That is also roughly the ratio for *Not Reconciled*.

A.E. Did you have any assistance in the choice of costumes and wigs?

J.-M.S. We started work on the costumes in Rome, nine months earlier.

A.E. What I want to say is this: as far as you know there are no errors, right down to the smallest detail, in the historical material.

J.-M.S. Oh, yes, yes, even the spectacles. We got the formula for the glasses for each of the musicians and we made corresponding spectacles for those who couldn't play without them. At first we didn't want any costumes that were too dominating, that is necessary from a cinematic point of view. In Rome we pleased ourselves. The ones that we had made, also the ones for the boys, a third of all the costumes, were made to measure, we designed them ourselves, after old prints. And also the instruments. There are some original instruments among the ones we used, the oboes are all original. There are also copies, the violins for instance, they used to play standing, which is not done any more, and the violinists played without the chin-support. No, we kept a bloody good eye on those details. Also when we had a white transparent window in a church, it was because during the Renaissance and most of all during the early Baroque most of the Gothic stained glass windows were dismantled and replaced by white glass.

A.E. Do you have a feeling that your difficulties with the work on the Bach film, the difficulties which you have today in your film work, with the things you would like to do and which you also believe you yourself can do best . . .

J.-M.S. Precisely, I do it in that way because I can't do it better; I'm not the first one to say that.

A.E. . . . whether you have a similar feeling, a similar oppression, as Bach must have felt, as people were always hampering him in his work? In the Bach film there are two dominant themes. One of them, and it is extremely sad, 'In this year we lost our child', and the other constant theme, 'He has asked for more money once again, we have received a little'. Do you think that not much has changed in the last two-hundred years, and that a person who pursues his work without any compromises will still be impeded by society in his work?

J.-M.S. Yes, sure, sure, sure.

A.E. And your much-quoted quotation, 'the Bach film is my contribution to the fight of the South Vietnamese against the Americans', should that be understood in the sense that just like them you only do something because you are convinced that you have to do it?

J.-M.S. Yes, and something that one has to start afresh every day, that is fundamentally . . .

A.E. The swindle in the cinema . . .

J.-M.S. Yes, just the tradition . . . Castro or someone else said once, 'The revolution is like God's grace, it has to be made anew each day, it becomes new every day, a revolution is not made once and for all'. And it's exactly like that in daily life. There is no division between politics and life, art and politics. This is also why this film interested me, because Bach was precisely someone who reacted against his own inertia, although he was deeply rooted in his times, and was oppressed. But apart from that, if the film had been about any street-sweeper, we would have gone to the same amount of trouble with the technical things and with the problems. I think one has no other choice, if one is making films that can stand on their own feet, they must become documentary or in any case they must have documentary roots. Everything must be correct, and only from then on can one rise above, reach higher. Not without solid foundations. If a button is wrong in a film, it can still be nice as a detail, but only if the film is good, but for that the rest must be correct. And it would be better, if this button were right too.

A.E. So you were not interested in making a period film?

J.-M.S. No, that was just a drag. It really is a drag filming with costumes.

A.E. But you're going to do it right away again, in Rome.

J.-M.S. But simply, much more simply. And the costumes I will be using in Rome won't be too historical, they will just be material falling in folds, but in the case of the Bach film the wigs were for me practically a kind of mask. And the costumes a kind of uniform. And the wigs something like masks. Because one is condemned to be faithful, all one can do is be faithful. And also because everything leads up to the end and contributes to it.

A.E. But for the spectators it is a bit exotic.

J.-M.S. That's simply the charm of past things. They have no make-up at all, there is a contradiction between wigs and faces that have no make-up. And I didn't want to do what they told me, what they usually do in films, I rejected that in Rome. And they accepted that, and the wigs have tulle as foundation, and it is visible underneath, it can be concealed with make-up, but I wanted to make it so that the wig is recognised as such. At that time it was like a hat or a sign of affluence, they just put it on their

Straub and Ennio Lauricella (Galba) during the shooting of *Othon*.

*Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*: Gustav Leonhardt conducting in Shot 33.



heads, and didn't want to make it look like real hair, as is customary in films. First of all it is rather picturesque, something that distracts, on the other hand something that makes one concentrate on other things. Because it does the opposite of distracting. Exactly like masks in the Greek theatre. So that the facial expression is enhanced, because one only sees a sea of moving wigs, one concentrates on the point in the middle where something happens. Where all the threads run together. Then one sees the hands more. Then one is no longer disturbed by the individualities. There is a very beautiful sentence by Griffith, 'What the modern movie lacks is beauty, beauty from the moving wind in the trees'. The wind is important in this film, the wigs and the costumes contribute towards this, the wind is nothing but the spirit. A film does not consist of images, that is something optical, but of ideas, and this is what moves these wigs, these hands, first the fact that these hands and wigs do move and second what makes them move, that is the wind. It is a film about the wind. And the wind is precisely the work of Bach. And the period and these texts. And let's say, rather pretentiously, the spirit. And the wind blows where it will and it is somehow concentrated here.

A.E. When I saw *Not Reconciled* for the first time, in Munich, you showed it to Otmar Engel and myself in the cinema of Frau Ständner, and I was a bit drunk and said to you, 'I don't know what they're all making a fuss about, but for me this is the simplest film I have seen for a long time'.

J.-M.S. Which pleased me a lot, because everybody said, 'This is horribly complicated'. And I always insisted that it was simple.

A.E. Yes, but now I have thought over these things, also in connection with the Bach film, I agree entirely with you, the Bach film is also very simple, I don't say it is easy to understand, but it has a simplicity, which I think only two groups of people will understand, or accept, and one group is the specialists, the super-cinéastes, who have put all that behind them in order to return to simpler forms, who have had the entire baroque cinema in them . . .

J.-M.S. I think one understands the film best if one belongs to the first group. It is good to have seen as many of Griffith's films as possible. Just by chance — for seven or even ten years I hadn't seen any — and by chance there were four films by Griffith in Cologne and we were able to see three of them and then we had to leave. And I believe that the whole Bach film has its roots in Griffith. It is true he never made a Bach film and never a film of that kind, but nevertheless one can see that it is there. Therefore it is good to have seen many films. Let us say simply a film culture which doesn't just start with Godard, but which goes further back.

A.E. . . . the second group — this is purely a speculation on my part — it doesn't have to be true at all: I could imagine they are people without *any* education, that is, children.

J.-M.S. Yes.

A.E. They can look at it without prejudice. Most people come to a film and know beforehand whether they will like it or not. Because they only go to see films they know they will like.

J.-M.S. Yes.

A.E. Children are still open, and that could happen once more with the professional cinema-goers, that they should be able to take in a very simple message again. They are so cynical about film, that they may well reach a point where they may be able to understand very simple and good films again.

J.-M.S. I don't think you are exactly crazy and that proves that we aren't crazy either, or still aren't, because you have had this thought in your corner, and Danièle said, when we saw the first copy or when we saw the film for the second time, she said, 'This is really a film for children'. Danièle said that. And when I once said to provoke the pimps of the industry, that it is a film for a caveman, that is exactly what I meant by that. I still meant it one hundred per cent seriously, it was a provocation, but a serious one. In other fields it is quite similar. Someone who knows a little, let us say a half-educated man — it is always such a person who discovers anachronisms in historical films. A woman in Stuttgart wrote a three-page letter to us after she had seen the film in Reutlingen and she declared that the film is not correct at all on the following point, 'Bach never used his thumb', or something stupid like that, and then one can read in a letter from Bach's son Carl Philip Emanuel around 1752 or 54, i.e. two, three, or four years after the death of his father, where he says: 'Before my father's time musicians seldom used the thumb, but my father used all ten fingers and the thumb even more than the others'. She has heard something to the effect that musicians of the baroque period only used eight fingers and then she sees someone playing with his thumb. A thing like that is a joke, since first Leonhardt has studied the problems of the baroque period, that is his life, he would never had played with his thumbs if it hadn't been right. And further when somebody makes a film, he takes onto himself a lot of trouble and has to cringe, waiting for years before he can do it — then he makes sure that he gets exactly what he wants.

A.E. Unfortunately the situation is that people are systematically corrupted by other films. When I see a film I always annoy people because I point out all the things that are wrong, wrong cars, wrong dresses, wrong haircut, everything is wrong — you're never used to seeing things done correctly in a film — normally you're cheated in films, because it is easier to use *papier mâché*, and cheaper . . .

J.-M.S. Ninety per cent of films are based on contempt for the people who go and see them. The sentence we heard most often, even before *Machorka-Muff* when we insisted on a certain detail . . . because we thought, there are no details — everything is detail or specific things or one thing is just as important as another . . . also the smallest things — they always said, 'Nobody will notice, nobody will see it', also when it came to sound: 'Nobody will notice, nobody will get it.' This is based on contempt for the audience, or on cheating, which comes to the same thing. But when somebody really knows something about costumes, and hasn't just picked up a thing or two, he knows that in a certain period many more possibilities are open than one really thinks; it isn't so

Otmar Engel, a good film critic, by trade art historian. No relation. Mrs. Ständner's cinema has a back entrance on to the Schwanthalerstrasse in Munich, where the Straubs had their tiny flat.

Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach: Christiane Lang-Drewanz and Katja Drewanz in Shot 34.



limited. The same is true about furniture. We have had this experience ourselves, we were also uneducated and naive, usually you only know the typical things and not the untypical; people believe that in the baroque period they hung certain pictures on the wall and that there were tapestries and drapes everywhere, and then one reads in a book written by someone who is a specialist in these things: 'In the baroque period, people — except, of course, those who lived in a palace — had very little furniture, at most one cupboard in a room, usually nothing on the wall and no curtains either', and when someone sees it made like that he says, 'That is a caricature, that is not historical enough'.

A.E. People just want to see the image they have of the baroque period . . .

J.-M.S. They want a confirmation of the image they have of the baroque period, but this picture is based on a caricature. Similarly the film *Not Reconciled* would have stopped if we had only taken those costumes and location relating to the short period 1937–39 which don't seem too obvious today, those which make people say, 'Oh, that is 1934, typical of the time'. First one wouldn't have had past and present on one level, secondly because basically I hate what is typical of a period, and thirdly because it has more impact on people. When they see a sign, this is 1934, at once, and they hear on the bridge, 'Are you Jewish?' then they say, 'Oh yes, 1933, anti-Semitism,

*Not Reconciled*: Ulrich Hopmann (Robert Föhmel) and Ernst Kutzinski (Schrella) in Shot 17.



Germany', and they lean back in their seats and are happy again, 'We knew that already', they feel reassured. But when they see a bridge, not knowing what period it belongs to, and costumes that don't look exactly modern but on the other hand aren't necessarily historical, and then hear the question, 'Are you Jewish?' then it comes home to the audience. That is always what I call the science-fiction aspect of my films, that people ask themselves after the film or while it is running, what kind of strange planet is that where these sort of things go on or they have these sort of attitudes, and then people see their own world in a new way. First it looks new and then let us say they are carried away, and secondly, this world is very strange and partly not strange at all, yet not 'estranged' as some people like to put it — it has nothing to do with that.

A.E. Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451*, precisely because he has not made a science-fiction film, could have all happened today, the audience knows that things aren't like that now, is not shocked at all by what it sees — they are not afraid, whereas they are always afraid in a science-fiction film that things may become like that in ten years, which of course is just nonsense.

J.-M.S. I think one can do more; it is better that one makes science-fiction without doing it systematically; unless one is completely a mad genius in this field, a kind of Jules Verne, one can't make real science-fiction films, because one can't make a film about the future one is always running behind; everything that one makes systematically in cinema is bad. You handle the past like this, in an intuitive way, but I see what disturbed you in Truffaut — he makes a science-fiction film consciously — that doesn't work. I don't like the film myself for the same reason and for other reasons as well — the Truffaut which I can most easily accept is *Tirez sur le pianiste* —

but the point where you may be wrong is that one relates it to the present. But that is not what it does. He projects it into the future and is saying that this is our present in the future. It would have worked if he had really shown the burning of books in the past, but then in a completely new set-up. Maybe the spectator would have been able to do the jump into a menacing future more easily.

A.E. How do you see the relation between the almost totally passive spectator and the film that you are showing; they hardly have any influence on the film, all they can do is leave. There are already painters and sculptors, the pop artists, who try to activate people with their things; in the theatre there are also forms like that, where the audience is on the stage, etc.

J.-M.S. That is a caricature of Brecht. I don't believe in these things, there may be people who do these things well, I am always ready to be convinced of the opposite of what I have been thinking, exactly as when I saw recently in Switzerland a film by a young man, his name is Salvodelli, he lives in German-speaking Switzerland, he calls himself the immigrant worker of Swiss cinema. He showed me a medium-length film in colour, which in the beginning — for about three minutes — is everything that I normally hate in films, and suddenly one sees it isn't that at all and one sees a very beautiful film, he is really a poet in the field of cinema. Then I let myself be convinced that it isn't the techniques he seemed to use in the beginning, which are wrong — although it seemed to me they were — but just the way they are normally used; then you are convinced that you are wrong and that everything is possible. Bach said once, he once said a very beautiful sentence, which was repeated by his pupils, he said 'It must be possible to do everything'. Anyhow, until now I haven't believed it. It is the same when Kluge always goes on about the film which is created in the minds of the spectators. I don't believe it. Then I react like Rivette and state that film — let's not quibble over the words — is only based on fascination, and that it only touches people, and touches them deeply, when it is based on fascination, i.e. on the opposite of distance or participation or some such thing, that the traditional attitudes of people. . . . 'One never invents very much', Renoir said, not like Kluge, with whom I quarrelled in Mannheim. He climbed on to the stage and said, 'Well, what we are doing is new. We make films which are going to be created in the minds of the spectators. That is completely new and nobody has done it before. My films are like' — and then he saw me down in the audience — 'my films are like those of Straub, for instance'. Then I was furious and stood up and said, 'The things I do are not new at all, they are traditional. Anyone who makes films progresses a tiny step forward on his road, in one direction, and . . . only tiny steps', and then he repeated that, 'Yes, yes, steps', and then I said, 'Not at all, not steps but tiny steps'. I still don't believe that one can make films where one always . . . I think that is the negative influence of Godard.

A.E. Now we hear he is trying things like showing one reel at a time, and is inviting the audience to discuss the film between reels.

J.-M.S. For the moment I don't believe in that, personally, but I would like to be convinced. If somebody really succeeds in doing that and convinces me then I will accept it, but I'm only going to be convinced by someone who has achieved it himself. But still as author. I think most of it is just a fashion, a very flimsy fashion, which won't last for long. For the moment I don't see any future in these things. Three weeks later we showed *Not Reconciled* in Switzerland. They looked at it with, shall we say, admiration, but no more than admiration. It was just like certain film clubs in Germany two or three years ago, where the film was accepted, but only on that level. Exactly the opposite happened in Frankfurt just before that, where there was an exchange between film and audience, good in a certain sense, but apart from that, what John Ford and I mean — and it isn't a paradox when one thinks about it — John Ford is still the most Brechtian of all film-makers, because he shows things that make people think damn it, is that true or not, for instance the end of *Fort Apache*, which was completely misunderstood, even by Sadoul, it doesn't have a happy ending and this is correct to make the audience collaborate on the film: in the middle of the battlefield you can see general Custer, he dies there and all his soldiers have been shot, then a few moments later John Ford says, John Wayne looks at it and says, 'This man is crazy', literally. Then finally we have the so-called happy ending, one sees John Ford, he is sitting there, behind him you can see a huge historical picture, representing the battle. And in front of John Ford, in a circle, there are journalists taking notes, and asking questions; somebody suddenly notices the picture on the wall, the rather heroic historical picture and asks, 'Is that correct? Was it really like that?' Then John Wayne turns around, startled and surprised, looks at it, wants to answer, turns around again to answer and one notices for a fraction of a second that he is about to say, 'It is all crap, it has been made too heroic, it is false, etc.', but he says instead, 'Yes, gentlemen, it was really like that'. Then John Ford goes another step further, and John Wayne says, 'Right now I haven't got any time. I must go back to work'. And then he puts on his cap — until then he had on quite a different one exactly like the one Fonda had earlier in the battle. And then one sees him ride away on horseback, they are going to another battle. That is what I call a Brechtian film.

A.E. But when one thinks further along that line one arrives at the conclusion that it is wrong to show good films in cinemas. Because if you have a film which says the same as you think, when you then see it in the cinema it has essentially . . .

J.-M.S. The opposite effect.

A.E. Exactly. To formulate it in a very exaggerated way: the worse a film is, the better is it.

J.-M.S. I think you have a correct intuition there, which is important, but one shouldn't systematise it. I think that the reason why people call John Ford a fascist is that he is better at showing for instance what a settler was — when I saw *The Searchers* I understood better the attitude of the settlers in Algeria. I had really tried hard to understand them when I was in Paris during the Algerian war; when I saw the film by John Ford, the one that shows the settler and the Indian-hunter with a certain initial respect because he understands him. That is why people have said that he makes fascist films. In this sense, yes, but not in any other.

Reto-Andrea Salvodelli.

*'To be consequent, something I hate so much — and what the critics always demand, because otherwise they are disturbed — gets people, who start out being creative at the beginning, to copy themselves and to quickly stagnate as soon as what they have made has been accepted by the world. It is terribly difficult to confront the world every time with something new, and the biggest fear of modern man is rejection. So, consequence is only a pretty word for security and security only a friendly word for decadence of feeling.'* Jean Renoir, in a recent interview.

*Godard wanted to show Made in USA and Deux ou trois Choses que je sais d'elle with alternate reels and discussions in between. As far as I know, it was never done like that.*

A.E. For me Ford is a man from the 19th century.

J.-M.S. Ford belongs to his generation, he is a liberal, he can't change his skin. Nobody can do that.

A.E. But he shows that disputes between men are worked out in a fight. Afterwards they become good friends.

J.-M.S. But one shouldn't accept everything he shows at face value, that is what I call the Brechtian effect, maybe Ford thinks that even if he shows something all the time it does not always have to be like that. I would say that you are right on another point, but that is an idea that can go crazy and I wouldn't accept what you have said as theory. As a matter of fact there are films, such as *Zazie dans le Métro*, which many left-wing papers in France celebrated as a left-wing film, while I consider it to be a real fascist film — that is the other aspect of what you said. But what I wanted to say earlier on, you are quite right, too: people for example — but there are also exceptions and I am happy to be convinced of the contrary — in itself it doesn't make sense to show a strike or a barricade, it's just a confirmation, of their own beliefs. The spectators liberate themselves in that moment and then they feel they don't need to do it in their lives. Or Garrel — I haven't seen any of his films — who said that it is just as bad to show a barricade as a beautiful naked girl. Politically that is just as wrong. Because what people see there has nothing to do with life. It satisfies them momentarily, and what's more, it tends to give them a clear conscience. Not that I want to talk like those who stand up and say they want to make films which make people feel guilty. I wouldn't like to belong to that group of people who only want to make people feel guilty — just to make people feel guilty is clearly quite wrong. That is also one of the things about which I have quarrelled a bit with Godard in Locarno. I suddenly had the impression, or maybe I had forced the issue, when he said, 'One must make films with the means of capitalism against capitalism'. Which means one must fight stupidity with stupidity. I don't believe that.

A.E. But he doesn't do that . . .

J.-M.S. No, but it is a temptation — he means that one must make films that are just as bad as commercials, although your aims are different.

A.E. Like Lelouch, who isn't so nice and friendly . . .

J.-M.S. I don't know Lelouch, but Godard defended Varella's film, *Money, Money*, starring the wife of Cournot. What I really mean is that you can never make your films intelligent enough, because people have enough stupidity to put up with in their work and daily lives. The life they lead is horrible, it makes them more and more stupid. They can't take any more; you destroy them and finish them off. That is why it doesn't make sense to burden them with more stupidities.

A.E. You directed a stage play in Munich.

J.-M.S. They came to me just before the Bach film was made, just as we were in great difficulties with the contracts, and in the middle of the bankruptcy of the first producer and when we thought, now we have the musicians hanging around our necks and we are still not able to shoot. And the Kuratorium is going to refuse again, and that will be that. Then they came and said, 'We are opening a theatre'. They also went to Kristl. I said, 'Okay, so far I haven't done anything for the theatre but I am interested. In France I always wanted to stage a play by Corneille, one of his last plays; in Germany I wanted to stage *Die Massnahme* by Brecht, as there are no good translations of Corneille.' But they said, 'We will never get the rights to perform it'. They had got a letter from Helene Weigel with a facsimile letter by Brecht saying, 'Take another play; this play is not to be performed'. That is completely wrong. If one has written something, then it is there, to be performed. Then they said, 'We won't get it. And again, but we have got the rights for a play by Bruckner.' Then I said, 'I'm sorry, but I haven't read it'. Then they left the play at my place, but I said, 'Under no circumstances can I do it right now. I would like to make the Bach film now. Why don't you come back when my mind is free again?' Then I read it and found it didn't interest me at all, I didn't like the play by Bruckner very much. And then they came back and I said, 'Look for someone who can do it as Bruckner's play, without altering a comma, because I don't particularly like it, and it doesn't make sense to do something one doesn't like'. And they looked for someone else and then came back and said 'We haven't found anyone'. In the meantime I started to get interested in the play, but all I did was delete things, till finally it became so short that I had to tell them, 'It is no longer a play by Bruckner, it has become my own play; I would like to stage it as soon as I have got time, but you should know that it will only be about ten minutes long.' Then I produced it for them and it played in the theatre for three weeks together with another play, and then the theatre closed down. Then the theatre manager, Horst Söhnlein, was put in prison in Frankfurt; he took part in an arson raid on a department store. The police also came to the theatre, where they were putting on an anti-Springer play; furthermore it was closed because of debts. Before this happened, towards the end of April, we simply filmed the whole thing, and the film was constructed around the play. But still there were elements in it that had been on my mind for seven years, for instance this Landsbergerstrasse in Munich. We had discovered it as we were walking home from Pasing in the outskirts of the city, coming back from a late show in a cinema — I think it was *Distant Drums* — and we walked along this street to our place. At that time I thought it would be nice to make a film there, and we thought out a story which wasn't all that clear, something about a man who puts his wife on the street every night, and then I read in 'Le Nouvel Observateur' that Godard had plans to make a film on a similar theme, then I gave up my plans. I thought, now someone else has done it, certainly quite differently from the way I would have done it, but what's the use. Then we made the Bach film, and afterwards I returned to this theatre project and then I felt like making a short thriller. We thought we could construct such a film around the play. But while I was cutting the play and deciding to produce it for them, I didn't think about the film at all. And then the other things fell into place automatically, for instance the principal character turned out to be black and further we discovered this horrible slogan on the wall in the

*Straub ended the introduction he wrote and spoke for the TV broadcast of Othon in Germany: 'And if not too many switch off during the film, we — you as user and I as maker — will have already obtained a small victory against the stupidity, against the contempt, against the pimps of the film industry who believe, out of their own contempt and stupidity, that films are never stupid enough for the public.'*

*Vlado Kristl, ex-Yugoslav film-maker, also painter and writer, with a really strong punch and a bitter edge to his work, lives in Munich.*

*The Bridegroom, the Comedienne, and the Pimp: Lilith Ungerer (Marie/Lilith).*



*This arson in a Frankfurt department store was the first ripple of what was later to become the Baader-Meinhoff movement, of which Holger Meins was a member (see Moses and Aaron). Axel Springer is the biggest newspaper publisher in West Germany, and his reactionary policy triggered off most of the student revolts in the past decade.*



*The Bridegroom, the Comedienne, and the Pimp:* Landsbergerstrasse.

Godard's *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*.



telegram department of the main post office — 'Stupid Old Germany — I hate it over here' — she must have gone through many bad experiences, to have been driven so far. And in this way the film took shape. . . . To put it a bit pretentiously: They have allegoric relationships, meaning that those on the stage, who act in the play, bear more logical relation to each other than they could in life. Remember for instance when he says: 'Lucy is a very smart creature; I could certainly make her walk the streets.' Then one thinks he is really like that in life. And when he says, marriage or something, one thinks he really would like to marry her not the actress on the stage. And the other way round, because the text in the film became fairly non-theatrical as opposed to the stage play which was completely theatrical — and because the texts in so-called real life are very literary — they are by Juan de la Cruz, a Spanish poet, who died in 1591 — I translated the three poems literally, as the existing translations were done in the 19th century, and no longer have anything to do with the text — and also this wedding which is even a bit more theatrical than the play, and also a bit like science-fiction. The point of view of the black man, who looks on the whole ceremony as on an alien world, although he stands there as participant.

A.E. Concerning the things that were spoken on the stage I probably understood the meaning of the German words but didn't bother about working out what it meant . . .

J.-M.S. Because it doesn't really mean anything. You did the right thing. It really has no meaning — that is what makes my text, the cut version of Bruckner, completely different from the original play, which was two hours long. Here it lasts eight-and-a-half minutes, without the pieces of black leader. With the black leader it is ten minutes long, exactly one roll of Kodak negative. But it doesn't mean anything. It simply shows relations whereas in Bruckner's play there is psychology — there one knows what it is all about — but in my piece there are only constellations, people who have certain relations with each other which dissolve and reappear. Nothing more. Let us use a fashionable phrase: it shows modes of behaviour.

A.E. If people examine this film and expect a message they will be disappointed.

J.-M.S. I have already mentioned that in connection with *Not Reconciled*. They were disappointed because what Stravinsky says about music applies here: 'I know very well that music is incapable of expressing anything.' That's a fact. I think I will never make a film where there is a message *à la Patalas*.

A.E. What do you think of the American musical?

J.-M.S. 'Oh, I don't know enough about it. The one I know best is *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. I have seen it several times in Paris. But after I came to Germany . . .

A.E. Let's put the question in context. Most American films are rather honest to start with. They are saying, we want to entertain.

J.-M.S. Because for a start they are not ashamed of their own professional skill, and therefore they don't despise the audience either. And also because they don't think, we are going to do this as cheaply as possible — people will accept it anyway — nobody will notice. In Germany they scrim on film stock. Danièle was just reading about *Ben*



Hur — of the 200,000 feet of negative stock they shot for the chariot scene they kept only 750.

A.E. It's just that I feel that in American cinema you only admire technical skill — form is everything, content is nothing.

J.-M.S. Yes, but empty form doesn't exist. There is the soul, that is something that doesn't exist either. The soul is the form of the body. I feel that every film-maker should be a Thomist in so far as one can only make films when one somehow believes that the soul is nothing but the form of the body. This is particularly important concerning the people in front of the camera.

A.E. If you had had more money, would your films have become different?

J.-M.S. No. In Berlin I said before — and people considered it a provocation — that even if I had had 7 millions at my disposal I would have made *Not Reconciled* just the way I did, and not otherwise. No, this condensation of the script is not a question of money. For the Bach film I needed money for the costumes and I was willing to wait for this. I would have preferred not to make the film at all rather than make it in a different way just to save money. No, one should rather adjust the shooting schedule to eliminate unnecessary expenses. One should save on telephone calls but not on negative stock. Bad producers economise on film stock. I wouldn't have made the Bach film without the Mitchell. The contribution of the Italian producer, the Mitchell, the costumes, for the camera people and film stock all this cost 120 to 130,000 marks. Since I couldn't find anybody to pay for such expensive costumes and for the Mitchell I had to wait.

Approx. £24,000—£26,000.

A.E. So it wouldn't have been a different kind of film if you had had a normal budget — you would have made them just in the same way as you have till now?

J.-M.S. Yes. On the contrary, it would make me unhappy if a producer who had too much money forced me to incur unnecessary shooting expenses — due to the fact that when you have a certain reputation people run after you — when you are young and unknown and dying in your little corner you can wait ten years with a film project.

A.E. But you would like to film in colour?

J.-M.S. First of all I would like to be able to live off my work. One doesn't have to become rich from film-making, not at all, but directing should be paid like any normal work — one should be able to live off it. And secondly one should have some money to prepare a film, for travelling — and not have to go hitch-hiking as I had to do for the Bach film. Or even to have to walk sometimes. Yes, but with colour it is the same. I think it is a virtue of the Bach film that it was finally in black and white, but the next film I'm making — I would have waited another year rather than do it without colour.

A.E. It is a play by Corneille, also in costumes, but in 16 mm and colour.

J.-M.S. Yes, in 16 mm because I want to do things which are only possible with a hand-held camera.

A.E. French dialogue?

J.-M.S. Yes, I will use people — Italian friends — people whose mother tongue is Italian but who speak French particularly well as the text is very difficult to learn. But after the Bach film I need a very dense and solid text — I must have a web that is very dense, and I think that this text by Corneille is important just now, because it provides a sort of mental gymnastics. Moravia would like to play the role of Galba, the old emperor Galba.

A.E. What is the name of the play?

J.-M.S. *Othon* — the successor of Galba, who himself was the successor of Nero. He has to face the decision of either becoming emperor and losing his woman or the other way round. And towards the end he is close to not becoming emperor and he loses the woman he loves after all. Since the people speaking the text in French do not speak French as their mother tongue, the text won't be so sterile, the way it becomes at the Comédie Française. These people who do not master the language as their mother tongue will face obstacles which in my opinion, should make the text more alive. And it goes without saying the verses shouldn't be spoken as verses, but freely.

A.E. Are you going to film the play as it is on the stage?

J.-M.S. No, it is the opposite of everything I have done so far. I always try to do something different. First it will be made on a single location, a hill in Rome, Monte Palatino, and not on 45 different locations as in *Not Reconciled*, or 35 in the Bach film, from Hamburg to Dresden, Munich, etc. One location only, and secondly instead of filming theatre as in *The Bridegroom*, I will be fairly close to the actors and use more cuts. Imagine a theatre that would appear superficially somewhere between Hitchcock and Dreyer, although I certainly don't try to run after anyone.

A.E. In the talk we had in February '69 we covered your black-and-white films. Since then your films have been in colour. I wrote that if one would take away the colour or some of the sound of one of your films they would no longer exist. I recently had this proved when I saw *Moses and Aaron* on German TV — on a black/white set with fairly bad sound. I have only *seen* the film here in the cinema with proper sound and on the big screen.

J.-M.S. I would like to shoot something in black and white again. But what you say, only comes because films are materialist. That is what they have in common with Snow's film. The only thing, but there it is. When you leave Snow's film and see the end of *Citizen Kane* — on the TV screen admittedly — then you have the impression that *that* doesn't function any more.

A.E. What doesn't function any more?

J.-M.S. *Citizen Kane*, I am afraid.

A.E. But then he made it quite some time ago.

Here ends the first part of the interview.

Michael Snow's Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thank to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen, which the Straubs had seen the evening before at the festival. And when they came home, Straub saw the last minutes of Citizen Kane on BBC TV.

J.-M.S. That is not the reason. Had you seen after it a Mizoguchi or a Renoir, this wouldn't have happened. They are also 'matter'. They have everything that Snow has and on top what Snow doesn't have, and that is why I cannot — let's say it — bear it. It has the reality of sound and image — materialist — but it lacks the binding, it lacks the third pole. Of course there is a connection between eye and ear and the brain functions. He appeals to the brain only in this respect and not . . . he represses, I believe, everything where a thinking tissue could form, that he represses. Your realisation is absolutely correct in so far that the films, especially *History Lessons*, well the three latest ones, if they are not properly projected . . . if the sound-level for instance is not right — if it is too low, also too loud — then the film doesn't exist at all. If you see the short, *Introduction*, with the sound only one point below full volume the film doesn't exist, because the voice of Strasczek, the voice of Danièle and the voice of Nestler, the three voices are overlaid with music. This way Schoenberg corrects his earlier letters which are from 1922, through this piece which is longer than the text — the end is only with this music, the speakers are no longer there — there is much more in it than he writes in his letters. Though I do find these letters beautiful, they are very limited . . .

A.E. Several letters?

J.-M.S. Only two. Danièle starts and says: 'But, asks Brecht, how is somebody going to tell the truth about fascism which he is against if he doesn't want to say something against capitalism which has created it?' Then Nestler continues. That's a text by Brecht dated, I think, '35, at the Paris Congress of Intellectuals against Fascism. And before that you have two letters by Schoenberg. The first block of Strasczek's, right at the beginning. The first shot consists of nearly the complete first letter. Then came an answer from Kandinsky, where he says something like, 'But my dear Schoenberg, we know that you are an exception. You are not like this and like that. You are a great human being.' And then comes the whole text read by Strasczek. That comes from a single letter which is much more aggressive than the first. Then Schoenberg attacks: 'What do you think! I don't want to become an exception. Am a Jew. And a cursed one.'

A.E. What was the position of Kandinsky at the Bauhaus?

J.-M.S. I am not quite sure. He was in it. And he had invited Schoenberg to lecture about music.

A.E. But it wasn't as if Kandinsky openly supported the politics of the Nazis against the Jews?

J.-M.S. Andi, it was '22! That is the incredible thing about the letters of Schoenberg, that they date from '22. Firstly the incredible, the important thing is that a Jew attacks! They have never attacked. They only always exposed their bent backs. To begin with, the bourgeoisie, because they thought, 'It might not come to us', and the others because they had no choice when they were already in the KZs or shortly before and because they had no money to get away. And here one attacks! And accuses! That is important. And the second important point for me is indeed that they are so early. That he writes, 'that Hitler will not agree, that I will become an exception'. That's in '22. This Hitler was no famous man in '22. When was it when he was in Landsberg prison and wrote 'Mein Kampf'? When was that putsch with Ludendorff in Munich?

A.E. I'll have to look it up.

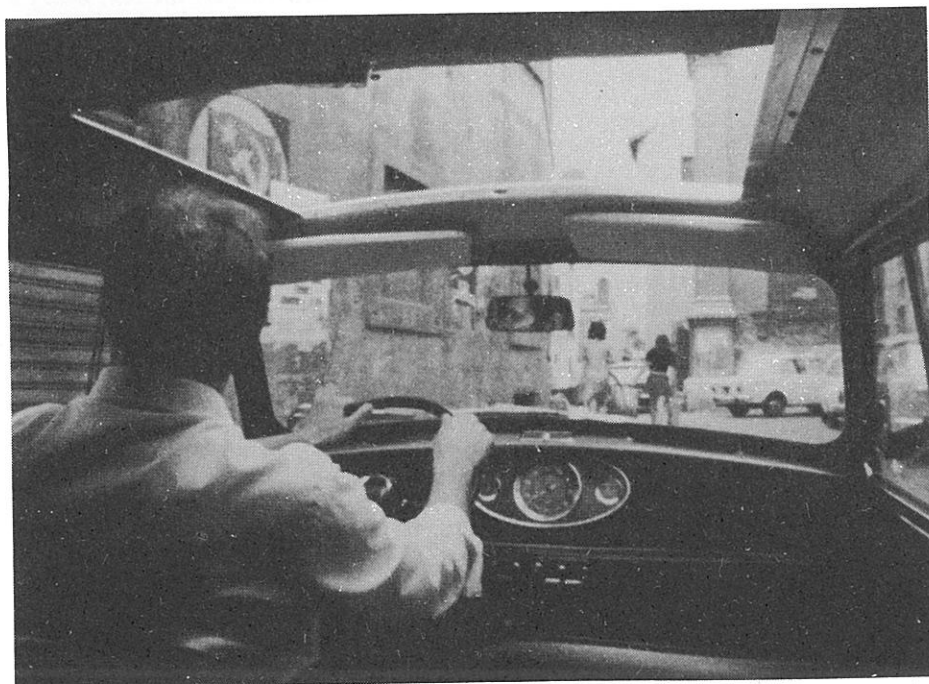
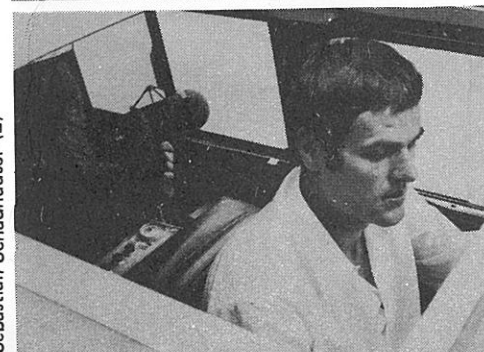
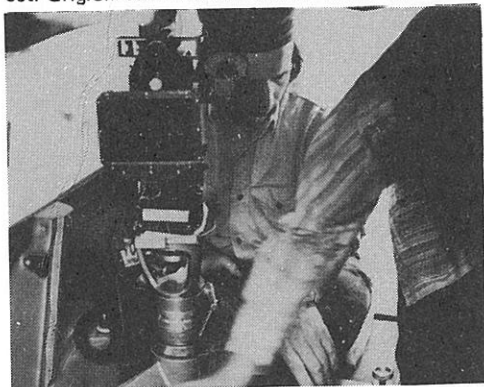
J.-M.S. It should be later than '22. Anyhow it was very early and someone attacks strongly! That's very important. Point 1: the two letters, '22; point 2: the piece of music from the end of 1929; point 3: the Brecht text of '35. There you have the chronological order. Starting with '22, then the music comes in '29/'30, then the Brecht comes in, '35, and then the music of '29/'30 runs on till the end. So that Schoenberg has in a way the last word and that even the music of Schoenberg partly corrects Brecht, or comments it. I believe, that the continuation of the Schoenberg

The Hitler/Ludendorff putsch was on the 8/9th Nov. 1923, Hitler wrote 'Mein Kampf' in Landsberg prison in 1924.

*History Lessons*: Benedikt Zulauf (the Young Man).

Renato Berta with camera inside car.

Jeti Grigioni and Benedikt Zulauf inside car.



music is supposed to play the same role towards the Brecht text as the car-drive in *History Lessons*. I must admit, I don't know exactly what happened there with Kandinsky. We have no documents. There were, this is crystal clear, anti-Semitic tendencies in the Bauhaus itself. Not properly Nazistic. There was no Nazi power yet. But you know that these thinkers of anti-Semitism bloomed in Vienna. It came first from Paris, I believe, much earlier and then it bloomed in Vienna and so to speak moved house from Vienna to Germany. Surely there was something pretty strong in Germany, but the strongest was in Paris, then Vienna, and then Berlin.

A.E. In Paris 'Die Weisen von Zion' also originated.

J.-M.S. Danièle, how was that exactly with 'Die Weisen von Zion'?

Danièle Huillet: They were written in French by the secret police of the Czarist court.

J.-M.S. That's complete fiction, which they prepared there and imported to Paris and from there it was distributed. Many thought that 'Die Weisen von Zion' really existed. And Schoenberg himself knows nothing. He says: 'That must be a fairy-tale from '1001 Nights' without containing anything nearly as convincing.' But he couldn't say: 'Listen, kids, somebody played a trick on you.'

A.E. Could we talk about *Othon* and about your approach generally to the making of films? How do you find the subjects?

J.-M.S. I had read the Corneille piece badly years ago. What I knew were other pieces and what I once discovered at a student theatre performance in Paris before I left was a comedy of his. It was played excellently and it made me think again of Corneille. I wanted once to do something on the stage and for a group like this one. But then I left for Germany. But during our ten, twelve years stay in Germany we made a trip to Italy and were in Rome for the first time and then I found a terrace on the Palatin hill in Rome, which is the foundation of the palace of Septimus Severus. Only the foundation is left. There I thought about a film, only I didn't know which one, about the decadence of the Roman Empire. That was not Corneille. That was this space, this activity around it, and these pieces of rubble, and that light and that rectangular barren space.

A.E. Meaning that in this case it was not a literary basis and you now looked for something to combine it with.

J.-M.S. We didn't even write anything then. We thought about something, all we had was an intuition, something vague. A clear intuition, but a vague film. And we went on struggling for the Bach film, finally could shoot it and I repressed my terrace, and thought about it now and then and then hit on Corneille and by chance on 'Othon' and I discovered that Pierre Corneille — with a subject from Tacitus — had treated my terrace theme so to speak, but in his way of course and using the approach of Tacitus. And we made a film using the approach of Tacitus, using the approach of Corneille. We added little, but at least dragged it into the present and planted it into this space.

A.E. The costumes of *Othon* were deliberately simple.

J.-M.S. Yes, we didn't want, for example, jewellery. Simply the minimum for the girls, a few hair-styles, but very simple.

A.E. And the uniforms of some of the soldiers.

J.-M.S. The most laughable, that's me, with golden shoes. That is so to speak the head of the police guard, if you want, the commissioner of police. The praetorian guard is the equivalent of the CRS in France.

*Othon*, is, I think, our strongest film as far as the 'matter' is concerned and one could say it is the most barbaric and maybe the most complicated because there is no film as foreground, therefore no cinema which can be reduced.

A.E. I agree with that. *Othon* so far I have only perceived on a sensual level.

J.-M.S. Yes, yes, yes, that's the most sensual.

A.E. But when you want to make the next step, it immediately gets very difficult.

J.-M.S. The difficulty is that the impressions to begin with are very strong — one doesn't get bored and run out. If one is touched, then the impressions are very strong, nearly barbaric. These colour shocks from one shot to the other. The reason for that is we shot always chronologically. *Othon* was strictly shot in order, which means that when you shoot and the sun is there with an ultra-white sky, and you then make the counter-shot, the sky will be dark blue. And *that* no cameraman will do. Piccone said at the end when he even heard that the film eventually will be transmitted by TV — we hadn't signed contracts with ZDF, but were still negotiating for one year; there was also talk about a possible transmission by Italian TV, which didn't come to anything because I refused to dub the film into Italian — anyhow Piccone said: 'You have ruined my career.' Especially with this shot/counter-shot story. *They* shoot all shots in one direction and the sky is always blue or white and then the following day all shots in the other direction and then the sky on the other side is always blue or white. And that created not only concerning the sky but also the rest strong contrasts within the colours, and also at the end some pink stuff which is unbelievable. We met up with this at the technical acceptance test at Mainz one year later. I was sitting beside the man who was testing it with his appliance. The needle never went over, it was O.K., as far as the colours were concerned, but he said that this film was not transmittable because the sound was bad. Then I said to him: 'Are you here to test the sound?' 'No, no, the image.' Then he said: 'Yes, but the image doesn't work either, such a pink sky as in this and this shot doesn't exist in this world.' And he in fact did write in his report: 'Cannot be transmitted'. Then the editors had to write, 'This is all artistically intended', and similar rubbish, and then the technicians said, 'Well, if you are so infatuated with your artists, O.K. We have said what we think of it as technicians.' But he didn't talk of *his* technique but again and again of that of the others. Then he said: 'The fountain is too loud.' Things like that.

A.E. How was it financed? You mentioned TV.

1961

Straub laughs.

CRS stands for *Compagnie Républicaine de Sécurité*, French riot police, whose members are well known for their polite behaviour and reluctance to hit people with the butts of their carbines.

The Second National TV Network (ZDF) in Mainz did broadcast *Othon* on the 26th of January 1971.

Klaus Hellwig, owner and motor of 'Janus Film und Fernsehen' in Frankfurt, a distribution and production company.

Werner Dütsch, one of three editors in the film department of West German TV in Cologne.

The Southwest German Radio and TV has its head office and studios in Baden-Baden.

Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene: Günter Peter Straschek in Studio Baden-Baden (Shot 6).



J.-M.S. Only ZDF. And to start with no co-finance at all. Hellwig — the first and only time where a producer fully financed a film of ours himself — had no contract and — he started negotiations and took me with him to Mainz one year before we shot the film, when we still lived in Germany — they said: 'Ah, well, yes, yes', and then the difficulties started, so that I did not have a good feeling. He told me then, I was a pessimist. He was right in so far that he did get the contract, but I was right in so far that he only got the contract one year after conclusion of the shooting. And I think that we or another small film-maker would never have got it into TV. Then Hellwig thought that they were going to do *Moses and Aaron*, but they refused. They paid for the film completely and here one has to say that for the first time in our lives we did get proper payment, monthly salaries, which we got one year after the film was made. We still live off that money. For the following films, we did not get paid.

A.E. But I had heard that for *Introduction* the TV gave you the possibility to be your own producer.

J.-M.S. Yes, I have to thank Dütsch for this, so to speak, because he talked to the people of the music department who were looking for *the third man*. They had bought a Swedish film illustrating the music with clips from *Die Nibelungen*. But said they, 'We have a programme which runs for half an hour. What do we do with this ten-minute film?' — which they were enthusiastic about. 'We absolutely want to broadcast this.' Then one had that stupid idea, 'Let's propose to another director the same piece of music and he shall give his optical impressions, which of course will be different'. That way Dütsch heard of this and said, 'I know someone who is interested in Schoenberg'. Besides, the same department had refused to come into *Moses and Aaron* — we wanted their choir, the same services we then got in the end from Austrian TV. The same people were reminded by Dütsch that there was someone who made films and was interested in Schoenberg. Then they said, 'This film project is now being looked after by Baden-Baden'. So they left it all to dear Hilmar Schatz, 'It is your responsibility that we get a third film'. Because in the meantime they had the second, made by a young Frenchman, a musician, now he makes more and more films, by the name of Luc Ferrari. Then I got a letter from Hilmar Schatz who wrote, 'Would you be prepared to illustrate optically this music of Schoenberg?' I listened to the music which I did not know and I answered: 'I see nothing, therefore I cannot illustrate anything optically at all.' And then I thought about it and said, 'Maybe I can come up with something'. It started to interest me. Then I found the two letters by Schoenberg, and so it assembled itself. I hadn't shown Schatz a script. I said, 'I'll start with some letters', which he knew — 'Ah, yes, very nice, letters' — 'and then I have a few lines of Brecht', I did not say which of course, 'and then newsreel material'. Again I didn't say which. Because then we thought to turn the thing upside down by a bit of artificial dialectics, meaning, not to show American barbarism, which is now in the film, but the three Israeli/Arab wars. We saw some material. Slowly we arrived at the conviction that it would be better to return to the source of imperialism, that is, to the Americans, who in fact feed the state of Israel. Then I delivered the film to Schatz the day it was to be broadcast. There was a slight difficulty with the head of the station, but it was too late. We said, we keep the rights to ourselves, together with the negative, and here the answer to your question, and we insisted that our film was shown third, not at the beginning, and not in the middle, because I knew exactly that the whole thing was going to be completely a-political and it would be better to have it at the end especially in an a-political frame. Because we insisted in keeping the negative, the so-called cinema rights, and partly wanted to shoot the film in Rome — what I am saying at the beginning, I wanted to show the prison building behind — we still got the same amount which Luc Ferrari got, but for him it was a director's salary because he made his film at the station with their services and staff. And the cash which was available was the same amount for each 'maker'. And this amount we got. With this we bought the film stock, paid the sound engineer, the cameraman, and the lab in Rome. There was very little over for us. But what I did want to do, to compromise the machine, was to shoot the recordings on the sound stage of Baden-Baden TV, so that — if they had not accepted the film in the end, not Hilmar Schatz, but some bosses above him — we could have said: 'But that was shot at your station and now you don't want it any more.' That was shot there. There they supplied cameraman and sound engineer for the Straschek/Nestler takes. In the last minute they told us, 'We have no negative. It's on reversal.' So we had to go to our lab in Rome to make a negative of the reversal which cost us a lot of money. We took everything to Rome and also paid for the editing table in Rome. They got two prints as agreed and I would like to say that Schatz was very correct and very friendly. What difficulties he had afterwards himself, he never told us.

A.E. The film makes nearly the impression of a family venture, your friend Straschek is in it, Nestler, you are in it, Danièle, your cat, even your flat.

J.-M.S. It is like this. The Brecht text was brought to my attention by Nestler, years ago. Therefore I wanted him to read it. I didn't discover this text. He did. As far as Straschek is concerned I wanted an Austrian accent. I wanted a young man so as not to give the impression, 'That is Schoenberg, resurrected, reading'. And I wanted one who right from the beginning did not agree with it. Straschek didn't want to do it at all.

A.E. Yes?

J.-M.S. Of course he thought the letters beautiful but it went against his convictions, what is said there.

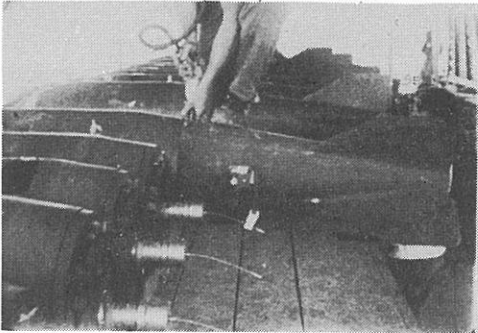
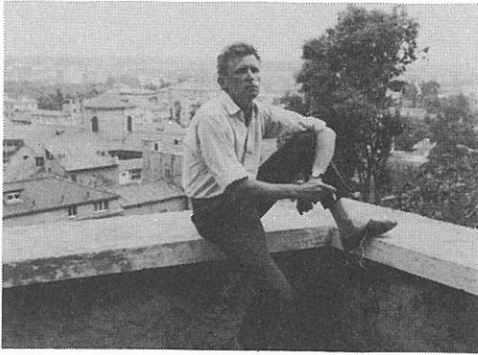
A.E. But he reads it excellently.

J.-M.S. Yes, but there we worked, the three of us, for five days in Rome.

A.E. But recorded in Baden-Baden.

J.-M.S. We took the train together to Baden-Baden after we had worked together in Rome. He always wanted to come to Rome. Had no money. We paid the trip with money from this film, so he was a week to ten days with us in Rome. And for five days, several hours per day, we really slogged away at the pauses and everything and at the

*Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene: Jean-Marie Straub (Shot 2). The prison is the first building on the left. Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene: Shot 19.*



See cover.

*The music here is a chorus piece from Bach's St. Matthew Passion: 'Open up the fiery precipice, oh hell, crush, devour, destroy, smash the false traitor, the murd'rous blood'.*

*Suhrkamp is the publisher and international right owner of the work of Bertolt Brecht. They again like Witsch didn't want History Lessons to be shown. After a lot of mucking about they relented. The playwright Peter Handke is one of Suhrkamp's best-selling young authors.*

end he said to me, 'What do you want? You want me to read that as if they were the letters of my father?' Exactly the same distance as from a father with whom he would not be in agreement and for whom he would on no account feel contempt. So I said, 'That's maybe right', and that crept into it in the last minute. Family film aspect stems also from the fact that the film is very aggressive. That is, I think, our most aggressive and we intended it that way, especially as it was going to be shown in a non-political frame, and wanted to go up to the limit and find out what the Third Programmes were prepared to stomach. Maybe now it would not pass and in no other country in Europe I think could something like it pass.

A.E. Well, Sweden and Holland.

J.-M.S. Yes, Holland maybe, yes. But never in France, and Italy neither. So because they are the Third Programmes and as it was eleven o'clock at night, they did stomach it, anyway, they did stomach it. And because it was so aggressive and went to the limits and we wanted to make an agitational film for the first time, I wanted the responsibility to be clear, that it is us who make it, as persons, and that it is not coming out of the air. And I wanted to be the announcer. I thought it would be better to have one who speaks German badly, with bad accent and pronunciation, so one doesn't have the usual announcer-German at the beginning, so I thought that could be better if I did it and besides, I am the man who made the film. I am responsible.

A.E. What is the connection between the beautiful fountain-head spurting water at the beginning of *Introduction* and at the end of *History Lessons*?

J.-M.S. Those are two different shots from the same angle. We never planned that. When I planned the film and for ourselves wrote a little 'scriptlet' which we didn't show Schatz, as I already said, only sent it to Straschek and Nestler, the fountain wasn't in yet. That came only after we had edited *History Lessons*. Before we had shot and edited *History Lessons* we had already edited the newsreel material of *Introduction*. For three days. That was an ordeal; tiny bits from many thousands of metres of material. We wanted to show it precisely, the hands of the people who assemble the bombs, as few faces as possible, and reduced to precise gestures. That was an ordeal, because it is what it is. It was a nightmare.

A.E. Did you cut to the clock?

J.-M.S. What?

A.E. Did you know how long it had to be?

J.-M.S. No, no, this sequence we edited free, silent.

A.E. Danièle and you edit all your films. Do you also work with other people?

J.-M.S. No, no. Then we shot *History Lessons* and at the end we also shot the colour parts of *Introduction* and we edited *History Lessons*, and then, when *History Lessons* had been edited, we went there with Straschek and then we edited *Introduction*. And only then had the idea to use the fountain again but only the end of the same shot without the zoom approach — in *History Lessons* it ends with the whole fountain and one moves towards the stone face.

A.E. A zoom or a travelling shot?

J.-M.S. A zoom. That's the first zoom in our films, except the newspaper sequence in *Machorka-Muff*. One doesn't know, but probably it is a Roman face which they found somewhere and fitted into this baroque fountain. I wanted something at the beginning to have a bit of calm. I thought, 'The poor TV viewers now have to listen three times to the same piece of music, and for all I know, they put the films closely together, I need some calm here'. So we used the same angle and motif as in *History Lessons* but without the zoom. And in *History Lessons* it is a sunny one, and the one in *Introduction* is a bit sombre, the sky was overcast, it is very blue. In *History Lessons* you see the sun on the face, reflected in the water. The reason why I wanted that in *History Lessons* was, because it is a woman's face, in a film where there are only men. How did you perceive that?

A.E. The scene with the fountain? Simply beautiful and like you said yourself, as a moment of peace.

J.-M.S. In *Introduction*?

A.E. Yes.

J.-M.S. I think that proves that one can do completely different things with the same shot. Because the zoom is cut off, because it is shadowy instead of being sunny, because it is at the beginning instead of at the end of a film, because there is no music, only noises on it, it is at the beginning of *Introduction* something very calm and nearly sad. On the contrary at the end of *History Lessons* it is of course anger, somebody who vomits, simply.

A.E. There is a lot of talk about Brecht, now. You must have studied him thoroughly.

J.-M.S. I know very little Brecht theory. Only now, slowly.

A.E. You read the plays.

J.-M.S. Saw the plays at the 'Berliner Ensemble' between '58 and '60.

A.E. Still with Busch and Weigel.

J.-M.S. Yes. But that really was a great discovery for me. And then a few pieces in West Germany. 'Puntilla' in Tübingen, played by students and then in Hamburg, 'Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe.' Now I have even the complete edition, which I never had. One year after the incident with Suhrkamp, 'You can make it up to me a bit if you give me that as a present', I wrote that to Handke who was supposed to talk to them. Now, I have the suspicion that Handke . . .

A.E. Paid for it himself?

J.-M.S. Yes, anyhow they arrived at Hellwig's office. I am afraid, he might have paid for them, he probably didn't want to ask.

A.E. When we talked the other day about it, I was a bit startled when you said, that you didn't clear the rights deliberately for the Brecht text, because you knew it would be very difficult, etc. Now I understand better because you are really only using some very strong parts from the novel . . .

J.-M.S. Above all because we only used sections from the novel which were a discussion on economics which at school is often completely repressed.

A.E. In a way you used here a basically different approach to your material than say in *Not Reconciled* with Böll or in *Moses and Aaron* with Schoenberg.

J.-M.S. I believe, that the process of adaptation of *Not Reconciled* is exactly between *Moses and Aaron* and *History Lessons*. The process of *Moses and Aaron* and *Othon* are identical as far as adaptation is concerned. But there is in *Othon* something of the 'car drive' aspect in it. But there also the text is intact like in Schoenberg. But in Böll — 'Billiards at half past nine' — there is already something of the approach of *History Lessons*. We also used sections and of course we changed the construction, in so far as there are gaps, not repeated from different viewpoints as it is in the case of the novel. For example the shot is heard, seen from three different points of view, with us only once. The construction is the one of Böll but reduced and with gaps instead of being filled completely and the texts are also taken as sections like in *History Lessons*.

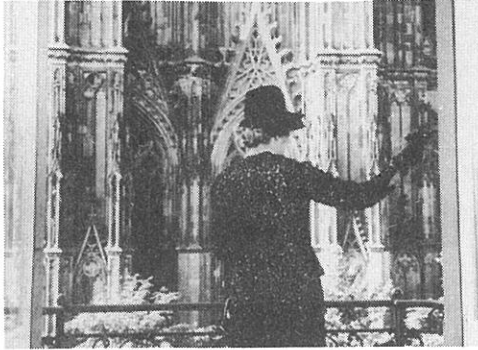
A.E. Is there a different approach to say *History Lessons* and *Moses and Aaron*? In other words, do you use material in some cases and in others do you put yourself — so to speak — into the service of somebody else's work?

J.-M.S. Yes, I think that the approach is so far different in that the works are stronger. They are works where I as a small 'Straub' wouldn't assume the right to take something out — neither in Corneille nor in 'Moses und Aron'. Therefore I take the things completely and show them in a way where the people can judge them or reject them and though the film is partly in contradiction the work is introduced in its entirety to the people. On the contrary, in 'Billiards at half past nine' I took the things which I really thought the best texts, the most beautiful. What we did cut were things which we didn't like and which we thought were of little value, and texts and details which I thought wouldn't survive the screen. Even in the novel of Brecht, I judge the texts we did select as among the strongest I know. Very clever what Brecht has done here: the banker partly talks more like Brecht than the writer. You understand? That's what makes the film interesting. That's not a banker who talks in a naturalistic manner but a banker who like Brecht makes exercises in his head. That's why it becomes interesting. And through that one learns. And still, he has the character of a banker. That's the wit and the difficulty.

A.E. That marvellous bit at the end, 'Our small bank . . .'

J.-M.S. 'My trust in him turned out to be well founded. Our small bank was no longer a small bank.' But the rest of the novel by Brecht wouldn't have interested me. There

*Not Reconciled*: Martha Ständner (Johanna Fähmel) in Shot 159.

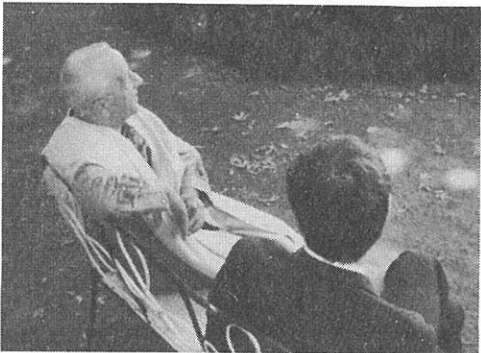
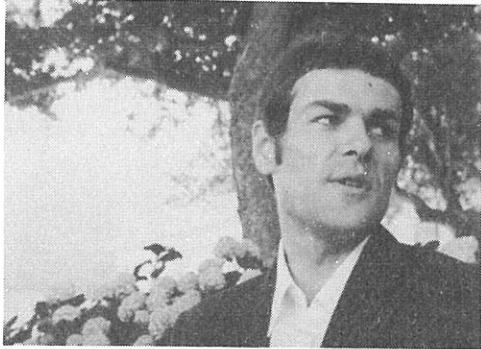


*History Lessons*: Gottfried Bold (the Banker).



*History Lessons*: Benedikt Zulauf (the Young Man).

*History Lessons*: Gottfried Bold and Benedikt Zulauf.



Approx. £13,000. The quality premium (£6000) is a state aid for German produced and German co-produced shorts and features.

Heinz Ungureit, one of three editors in the film department of the First National TV Network (ARD) in Frankfurt.

Hans Stempel and Martin Ripkens, film critics, who have made the occasional film. Their short got a premium of £4500. Hellwig gave £1500.

Approx. £34,000; their salary was £10,000, of which they put £6000 into *Moses and Aaron*, altogether they put in £6200.

are a lot of things like anecdotes. Likewise, we had cut the anecdotes and psychology out of Böll. They might be very funny when you read them but I do not believe that there is any point to put them again on the screen. There have been films like this, *Citizen Kane* or *Confidential Report*. A young ambitious man goes to the banker and asks him, 'How much would you like to have for the manuscript of Rarus?' In between, where we have the black spacing, are sentences like, 'The banker looks at me sharply. The banker reached for his glass of wine', or 'He leaned back'. Things like that. And then the lawyer comes to visit and they are introduced and the other says, 'He makes a such and such impression'.

A.E. The English subtitled version is reduced a further step still. Little explanations, repetitions, etc., especially by the banker, are not translated. So for the English viewer the film is more severe.

J.-M.S. Of course, that's partly sad, but partly a deliberate decision we took.

D.H. We didn't want the people, as in *Othon* — though we did not subtitle everything, but because for example Apra speaks so fast — to do nothing but read the subtitles. So we preferred to have gaps.

J.-M.S. So the people hear the German and hear how those guys speak.

A.E. The subtitles of *Moses* seem to be nearly a complete translation.

D.H. Yes, because Schoenberg writes in such a way that when you leave something out you drop a connection.

J.-M.S. His text is built in such a way, because he himself reduced a lot when he wrote the music. What's interesting is that the last act — the one which is spoken, as opposed to the rest of the text which is set to music — is a draft, so to speak. He would have reduced it a bit. He says that himself. The text is partly made up during composition. He said in a letter, the last act would be on no account longer than 15 to 20 minutes.

A.E. What is the relation in time between the interviews and the car-drives in *History Lessons*?

D.H. One to three, meaning that the three car-drives are about half an hour and the film is one-and-a-half hours long, roughly.

J.-M.S. I believe that *Othon* is sensually and materially our strongest film and *History Lessons* is for me at the moment the most exciting. I have only seen it now for the first time about a week ago when we had to check a print. Then I observed how much was contained in Benedikt, the young man, for example. What's slowly coming up there. Anger, which slowly mounts, which is not at all psychological. How he sits at the beginning, and how we let him sit at the beginning and that the distance between them gets bigger. That combined with his mounting anger. And the relation between the car-drive and the rest. All the things one sees by and by in the streets. Things I did not see at the beginning. And the construction, too. By comparison *Moses and Aaron* would be an American film, if you like. Slightly exaggerated. And this film more something new.

A.E. Was *History Lessons* a fairly cheap film to make?

J.-M.S. *History Lessons* cost 65,000 marks, 30,000 quality premium and 35,000 of debts we made, later paid by Hellwig, after Ungureit agreed to buy the film.

A.E. The quality premium was for which film?

J.-M.S. For *Bridegroom*. For the first time and for the last time. But this money is paid to the producer, because you have to reinvest that in a film in the same year. Hellwig wanted to invest it in *Othon*. But then the rules did not allow that. You could only invest it in another short.

D.H. They changed that now.

J.-M.S. Then he asked us — in order not to lose the money — whether he could invest the money in a project of Stempel/Ripkens and we said, 'Sure'. And then those two got a premium. But he had an ugly surprise, he only got 22,000. The amount had been reduced.

D.H. But he himself gave the 8000 marks.

J.-M.S. And with that amount we shot the film. We said, 'We are going to make a film. We are not going to say what it is.'

D.H. We still were the producers, because the debts were in our name.

J.-M.S. All at the lab.

A.E. And how much was *Othon*?

D.H. *Othon* was 170,000 plus our salaries which Hellwig would pay us when ZDF was going to buy the film. We got 50,000 — which then was a lot of money for us. Of these 50,000, because we live very economically, we took 30,000 for *Moses and Aaron*, because at the beginning when we were in Vienna we had to pay the trips and expenses of Gielen, the singers and the sound engineer. At that time we had no money from Hellwig yet, because not everything was secure and he didn't want to give cash. So we had to take the money from the salary of *Othon* and invest it in *Moses*, 31,000 marks.

J.-M.S. Then he had to go to the state and ask them for the money. There he had to give a title for the projected film, but as he hadn't heard from us, he put down as title, *The Surprise*. That's registered now in Bonn under the title of *The Surprise* and he received 22,000 for a film which is called *The Surprise*.

D.H. We stayed on as producers and he then got the rights for German TV and gave us again money to pay our debts.

A.E. So you own world rights?

D.H. Yes, yes, we have all other rights. On top of that Hellwig paid 22,000 to the Suhrkamp people for one broadcast in TV.

Approx. £4400 for rights to Suhrkamp, approx. £13,000 for the film. ARD paid £17,000, which leaves the Straubs £400 out of pocket with *History Lessons* (and no salary at all).

J.-M.S. So the film has cost 65,000 with salaries for us which were no longer possible because the 22,000 had to come out of the money from Ungereit.

D.H. He paid 85,000 meaning we were short of 2000. And Hellwig really didn't make any money on it.

J.-M.S. Nothing, not a penny. And it was a risk, because it was not at all sure that Ungereit would take the film.

A.E. I must say I am very surprised that a solid film like this one can be done for 65,000.

J.-M.S. And we paid everybody decently. And don't forget the many trips! We travelled from Rome to the Brenner Pass.

D.H. We paid Bold 3000 to come to Elba and Rome.

A.E. Who is Bold? An actor?

J.-M.S. He was — he is dead now, exactly one year after we made the film, he died because of the liver. We became friends after *Machorka-Muff*. He was cultural editor of 'Welt der Arbeit'. An honest man. I wanted to say that, one reason why I like *History Lessons* so much, is the work of this man. There is a lot contained here. What he brought into it from his own experience . . .

A.E. Did they all learn their lines?

J.-M.S. and D.H. Yes, yes.

A.E. Even Unterpertinger, the peasant?

J.-M.S. The approach to the peasant was reversed. With the three intellectuals we said, 'You have to learn the text. What is contained in it you will only discover gradually and don't imagine anything — only Brecht's words!' And Bold in the end put in all his experiences, experiences from the war, Russia and all that, and what happened after the war, the economic miracle, and his anger about the previous elections. That is an upright socialist, who always had beef with the social democrats and once had to appear before the secret service, because he had supported CP members. But with the peasant we gave the text to him and first accepted during rehearsals his own words. He read the text, and he understood some of it, and together with his experiences — political and otherwise — said it in his own words. And only gradually did we substitute his words with the words of Brecht, which that way became more precise and stronger; then his experiences were in them. The last point with him was one small word: 'They had their slaves.' and he always said: 'Of course, they had their slaves.' That had to come out. The same word was already in the text before and it weakened it.

A.E. He was a real peasant?

J.-M.S. Yes. And he doesn't live either any more. He killed himself.

A.E. Do you think he enjoyed working on your film?

J.-M.S. Yes. It even happened like this: six months after the shooting of the film he was much better, in his mind, etc., and six months later he became depressed again and he went to the hospital in Innsbruck. Came back after three months with pep pills, etc. And his wife, who at the beginning was very much against the undertaking — she said: 'It's going to tire him, and he's ill' — at the end she embraced us and when we saw her later she told us: 'That really was good for him.' It was an exercise for him and took him out of his problems and meant some entertainment for him. He is as old as he looks. The mill is on his land. His farm is 30 metres away. That's when you come by train from the Brenner, it is the first valley on the left, called Pussta valley, leading to Bruneck. Schoenberg went there several times for his holidays.

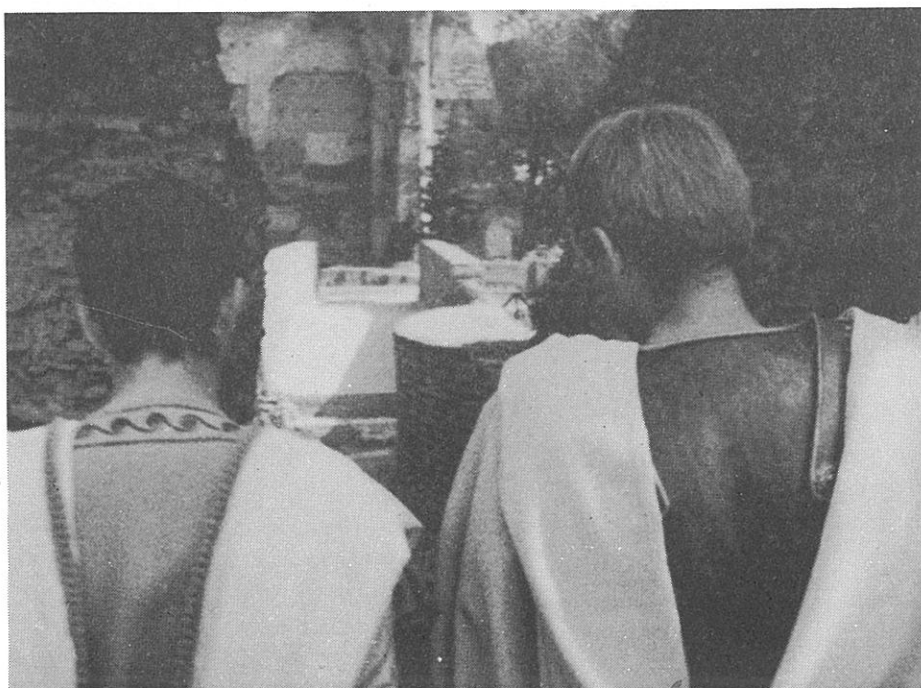
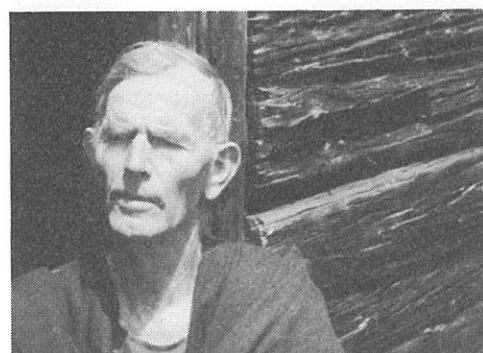
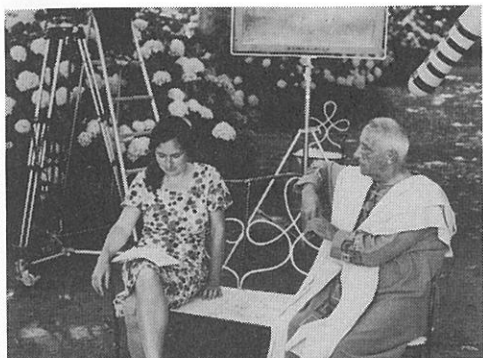
A.E. Could we just go back to the production of *History Lessons*. In fact you produced this on your own with considerable risk.

Danièle Huillet and Gottfried Bold during the shooting of *History Lessons*.

*Not Reconciled*: Kathrin Bold (Ferdinand Progulski's sister) in Shot 124.

*History Lessons*: Johann Unterpertinger (the Peasant).

Sebastian Schadhauer



*Othon*: Jean-Claude Biette (Martian) and Jubarite Semaran (Lacus); the long travelling shot only possible in 16 mm.



D.H. *History Lessons* is like *Not Reconciled*.

J.-M.S. Worse even, because with *Not Reconciled* we had letters even from the publisher and from Böll, where they say: 'Get on with it.' Here we had nothing. And a final thing one should say about this question of costs. The difference between the costs of *Othon* and *History Lessons* is caused also because of a condition by ZDF that they should get a 35 mm film. And as I absolutely wanted to shoot in 16 mm – for different reasons, because I wanted to after the 35 mm black/white films in Germany, and because I wanted to experiment, I had no experience at all, and because there are two sequences in it which for topographical reasons were simply not possible with 35 mm, you couldn't build rails there. The long travelling shot with Lacus. He follows step by step. And the ground consists of steps, etc. It was only possible in 16 mm. On top of all that we would not have got the necessary permission for 35 mm equipment on the Palatin hill. We only got the permission because we said it was 'cultural documentary'. So here the point I wanted to make: the blow-up of *Othon* alone was 30,000. So if you would blow-up *History Lessons* it would cost you exactly half of what the film cost in the first place. We did blow up the three panning shots of the Nile.

Approx. £6000.

A.E. Who shot that? You?

J.-M.S. No, no, Berta. Berta and his wife and we both went.

A.E. Where are these places?

J.-M.S. The first panning shot is very much to the south, nearly at the border of the Sudan. That's Aswan, near the dam. The second shot is in the middle of the country, from a mountain near Luxor.

A.E. How did you find them? With a car?

J.-M.S. We knew it already. We went there once before. Simply to find it. I first thought, estuary. And you can't, because of the military. We succeeded once to get into the area, with somebody who drove us, I had to keep down like this at each control, there are ten check-points. But you could never have shot there. Besides I didn't find what I was looking for. We travelled an awful lot, by train, by car – people drove us – and bicycle.

He puts his head between his legs.

A.E. In that heat?

J.-M.S. You can rent them there. We could stay then with Delcour, who was correspondent of 'Le Monde' in Cairo. Then we went a few months later only for ten days – ten days air ticket – with Berta and camera.

A.E. 16 mm Arri?

J.-M.S. Couldn't do that, because we had no permission. And good old Delcour played a very nasty trick on us – without wanting to – because he talked to somebody at a ministry and said, 'I have a friend here from France. He's a director and he's working on a film here.' So they said: 'Well, that's great. How about a permission? We need of course a script. What is it?' 'Oh, I can tell you that, it's *Moses*.' He didn't even know that Schoenberg had written something called 'Moses und Aron', and I said, 'But for heaven's sake!' Then he told me that he had met the same functionary again, who told him: 'We have made a note of that. This Straub, you say he is a French director, but he must be a Jew from Alsace.' And I had always said to Danièle, 'Careful with your head. We are going to have difficulties. They are going to check whether or not you are a Jewess.'

All three collapse with helpless laughter. Danièle has dark hair.

D.H. He said that, as a blond, he would have nothing to fear.

A.E. So what did you shoot with in the end?

J.-M.S. Beaulieu Tourist, we didn't have a revolving head, just a tripod.

D.H. It was very difficult for him.

J.-M.S. That's on reversal stock. He nearly died doing it, the daft thing. We arrived very early on the mountain and worked till one o'clock in the afternoon, he without shirt. Then he slept naked in his bed and on the next day he had pneumonia. All four of us had done it on bikes. Back by train, and on the train and on the plane he had very high fever. During the three days in Cairo we had left on the tickets, he couldn't see anything of the town. His wife had to call the doctor.

A.E. *Moses* is an old project.

J.-M.S. '59, first German stage production in Berlin. I saw that and she joined me there. I was on my own, between East and West Berlin. Most of the Bach manuscripts were Unter den Linden in East Berlin.

D.H. We had absolutely no money. And he called me long-distance!

D.H. and J.-M.S. First telephone call from Berlin to Paris!

D.H. And secondly, I had to get from Paris to Berlin and that was also a problem. Even by train, that was expensive.

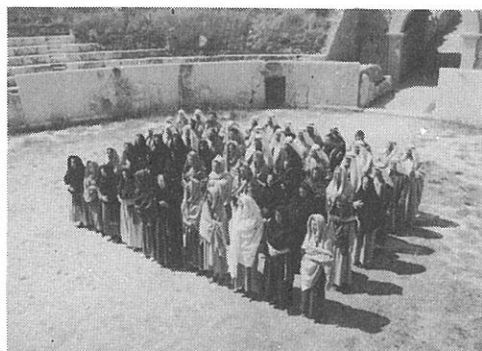
J.-M.S. So I saw it a second time with her. What was there immediately was: under open sky; contrary to what I had seen. I did not know how, but I knew that if I ever do this – I wanted to do it – again it would be reversed. What I saw was very 'stage abstract', misunderstood abstraction. 'Stylised', as Schoenberg said. There is a letter by Schoenberg, where he says: 'Stylised, what does that mean? Then I always ask in which style?' And everything was turned into a ballet. But musically much better than the few things we have seen since, when the epidemic started last year in Germany.

A.E. What liberties can one take when one directs an opera? Yesterday somebody came to me, who likes your work, and asked me, 'Didn't he change a lot?'

J.-M.S. What we did change of importance, basically . . . he describes, he describes for example: 'A woman is carried on a stretcher before the altar and is carried away, etc.' Or he says, 'The priests embrace the girls, kiss them for a long time'. He describes all that. One knows exactly what is in the score, how long he wants it to last. What we did change basically are three things: Firstly, the two acts which are music we show in the

Directed by Hermann Scherchen.

*Moses and Aaron*: Shot 23



same place, same space; secondly, the mountain is already there when Moses has his so-called calling, and there is the burning bush, and the bush which talks and answers him, is already somehow the people instead of being a bush. It is a bush, but it is also the people. And thirdly, that is maybe the most important point to your question and gives you maybe the definitive answer, Schoenberg worked for the stage, for simultaneity, meaning when he describes the animals, which are led in, it starts exactly like we do and one knows exactly where it is supposed to stop, because a new section starts. First the camels, then goats and sheep, you can hear that in the music, then the cows and then the dance of the butchers. The entries of the music pieces are absolutely precise and one knows exactly where it could and should stop — as it happens in the film — but on the stage the succession is changed into a simultaneity. We only reduce it to succession.

A.E. You have only changed the angle, so to speak, but not the contents.

J.-M.S. Yes. He says for instance: 'They dance with big knives, but dance around the cattle.'

A.E. I see, and in your film they dance before the calf. But the man I mentioned said that in the Boulez version Aaron is killed.



*Moses and Aaron:* Günter Reich (Moses), Louis Devos (Aaron), Harald Vogel and Hans-Peter Böffgen as soldiers, shortly before Aaron's death (Shot 82).

J.-M.S. No, no, this is the only point which we changed, but again not really, because in our film Aaron, when this is to take place, is not on the screen, because the camera has left him and pans to Moses. Schoenberg writes: 'He is untied, gets up and falls down dead.' That's all. But after the sentence: 'Set him free, and if he is able, so may he live!' And when he says this sentence the camera is on Moses.

A.E. So it is not the soldiers who kill him.

J.-M.S. No, no. Someone told me that this is straight out of Hegel: This is a man who then no longer has a purpose.

A.E. Are there any other details which you interpreted your way?

J.-M.S. For example, 'Grouped around the soldiers which stand with Aaron', Schoenberg says, 'are the Elders'. The court of law, so to speak. In our film you don't know that, because our shot is so close, that you can only see Aaron and the soldiers. And in Schoenberg the soldiers only ask: 'Shall we kill him?' after Moses had said: 'Thou hast betrayed God to the Gods, the idea to the images, this chosen people to the others, the extraordinary to the ordinary.' But, I believe, what is interesting in that man's comment is, that exactly the same happened to us. It was a challenge for me to make the film. To get a clear view of the whole thing, I wanted to shoot the film. And then also for the people who bought the record, because they cannot work it out either. For instance, Johan van der Keuken, the Dutch film-maker, said to me yesterday, that he knew the music, had heard it twice from a record, but now for the first time he got a clear view of it. We recently saw a rehearsal in Frankfurt, where they always scratched their legs, 'Leprosy, leprosy'. In Vienna we went with Gielen, and in Vienna it was like that, that you couldn't understand anything, neither of the score nor of the libretto, complete confusion. Believe me, we who knew the thing pretty well, from the script, from hearing it again and again, where to cut, who looks at whom, etc., I sat there and suddenly I couldn't even hear the notes, besides it looked like 'Pigalle 1900'.

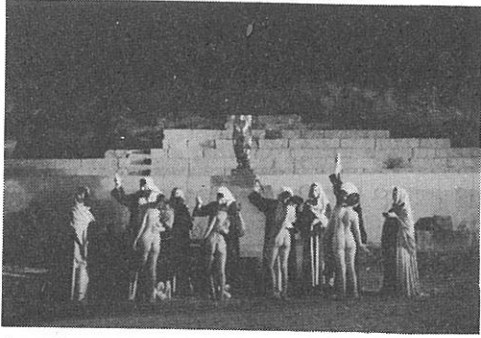
A.E. There was the production in Hamburg, which turned into an orgy. The bourgeois were delighted.

J.-M.S. That was later. We didn't see that.

D.H. That was the reason for many people to go. And that is also the reason that music critics in Germany were so furious — some of them — because they thought now the film will make it possible to go even further than the Hamburg production.

J.-M.S. And instead of writing about their actual work — music — they only wrote about things like that. They were frustrated. Schoenberg writes: 'Four naked virgins',

*Philips have brought out a recording of the Straub/Gielen version of Arnold Schoenberg's opera 'Moses und Aron' (No. 6500 836). And though this recording would not exist without the WORK of the Straubs, and the people they brought together from musical director to sound engineer, singers, choristers, and musicians, Philips have not sent the Straubs a copy of the record, and only sent one to Louis Hochet, the sound engineer, after Straub asked them to. Further, when Straub pointed out to the Dutch managers of Philips that without him there would be no record and that it would not be completely out of this world for Philips to pay him a small percentage of the world sales — Straub mentioned 0.999% — he only received a noncommittal, polite letter in May 1975, has not heard from Philips since, and of course has seen no money. As Danièle Huillet says in her text: 'The culture industry is one of the most flourishing in capitalist society.'*



Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet with Renato Berta during the shooting of *History Lessons*.

and in brackets, '(as naked as the law permits)'. There is indeed no other nudity than what we showed. One thing we did reduce and which was still in the first version of the script, is, when the young man runs into the scene naked, rips off the dress of the young woman, then kneels before the altar, then there is a line of other naked couples, doing the same, kneeling down. . . . That I reduced, because I thought it was stronger to move from the first couple to the flame instead of seeing such a line. Besides, it was for him already such an ordeal to hold his own wife up and he had to repeat it seven times, he shivered, and it was very cold. But there is no doubt, that otherwise it would have been weaker. And of course, what happens in the scene with the flare, where the Elders are singing off the screen, 'Blissful is the people' — nearly on the borderline of fascism — we showed before, as is in Schoenberg, wine being poured out, from goatskins — we bought that in Cairo from a man who sold water in the street — then a panning shot upwards to the flare, then it says in Schoenberg, 'a few drunks gesticulate'. That is 'reflected' on the flare, so that the viewer can imagine it. I think this is better like that, than to show people who gesticulate badly which Orson Welles has done better anyhow than I could have, for example in *Othello*. It would have reduced the freedom of the viewer and limited the music.



# After 'Othon', before 'History Lessons' Geoffrey Nowell-Smith talks to Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet

This interview was made in London, November 1971, in French transcribed and translated by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. It has been slightly abbreviated in two places which have been marked in the text. Excerpts of this interview were — at the time — published in the weekly '7 Days', since gone bust.

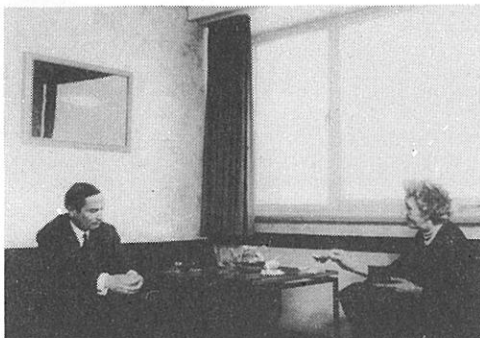
History Lessons was shown on the 20th of May 1974 by the First National TV Network (ARD); but very late at 22.50.



Sebastian Schachhauser

*Not Reconciled*: Henning Harmssen (Robert Föhmel) and Martha Ständner (Johanna Föhmel) in Shot 112.

*History Lessons*: Gottfried Bold (the Banker).



Approx. £30,000

**Geoffrey Nowell-Smith** Why are there no women in your new film?

**Jean-Marie Straub** Because they have nothing to do with power. The film is very contemporary, at least to the extent that it ends up talking about imperialism. But it's not a film about the contemporary world. It's about the origins of imperialism. It's an historical film, but the figure who acts as a connecting thread is not in costume.

**Danièle Huillet** Well . . .

**J.-M.S.** I mean he's dressed like you or me. But it's a film we mainly just want to finish and not talk about in advance, because there will be all sorts of problems about copyright and negotiating to sell it to West German TV. We want it to go out first on German TV, on the Third Programme, and reach as big an audience as possible, but we can't start negotiating before it's actually made otherwise there'll be six months of talking: 'Why are you doing this?', 'Why don't you do it that way?' And we just want to make it and offer it to them and they can take it or leave it. And if they leave it, that's our hard luck, but the film will exist and we can sell it somewhere else, like to the Trades Unions.

**G.N.-S.** Will this be a film based on a pre-existing literary text, or will you be making direct use of Marx?

**J.-M.S.** It's all Marx, but it's not from Marx. But I can't let on at this point whose text it is.

**G.N.-S.** I've noticed that in your films you usually start from, and elaborate your own discourse about, an existing work of art — Böll, Corneille, the music of Bach.

**J.-M.S.** Very often it's a critique. I mean I take texts which I respect, but at the same time, with the Böll for example, there was a respect, but I chopped the text about a lot and it was presented to people for them to judge. Corneille rather less, because I have more respect for Corneille than for Böll, but even so Corneille was presented as something past, written in a past language. There's a dialectic of the texture. But here the text as such is not offered to be judged, at least less so.

**G.N.-S.** With the Corneille in a sense you criticise the text.

**J.-M.S.** Yes. But much less so in the new film, because the text itself is already a reflection on Marx. It will be presented to be judged as a reflection on Marx which can perhaps be superseded or even criticised too but there is not the same distance as there is in relation to the Böll text. It's not presented to people as an object to be criticised. The aspect of critique is restored to the extent that the film has characters and they are criticised. But they won't talk like . . . well, put it this way, in Böll, in *Not Reconciled*, sometimes it becomes an epic text in the Brechtian sense, like with the old lady, but it is all the same; often naturalistic, it gets closer to naturalism, to the way German bourgeois speak — in spite of it being a literary text, and by Böll, and sometimes even epic, at least the parts we left in. Here, on the other hand, the language won't be naturalistic at all. The banker will talk like a banker, but like a banker who's read Marx — maybe there are some, I don't know — and who is cynical. He won't talk like just any old dumb banker.

**G.N.-S.** Gramsci once quoted someone as saying that if the bankers had read 'Capital' they'd be better able to keep their own affairs in order.

**D.H.** The trouble is precisely that some of them have.

**J.-M.S.** There's that on the one hand, but on the other hand there's the fact that capitalists work in a perspective of ten years at most. It's not a new thing to say, but it's a fact, that no capitalist business is profitable. All capitalist enterprises lead to bankruptcy or collapse — their own first, and then that of the globe. Capitalists all think that what they're doing is profitable, but it's not true. It's profitable perhaps for two generations, but not more.

**D.H.** Less.

**J.-M.S.** I think the process is speeding up. It's profitable for ten years, and there are even businesses where they pile up money for five years and then collapse. You can see this in the cinema. We found it in the case of the guy who acted as producer for the *Bach* because without him we couldn't have qualified for a grant from the Kuratorium junger deutscher Film, because although that's an organisation that supposedly exists, or used to exist, to subsidise the young German cinema — it still exists, but only to help in distribution, not production — it's still controlled by Bonn and they refused us personally a grant for the *Bach* when we asked them but they gave it to this producer who acted as an umbrella for us, who is a guy who since the war, well the *Bach* is his fiftieth film since the Liberation, if you can call it that: he's made forty-nine films before that and they were always saying in the trade papers how this was the stuff people wanted to see, *Tante Frieda*, *Lausbubengeschichten*, *Grün ist die Heide*, stuff like that; and one fine day, three months before we were to begin shooting the *Bach*, with the subsidy we had thanks to him because when the request was resubmitted in his name there was no problem, although they had turned us down when we asked — because the money stays in the family, as it were — and we were one vote short but when the government representative saw his name — 150,000 marks it was for: the film cost four times as much . . .

**D.H.** Three times.

**J.-M.S.** So it was one-third of the cost. But he got it at once, because as soon as the Bonn representative saw it was him submitting the request he voted for. Anyhow,

three months before starting shooting, when all the industry press was saying — had been saying for twenty years — ‘This is the stuff people want to see, this is what’s commercial, this is the stuff that works’, well suddenly, three months before we start shooting, we hear that this gentleman has gone bankrupt. So I go down to the lab and the man there says ‘Well, my poor friend, it’s all over’ — but it didn’t seem to matter too much and we could do what we liked — anyhow the man says, ‘Guess how much’, and I couldn’t guess and he says, ‘six million marks’, that’s how much in debt our producer friend was at the end of his fifty so-called commercial films. . . .

Approx. £1.100.000

D.H. Forty-nine.

J.-M.S. Before that there were some films he had made more or less outside the commercial circuits. He had co-produced *Der junge Törless* and he had done some Thomas Mann, *Walsungenblut*, *Tonio Kröger*, stuff like that. Otherwise pure commercial stuff, and commercial only in the south of Germany at that. So you can see that a bloke like that who did these so-called commercial films was losing money all down the line. Not personally, but none of the films was profitable. The labs were happy because he was shooting; everybody was happy until the day they called a halt and said: ‘That’s enough, he has six millions in debts’; and the people in the lab and the studios too were really furious, but two years later I met the same man from the lab and he was happy because he said a settlement had been reached and they were getting back 40% of the money owed to them. 40% and they were happy. And now the guy’s back in business, but he’s changed the name. So you see that these so-called commercial films, made purely for the money, after twenty-five years they just lead to six million marks of bankruptcy and ruin.

He changed the name of his production company.

G.N.-S. It’s only the state really that keeps capitalism going. Even with the cinema, because that’s kept going by TV and TV is basically the state.

D.H. That’s what people are beginning to find out — what their so-called representatives are up to. For some time this remained hidden.

J.-M.S. For some time people really believed that democracy existed and that when they went to the box-office and bought a ticket it was really they who were deciding which films they would see, but it’s not true. If it were really a democracy those films would not exist because they bring in, when everything’s going O.K. . . . well, of the forty-nine films that guy made there were maybe five that really recouped what they cost to make, and the others, even when things were going well, maybe got back half, and these were films that on average cost 2½–3 million marks. First of all they were never exported, secondly even in the north of Germany they didn’t go at all because they were all southern-type films, Bavarian style. So the result was there were some that didn’t even bring in a quarter of their cost. And that piles up. Forty or so films like that, and the guy’s bankrupt. And they still say that these are the films people want to see and so it’s democratic to make those kind of films. But in Bonn this bourgeois democracy is anti-democratic because the state then forces people to see these films, because they’re subsidised. If they weren’t subsidised they probably wouldn’t exist and democracy would work better, I mean just at a bourgeois level.

Approx. £500.000 to £550.000

First cut in the text.

G.N.-S. In *Othon* you use a lot of long takes. Did this cause problems with the actors, having to do a whole scene in one go? Did you have to reshoot a lot?

J.-M.S. It varied. Some shots we only needed four or five takes. But there was one we shot 42 times. The last scene on the first reel — that is Act I — before the brief shot of the Capitol with the cloud passing, there’s the big scene with the three characters. At first there is Plautine, Othon and Vinus, then Vinus leaves: Plautine and Othon are left alone and the camera comes in on Othon: Plautine then leaves and the camera pulls back from Othon. This one we shot 42 times. The actors all knew their lines, but there were difficulties. There was a lot of wind. Vinus arrived late. He hadn’t slept much the night before. The day before, which was his first day on the set, he had got all his bit right and was so pleased with himself he’d gone out to celebrate and drank a bit too much and took in a movie too and went to bed very late and in the morning at

*Othon*: Anne Brumagne (Plautine), Adriano Aprà (Othon), and Anthony Pensabene (Vinius) in Act I.



9 a.m. he was in no state to do anything. He only felt all right by about 2 p.m. by which time the others were knocked out. So the others had to rest a bit and it was only when the three of them were more or less equally awake that we got it. And that 42nd take really is the best. There was one before which was usable, but all the others had fumbles. All morning it was Vinius who fumbled or stammered, once or several times: then in the early afternoon it was the two others who stammered and were tired. We only got it going towards the end of the afternoon.

G.N.-S. What freedom do you allow your actors in interpreting their roles? In a recent statement you referred to a certain totalitarianism in Bresson for example. Your own style seems to be perfectionist but not totalitarian.

J.-M.S. One shouldn't take this as an attack on Bresson — though I admit I don't like his latest films so much — because what Bresson is trying to achieve is a unity of the character, whereas what interests me more and more is diversity, which is why, whatever some people may say, I think *Othon* is the most interesting film I've yet made, because it has the widest range. At one end you have someone like Vinius who grimaces and acts up and stammers and talks slowly, and at the other end are Plautine and Othon who give the sense of never emphasising. More and more I'm getting interested in diversity. The more diversity there is the happier I am. But that poses problems. Vinius, for example, after several weeks up he comes and says he's getting nowhere and how he'll never make it. For a start he was very vain, which is something I normally don't like, but just for that reason I decided to keep him. I hate that sort of person in real life. Danièle and I had a row about this for weeks. She kept saying: 'He's impossible, he's disgusting, he'll never get there, he's lazy, he thinks it's enough to play at being an actor without even learning the text.'

G.N.-S. Was he in fact Italian?

D.H. His father was Italian, Sicilian, a marquess. His mother was English.

J.-M.S. He was educated in some boarding-school in England.

G.N.-S. I thought he had an English accent.

D.H. He didn't need to because he had mostly lived in Italy. But he clung on to it on purpose because he hated the Italians.

J.-M.S. But he was also a really screwed-up character. At that school in England, as a punishment, he was thrown into the bottom of a well — you know, to educate him. He's the one in the film who has the lines:

'How thou yet ill seest what the Empire is!  
If for two days alone thou couldst try it,  
Thou wouldst never believe to be able to overpay it.  
Love Othon, if thou canst make thyself a sure support of him;  
But if need be, love thyself more than him:  
Take the sceptre at the expense of him who will succumb,  
And reign without scruple with him who will reign.'

But the character is a victim of the system he's caught up in, the cynicism he has to adapt to. He says . . . how does it begin? Anyhow where he says 'One must, whatever may happen, or perish or reign', and again where he says to Othon 'I love you yet better, as master than as son', the point is clear that he recognises that you must eliminate the enemy or be eliminated by him, which is why he has to throw in with Othon.

G.N.-S. The whole film is about power relations.

J.-M.S. There is a phrase which at first looks really cynical and then one realises that it is actually quite naive and spoken in good faith with the cynicism intervening only later. The phrase has these contradictory movements within it, first one way and then the other, which end up destroying it from the inside, both the phrase itself and the idea it represents.

G.N.-S. One thing that interests me a lot is the way you bring out in the film the role of the women characters who are at the same time outside the power game played by the men and yet forced in a way to take part in it themselves.

J.-M.S. On Camille's side there is even this very sharp break . . . but tell me what you were going to say.

G.N.-S. It's something that in classical tragedy you normally don't see, but it comes across very clearly in the film. Normally in staging classical tragedy the presentation of the women and the way actresses are asked to act their roles is absolutely a-political.

D.H. The curious thing is that Corneille was more or less conscious of the ambiguity in the position of the women, because he makes Camille start a speech: 'I am too ignorant in matters of state to know what so great a potentate must be.'

J.-M.S. She says this as a concession to Galba, which she then withdraws because she says 'But' and then rebels. But in order to rebel she has first to say what she says at the beginning.

D.H. She can only rebel to the extent that she has first affirmed her submission, and only then . . .

J.-M.S. In fact it isn't even true what she says, because she knows better than Galba what's at stake, but she has to affirm that she 'doesn't know' about state affairs. So she says she doesn't know about politics but she does know what man she wants and she uses that as a starting point to argue a political case.

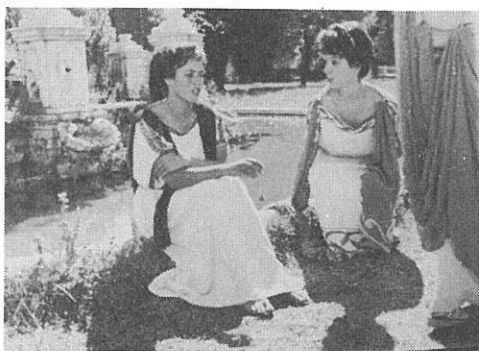
G.N.-S. The women are aware of being pawns, but being aware that you have no power doesn't help very much.

J.-M.S. There's a contrary movement in each of the women. Plautine starts as the young girl rebelling against her father who is really an utter pimp and who tries twice

*Vinius: '... they will soon cause our loss if we do not cause their loss.'*



68/69 A.D. The four emperors were Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasianus.



Othon: Olympia Carlisi (Camille) in Act III.

Othon: Anne Brumagne (Plautine).

Othon: Anne Brumagne (Plautine) and Olympia Carlisi (Camille) in Act IV.

to get her to change lovers for the sake of his own power game. So she rebels. Her first words are 'Non pas' – 'Not so, my lord, not so'. Later, in the fountain scene she repeats this No. But as the play goes on she becomes more and more petty-bourgeois. After saying No for the second time – or even earlier, because she's already had the idea – she forms this petty-bourgeois notion of self-sacrifice – sacrifice for god knows what. At the end she leaves Othon there and says: Get on with it yourself, since this is what you wanted. But to some extent she escapes – in a petty-bourgeois sort of way – though not for long, because Othon is still there. In fact Othon isn't there for very long himself, because he died six months later on the battlefield.

D.H. Three months.

J.-M.S. Three months later he committed suicide. Those emperors were brought to power by the army and reigned for a year at the most.

G.N.-S. In the history books it's called the Year of the Four Emperors, 69 or 70 or whenever it was.

J.-M.S. Camille on the other hand follows a slightly different movement. She is sublime at the beginning, epic. The character is an invention of Corneille's, because Galba didn't have a niece. She is the one who has the idea of an opening on to a limited but possible future – 'Perhaps one day Rome will permit herself to choose in her turn' – but concretely she proposes something perhaps Utopian but in any case an opening up of options for Othon which he turns down out of opportunism and cowardice. At the end of Act III she is really sublime, a totally epic character. She leaves Othon standing, she refuses his little game. She leaves because he hasn't the courage to accept her offer. But then in Act IV, with no transition, we find the same character there, playing her own little game, being very bitchy, quarrelling with Plautine, scheming like the rest. She even in a sense hands over Othon to the executioner at the end of Act IV – partly for revenge, partly from jealousy, but either way through intrigue.

G.N.-S. Her confidante protests at what she's doing, seeming to want to destroy the others, and she replies that this is not what she was meaning to do. But I didn't quite understand what she did mean.

D.H. What she means is that she doesn't want Martian to kill Othon without her knowing. Because if she knows in advance she can take steps to tip off Othon. Which is why she pretends to Martian she is on his side, so she can discover his plans and warn Othon of them. But at the end of Act IV, when she learns that Othon has been brought to power by the soldiers . . .

J.-M.S. The officers.

D.H. . . . she drops him.

J.-M.S. She swings straight over to Galba's side — 'Since Othon would perish, let us consent that he should perish'. She's gone squarely over to the side of authority. But to be fair, in the last act, when she is more or less on trial before Galba, she does defend Othon. She says the accusations are a load of nonsense, and she tells Galba that he is surrounded by sycophants. But all the same.

G.N.-S. You say Othon is brought to power by the officers. This seems to me an important thing that is stressed throughout the film.

D.H. The role of the army is very clear. Right early on in the film Albin reports that Pison has been presented before the army and they have rejected him, and it's clearly implied that everything depends on the army.

J.-M.S. Camille's behaviour at the end of Act IV is partly a class reaction. Her action is positive, it's kind, but all the same it is because she hates Martian, who is a freedman.

G.N.-S. Corresponding, in terms of Corneille's day, to the new nobility rather than the old hereditary families?

D.H. No, lower than that. Martian is an ex-slave, definitely an upstart.

J.-M.S. When he first appears he's a very threatening figure. Plautine affects a violent contempt for him. She says he will always be a slave and that there is nothing he will ever be able to do to efface the stigma of his blood.

D.H. Plautine is even more contemptuous than Camille, and she isn't even of Camille's class.

J.-M.S. With Plautine, who is a real *petite-bourgeoise*, the contempt is absolute. Of course she has good reasons, because Martian has just made his declaration of love, but even so there is that contempt there. But with Camille it is more like a class opposition. Martian is a magnificent character. He really existed in history, and was Galba's adopted son. Galba freed and adopted a slave! And when he makes his great speech to Plautine about how the emperors 'have submitted the earth to our policies' — meaning those of the freedmen — he is at the same time very moving and very threatening.

G.N.-S. Can one see a reflection of 17th-century class-relations in the description of the Roman world?

J.-M.S. Certainly. But with Corneille it's not quite sure whether he started with Roman reality to find a reflection of it in the 17th century, or if he started with the reality of 17th-century class-relations and found this reflected in Rome and then pushed it a bit further. Either he did the first thing, starting from Roman reality and finding a reflection of it in his own time, which means a step backward in time or a step forward in reflection, so as then to rediscover the reality of . . . which do I mean? Yes, to rediscover the reality of Rome through the reality of the 17th century. Or he went the other way, which seems more to be your idea.

Othon: Jean-Claude Biette (Martian).





G.N.-S. I don't think one can tell for sure. But in his early plays, where he talks a lot about kingship and about the king over and above society . . .

J.-M.S. He believed in royal legitimacy, there's no doubt about that. So did Shakespeare.

G.N.-S. . . . the concepts of his own age enter into his interpretation of previous ages, I think unconsciously, which is inevitable. But in the later plays he was perhaps more conscious.

D.H. Yes. But what is magnificent in *Othon* is the idea that Rome was free.

J.-M.S. But had prostituted herself.

D.H. It's an amazing idea for someone living under 17th-century absolutism.

J.-M.S. Particularly for a lawyer. Corneille wasn't even part of the nobility. The idea 'Neither full liberty nor full servitude: she' — Rome — 'wants a master' — that's extraordinary.

D.H. Rome doesn't want a king, but can accept an emperor.

J.-M.S. Emperor is a vaguer concept. We had this fantastic luck when shooting that scene. Between the lines 'Neither liberty nor servitude' and 'She wants a master' there's this motor-bike that goes by — vroom-vroom. We didn't use many types of noises in the film, but we kept that one, just on the words 'neither full liberty nor full servitude'. The sound of the bike is a sort of comment, a raspberry at the words being spoken. But what you also get in Corneille is this vision people can have of the possibility of something else and the peculiar fact of how far he was able to go but how much he also got stuck on the way there. For example, Lacus's idea — and it's extraordinary, that, putting it in the mouth of Lacus who is an utter cynic — his definition of an ideal sovereign, which basically is founded on seduction. He dreams of a power, based on seduction, 'which penetrates, shines forth, and sows rewards'. Those are the virtues he defines for an ideal king. To me that's monstrous, a power based on seduction. To some extent this was Corneille's own idea, monstrous as it is, but you can see he's quite cunning because he puts it into the mouth of a character who is himself a monster.

G.N.-S. Supposing you could get widespread popular distribution, do you think the epic and political features of the film would be understood by the majority of the audience? It seems to me quite risky, because over the years the public has acquired fundamentally different expectations of the cinema, which, if you like, you could call corruption.

J.-M.S. I think the audience is being corrupted more and more, that's the problem. With the present system of distribution — which never used to be quite so bad: there always used to be exceptions — everything now is based on profit.

G.N.-S. But do you still have more confidence in a popular public than in a bourgeois one?

J.-M.S. Yes. To the extent that people have a daily experience of power relations, they know what it's all about, they know that they are yielded up to a situation of permanent blackmail. Perhaps they would rebel against the film on the grounds that it's not giving them what they are used to, it's not the stuff they are usually fed on. But if they get over that first hurdle, they've got no reason to rebel any further, because they know they're not the people who are threatened by the film. Whereas the bourgeois have two reasons to rebel. First, it's not the usual pornography, their customary artistic, filmic spoon-feeding. And beyond that they sense that the film is threatening to them, whereas the others have only the first thing to get over and beyond that aren't threatened. And for the popular public it's a day-to-day experience, because they are victims of the blackmail, the parasitism. It's real for them. I don't think a film touches people unless they find in it an echo of their day-to-day experience — even if, as here, it's transposed and doesn't seem to relate directly, because of being in costume. Not only does a film touch an audience only if it relates to their personal experience, but I don't think the film can even exist if the people who make it don't have a stake in what they're saying. We would never have got interested in *Othon* if we hadn't found in the play elements of something we'd been interested in earlier as a project and also if all the situations in it hadn't corresponded to experiences we'd each had — one or both of us. The relations between the girl and her father, for example — though that's a bit indirect because Danièle's father hasn't been around for a long time: her parents were divorced when she was young; but it could just as well be my experience and the letters my parents wrote to me over several months round about 1958, after which they didn't want to have anything to do with me for several years; or various other things — well, all that is in the film and already in the Corneille play. And our relations with financiers and producers and the whole distribution set-up. In short, there's not a single situation in the play that doesn't have correlatives in our personal experience — transposed, obviously.

G.N.-S. The bourgeoisie has an interest in making culture a thing apart, and they don't want this culture demystified, because it is their culture and they don't want to see it related to or appropriated by the experience of the mass. The most they want is to bring the masses towards culture, but always interpreted in a particular mystifying way. At least that's how I see it.

J.-M.S. I think that more and more the work we've got to do — though I have some reservations — is to make films which radically eliminate art, so that there is no equivocation. This may lose us some people, but it is essential to eliminate all the artistic, filmic surface to bring people face to face with the ideas in their naked state.

*Othon*: Anthony Pensabene (Vinius) and Jubarite Semaran (Lacus).



Second cut in the text.

## A Work Journal of the Straub/Huillet film 'Moses and Aaron' by Gregory Woods



Sebastian Schachhauser



Hans-Peter Böffgen

## Notes on Gregory's Work Journal by Danièle Huillet

Wednesday, August 14th, in the early morning, at opening time, we were at Cinecittà with the Ford-Transit to load the Fisher giraffe which we had had such trouble in getting. A giraffe is to the microphone what the crane is to the camera and is a help in making things a bit simpler for the sound engineer not because it permits movements of the mike to accompany those of the camera; we will hardly use it at all for this (camera movements almost never occurring to accompany actors, but to relate or oppose the groupings, hence the sound has no reason to change place); but this giraffe permits, thanks to its very extended arm, setting up the mike, above the frame, even in a very open framed shot, at the end of this horizontal arm, far from the foot of the giraffe closer to the singers' positions, without the microphone or its shadow being in the field of vision. But when we began to look for a giraffe in Rome, an instrument only used here, if ever, in studio, saying that we would need it for at least three weeks of exteriors, there was panic. We were looking for the Mole-Richardson giraffe whose arm reaches to 8 metres. The only one there was we found a part of, the famous arm, being used as a barrier for cars (considering its length, evidently very practical) at the studio of SAFA; as no one ever used it, it had been taken apart and destroyed. So we had to set our hooks out for the Fisher, whose arm is but 4.50 m and whose three existing samples were in Cinecittà. They began by telling us that they didn't know if they would be available, but that, since there were three of them, there was a chance that one at least . . . In fact there were all three of them tidily in storage and we had only to choose, pack up and load. Our perchman, Georges Vaglio, will take loving charge of it, put it back every evening into the hut behind the amphitheatre and handle it artfully during the filming. In addition, Louis Hochet, the sound engineer, brought a perch specially made by him which mounted reached to 8 m, and his normal perch, the one he used for the *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*, of 4 m. From Cinecittà we go to the A.T.C./E.C.E. behind the Villa Doria-Pamphilij (ex-Villa Pamphilij, expropriated after *Othon*, at present it belongs to the city) to load all the material (Mitchell B.N.C. camera, rails, carriage, *torrette* (adjustable platforms), boards, reflectors, etc.) into the Ford-Transit where the giraffe is already, and in a second one rented to us by the E.C.E. The three Pisan propmen/electricians and Paolo Benvenuti and Jean-Marie set to work on loading and packing and fastening the material, carefully checked on the preceding days with the cameraman Saverio Diamanti and his assistant Gianni Canfarelli, so that nothing is damaged during transport. In the preceding weeks, we had already transported to the church at Alba Fucense, thanks to the Ford-Transit that Paolo had got on loan free from a small theatre company in Florence, a big electric copper cable of 300 metres, the calf, gold-leaved at Cinecittà and weighing 90 kilos, the separate pieces which, assembled, will make up the altar and the steps before and around it, and, from Avezzano, the boards of different lengths, widths, and thicknesses which will be used all during the filming, and the security batteries to assure us of electric current even in case of a breakdown of the mains supply.

Wednesday, August 14th, in the afternoon, the three propmen/electricians and Paolo arrive at Alba Fucense with the two Ford-Transits, and will work up till the arrival of the rest of the crew on Saturday on setting up the big electric cable which will permit us to branch on to the mains inside the amphitheatre where there is no electricity, at a frequency of 50 cycles, whose regularity is constantly checked during the filming giving a security nearly absolute for the synchronism between the camera and the Nagra tape-recorder which records the sound live on one side, and the two other Nagras which have to be synchronised with this first one and have to be in synchrony with each other as well. In addition, they have to install gas lamps in the corridor which runs along a half of the amphitheatre and will serve us for a bit of shade, protect us from the rain, and store the material; to construct a sort of hut in a space outside the amphitheatre to shield the choristers from the sun and, if be the case, from the rain, and set up the chairs there loaned us by the city of Avezzano; to install the electricity in the church where the costumes are to be arranged and ironed and where our 'Keepers of the Treasure' are to sleep, to build the costume racks in wood for 120 costumes.

On Friday the 16th the sound engineer Louis Hochet and Jeti Grigioni, his second assistant, arrive with the Renault transport truck in which all the sound equipment is installed, coming from Paris and passing through Switzerland, where they made a

Should I perhaps orient myself to a temporary phenomenon like the American film market which within two decades with a rapacious culture has succeeded in destroying a thing that was good? When I think about film I think of future films which must necessarily be artistic films. And for these films my music can be useful.

Arnold Schoenberg, discussion on the Berliner Radio, 30th March 1931.

#### Saturday, 17th August 1974

7 a.m. Arrive at Piazza della Rovere in front of the Straub's with Georg Brintrup in his Deux Chevaux Commercial transport which is to carry the seven boxes of Kodak 32-35 film material to the film site. Each box contains ten rolls of a thousand feet each, 70,000 feet or 21,000 metres in all (90 ft. = 1 min.). The general rule in calculating the quantity of film to buy is according to a one to eight ratio. When we went to pick up the order of film material at Kodak Jean-Marie explained that he was planning on a one to ten ratio. Gabriele Soncini comes in his Renault R4 soon after us. Into it we pack the remaining props, earthen jars and other equipment not already transported to the church at Alba Fucense which is being used as our warehouse during the film. Gabriele drives with me and Leo Mingrone to the house of Renata Morroni, the *costumista*, while J.-M. and Danièle wait for the other cars together with which they will leave for Avezzano. At Renata's we meet Paolo Benvenuti and load the six crates of costumes for the chorus and the soloists into the Ford transport truck he is driving. After making us coffee, Renata gets her things together and we leave Via Tiburtina for the Autostrada leading east, up from the summer heat of Rome, to the Abruzzi.

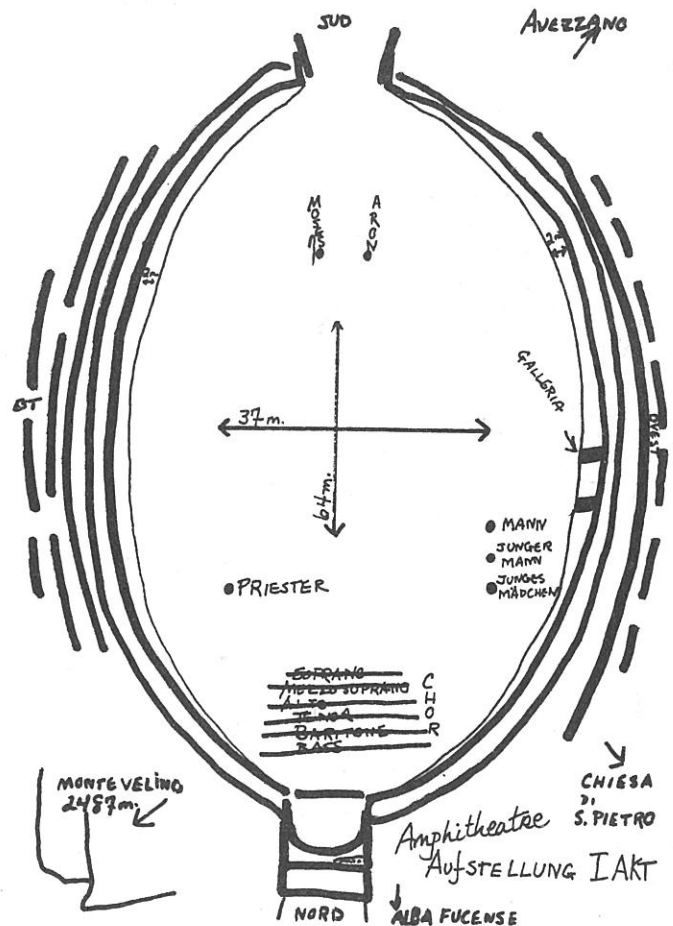
After an hour we come in sight of Monte Velino, 2487 metres high, which marks the entry to the ancient region of Marsica. The local Italic peoples who lived here were destroyed by the Roman army in the fourth century B.C. On the ruins of one of the local settlements Rome built Alba Fucens which grew to importance during the Empire as a regional centre and a residence for captured or uncooperative rulers. Turning south on the highway we arrive at Avezzano, pop. 30,000, the present regional centre where Danièle has reserved rooms for the crew and the cast. In one of our six hotels we drop Renata off and then take the road leading 8 km north to Alba Fucense. On the way we meet up with J.-M. and Georg and drive together up to the *paese* by the ruins of the ancient city inhabited by a farming community of 165. J.-M. stops to get the keys for the church and to greet the people he has come to know here during his visits since 1969. A dirt road leads past the single street up to the twelfth-century Romanesque Basilica of San Pietro. It is in this stone building, restored in 1957 after its destruction in an earthquake in 1915 which claimed the lives of hundreds of villagers, that we unpack what is to be used in the amphitheatre below. Danièle instructs us to set the props in the crypt underneath the altar, the costume crates in the sanctuary space set up for costumes and changing, and the film boxes on the steps of the marble pulpit. The church is locked and we arrange to meet in the amphitheatre after lunch.

The amphitheatre is a space 100 metres (330 ft.) by 79 metres (260 ft.) dug into the hill on top of which San Pietro, ancient site of a temple of Apollo, stands. Its oval arena measures 64 metres by 37 metres. After journeying 11,000 kilometres around Italy in 1969, the Straubs decided on this as the site they would use for filming Schoenberg's opera, 'Moses und Aron'. This was ten years after their original decision to make a film of the opera. Jean-Marie first saw 'Moses und Aron' at the Berliner Oper in 1959, two years after the first staging of the work in Zürich and eight years after the composer's death. He wired to Danièle who came from Paris to see it, and they determined to realise a film of the opera. The German *Drehbuch* (screenplay) which they made of it is dated: Berlin, end of '59 - Rome, beginning of '70. When we meet in the amphitheatre in the afternoon, Straub works on setting up the main axes which will divide the arena for the opposing forces which encounter each other in the first act. We also spend time cleaning up the arena of pieces of broken glass and cigarette butts, tourism's tribute to antiquity. Georg Brintrup leaves for Rome to stay at the Straub's apartment where he will look after Misti, pregnant and hungry feline. In the evening the others return to their hotels in Avezzano. Hans-Peter Böffgen and I set up a living space in the corner of the church. We will stay here to keep a watch over things in the church and the amphitheatre at night during the month's time we will spend shooting the film here.

last check with Kudelski, the maker of the Nagras. From Nice, by car with wife and daughter comes Georges Vaglio, with whom we haven't yet worked and who will prove to be, as Louis had told us, a very good technician, very well disposed and dedicated.

5254 and not 32-35 is the number of the Eastmancolor negative we used; probably the last film shot in Italy with this negative. During the time we were filming there the new 5247 negative was already out which the Kodak specialists advised us against using for a film so hazardous, so *risqué*, the laboratories not yet knowing how to handle it well.

We are going to use this new negative, but in 16 mm - 7247 - with the film next year, testing if there is progress over the preceding one and what is lost to win this progress; or if, indeed, it serves Kodak mainly as an industrial progress, i.e. a film which is more quickly developed permitting the laboratories to work faster, hence more, in using therefore more Kodak negative . . .

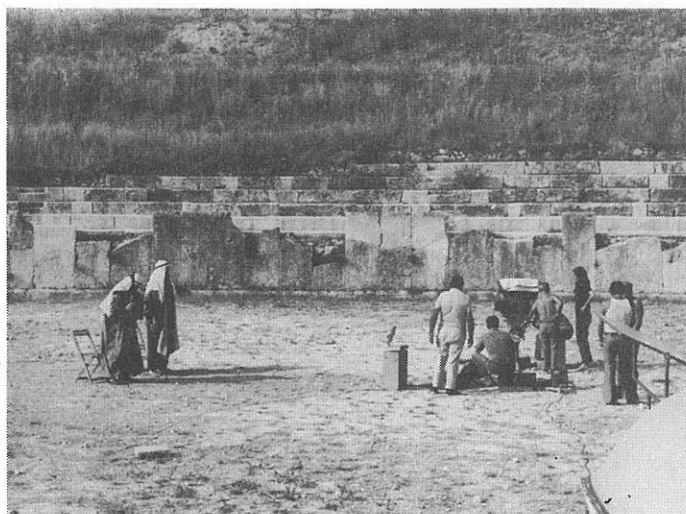
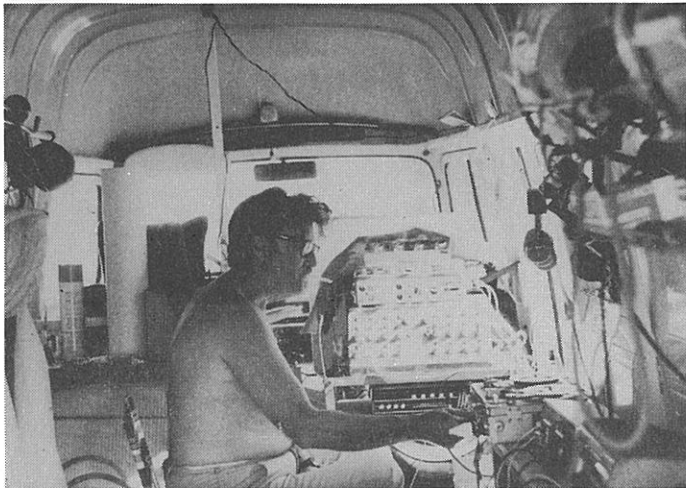


Sunday, 18th August

The troupe arrives at 9.30 and sets to work on marking the places of the soloists and the chorus. J.-M. stands on a *torretta* (platform) set on the main axis in the centre of the amphitheatre and has us stand in place to set the lines of the chorus. There are six rows according to their division into Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Baritone, and Bass. The corner points of this trapezoid are marked with large nails wrapped with coloured masking-tape around the head. The chorus is set in front of the arena's north portal which bears a stone inscription commemorating the donation of the amphitheatre by Q. Naevius Cordus Sutorius Macro to his native city. Macro, Pretorian Prefect under Tiberius and, therefore, predecessor in this post to the Lacus played by Jubarite Semaran in Straub's *Othon*, was forced to suicide by Nero after a career of ruthless cruelty which is recounted in the 'Annals' of Tacitus. These stones lay on the ground in pieces when the Straubs first came five years ago in their film-site search for a plateau in a mountainous region. Their discovery during the course for recent excavations permits archaeologists to date the construction of this amphitheatre to the south of the then populous city of Alba Fucens ca. A.D. 40. Opposite the chorus in front of the south entry the positions of Moses and Aaron are nailed down. On either side of the chorus the opposing forces of the Priest and the Man, Young Man and Young Girl are set, the Priest to the east on their left and the three soloists to their right on the west hillside of the amphitheatre. We use the underground tunnel (*galleria*) under the hillside steps to store the equipment not in use, and to keep our tanks of water in the cool.

Louis Hochet in his van.

Reich (Moses), Devos (Aaron), the camera crew, Straub (hidden), Huillet, and two propmen.



Hans-Peter Böffgen (2)

In the afternoon Louis Hochet begins to test out the sound equipment within the acoustics of the amphitheatre.

In this search we covered 11,000 km on paved and unpaved roads during five weeks, profiting from my mother's vacation and, hence, from her small Citroën. We 'discovered' Alba Fucense almost at the beginning of our trip, but as we didn't yet know exactly what we were looking for (we left with the idea of a plateau and a mountain — it was left for us to discover as the voyage went along that a plateau wasn't protected from the wind nor from the noises that rise from the valley, and that the 'theatre' action as well as the singing risked being dispersed there, and that we did indeed need a plateau, but one with a hole in it, and that this amphitheatre was not only the hole in the plateau in a mountain setting, but what's more the theatrical space which would concentrate the action instead of dispersing it, and all that in a geologically volcanic countryside. I was less enthusiastic than Jean-Marie who had already fallen in love with its magnificent shape of an ellipse and the extraordinary acoustic, for it was June 7th and it was raining in streams which bade no good for the future . . . From curiosity as well as from 'professional conscience' and because we hadn't in any case decided as yet to shoot the first two acts in the same place and we were therefore looking for two or three other places for the first act, the amphitheatre was at that point for the second act, we consequently continued our search for about another 10,900 km as far as Sicily. We saw other sites, in Sicily as well, but none as logical and attractive and with 'that love at first sight'. Slowly I was coming around to the idea (to film the whole thing at the same site) which Jean-Marie had had (it is always harder for me than him to break away from naturalism, and as it is already a problem for him, it takes us some time to get used to our own ideas . . .). On the way back (we had eliminated Sardinia for geological reasons, but also because of the distance, for to transport the technical crew, material, but, above all, singers and chorus so far to where the means of transport for return were unsure and that with people who were tied to concert dates or recording schedules in the four corners of the culture industry would have been madness) we passed once more by Alba Fucense and it was at that point that we decided definitively — for the site. The decision to film all but the third act there we took slowly during the course of the following year, gradually as we made our trips to the amphitheatre and learned to know the surrounding countryside. It was also during the course of this first trip that we 'discovered' the Lake of Matese, where we filmed the third act, and there as well, the impression made on the first glance resisted all the other lakes that we were consequently able to see, the last temptation to change having been the Lake of Campotosto, a year before filming — and even with the apprehension experienced in finding one day in August that there was practically no more water in the lake. . . . But the idea of a lake had already been substituted for that of the sea, the idea which we had at first in writing the film script, above all because the sound of the waves would blur the text. We consequently gave up the idea, the lake being simpler, less charged symbolically, and more realistic geologically and geographically.

And why from the beginning had we wanted Italy? Because Schoenberg was Viennese, his music eminently European, even if there are constantly intuitions of an astonishing realism which one discovers in going to the Orient — to Africa (for us, Egypt), and so we wanted a European country which would be a bridge between Europe and Asia/Africa. Spain and Greece, out of the question. And Italy, in addition to its geology, geography, its climate, its political situation, had the advantage (?) of a cinematic industrial machine which doesn't work in its entirety, but certain of whose parts, on the condition that one has plenty of energy, bullheadedness, and time, are usable still.

Louis had already had time to test the acoustics of the

### Monday, 19th August

The 66 members of the ORF-Chor (Austrian Radio Chorus) begin to arrive. Most of them have flown from Vienna to Rome and will arrive later today, but some have come in their cars. In the church Renata and the two other *costumiste*, Augusta and Maria Teresa, have been ironing the costumes and assembling the veils and slippers for each member. The singers try on their costumes in the dressing space that Danièle has arranged for them. In the amphitheatre Ugo Piccone, Director of Photography, works with Saverio Diamanti, cameraman, and Gianni Canfarelli, assistant cameraman on the pan the camera does tomorrow in Shot 19 so that it is out of the range of the microphones which are set above the soloists and on the ground before the chorus. Hochet tests out the sound for the soloists and sets up the microphones with his assistant, Georges Vaglio.

The choir in Shot 48.



There is a test run-through of Shot 18 with the three soloists.

amphitheatre a year beforehand, when we had had him come from Paris to see and hear our amphitheatre – for we were greatly apprehensive: having taken Renato Berta and Jeti Grigioni after the filming of *History Lessons* to Alba Fucense to have an opinion, Jeti had made a very long face and seemed to think that we were crazy. . . . The ellipse form and the stone ground as well as the large stones surrounding sent the sound back in multiple echoes. Louis asked if we would envisage filming elsewhere: 'No', we told him. 'Well then,' he said, 'we'll have to solve the difficulties as they come along. And the acoustic is so beautiful that it's worth the effort and we mustn't put in wood panelling or things of that sort for they would only augment the dangers and destroy something.' After which I don't know if he slept in peace for the following year, but in any case, we slept much better!

No: a third only arrive by plane, the other two-thirds in cars from Vienna or Salzburg, often with husband or wife. Straub and I are apprehensive, for what's more there is the returning traffic of *Ferragosto*, the mid-August feast, and the biggest Italian holiday. . . Sunday evening, I will make the rounds of all the hotels of Avezzano several times to check that all our group is safely arrived. All goes well, no accidents, no delays. To take this whole troupe to the amphitheatre we rented a large bus and a small bus at Avezzano, and we added one of our Ford-Transits with the seats back in place which Paolo Benvenuti drives. For we didn't want them all to come into the village with their cars, which would have frightened and upset the peasants and their animals accustomed to not seeing more than a few tourists for but a month during the year. To all the technicians who came by car, and to some singers from the chorus and Aaron, for whom we made exceptions permitting them to come by car, we made some recommendations: prudence, slow speed, look out for animals, no noise. All will go without hitches, there won't be the tiniest chicken run over, and our relations with the villagers will remain normal and calm up to our departure.

As for the costumes, we chose them from among the 3,000 costumes of this type from the house of Cantini (one of those parts of the Italian industry which functions rather better than elsewhere – on condition that one avoids the decorative traps preferred by the Italian talent, J.-M. detests to have new costumes made, we much prefer to choose among those which already exist). We carried them home, laid them out on the floor, assembled them (colours of the robes, the mantles, the veils, the shoes sorted out according to the measurement cards sent by the chorus representative, Mrs. Kapek), cleaned them up a bit, patched and ironed them. Then during our third trip to Vienna, in winter 1973, with Louis Hochet come from Paris to control with us the technical conditions in the recording studio, to discuss our requirements with the Viennese technicians, to persuade Prof. Preinfalk to make his chorus sing in six rows and not in four as had been the custom since 1934 – four rows, that would have made it necessary, in order to frame it, to film in cinemascope! During this trip from Rome we carried with us five suitcases filled with the costumes of all the women in the chorus which we tried on in Vienna, pinning up the adjustments to be made, changing the colours or the material when they weren't right. Having taken them back to Rome, I do a part of the adjustments myself (those which I know will be poorly done or not at all by the house that rents the costumes), then we return the costumes so that they can be cleaned, etc. When we go to Vienna for the rehearsals and the recording of the music in March we carry along a second load, heavier still; all the men's costumes for the same procedure. Meanwhile, we had either carried a choice of possible costumes to the soloists during our rehearsals with them (Moses, Aaron, Man, Young Man), or taken advantage of their arrival in Rome for a concert (Priest, Young Girl) to have them try on their costumes. This will permit the costume seamstresses to make all the final preparations in a half day the day before shooting.

Shot 19 and Shot 22 are those which fix *les règles du jeu*, those from which will flow all the other shots and the framing of the first act: whence the necessity to fix exactly the places of the protagonists (chorus, group of three – Young Girl, Young Man, Man – the Priest, and, finally, Moses and Aaron) in relation to the centre of the ellipse, each group in relation to the other, each soloist in relation to his neighbour or neighbours in the cases of Moses and Aaron or of the three youths: the Young Girl must be far enough away at the same time from the chorus and from the Young Man, her neighbour, so that it be possible in Shot 22 with a lens-objective of 50 to film her first alone, without having the arm of her neighbour or the nose of a

Act I rehearsal.



Hans-Peter Böffgen (2)

When this is finished, Gianni packs the parts of the camera into their cases and the three Pisan *macchinisti* (propmen), Cecco, Nanni, and Ninni, drive it to the small hotel in the village where they sleep and where they store the Mitchell after work. The Golden Calf, Guistiniano, as the Straubs call him, is also stored there until we start shooting the second act orgy scenes.

### Tuesday, 20th August

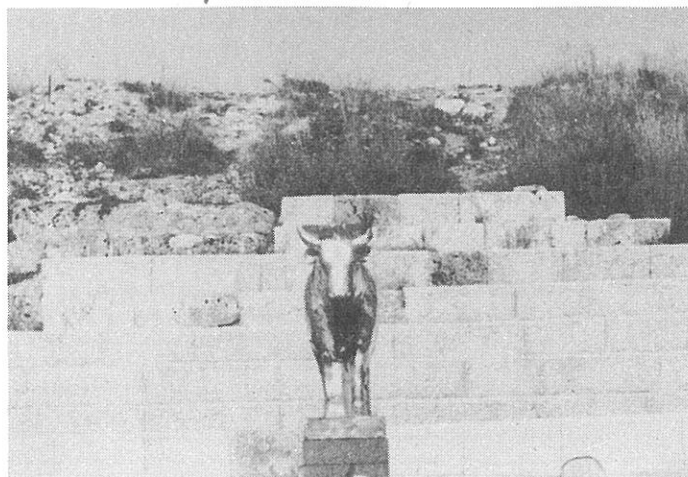
### Shot 19, 20

The first day of shooting. The whole ORF chorus arrives at the church by 8.30 with cars and a chartered bus from Avezzano. When they have changed into costume, there is a general rehearsal of today's music in the resonant hollow of the bare stone church. Dr. Preinfalk, the chorus director, tunes them up with scales on the piano that the Straubs have had shipped here from Rome. Afterwards, they make their way downhill to the amphitheatre. In the meantime the Straubs are setting up for Shot 19. The Mitchell is set up at the height of three platform levels on a *torretta* to the left of centre. When the chorus comes down, and the mikes are set up, Danièle sends the assistants to the posts which we are to keep during the shooting time for the filming in the amphitheatre. Paolo Benvenuti stands out on the roadway entrance to Alba Fucense to stop traffic from disturbing the recording. Sebastian Schadhauer stands at the entry to the dirt road that leads up to the church and to the amphitheatre from the *paese*. They are both in communication with Danièle by means of walkie-talkies. At the north entrance to the amphitheatre stand Leo Mingrone and Gabriele Soncini

chorister of the extreme left in the field. But she must also be close enough to her neighbour, the Young Man, and he to his neighbour, the Man, so that it be possible in Shot 19 to have all three of them together in the field with a 40; but also with this 50 lens, in the case of Shot 22 or the 40, in the case of Shot 19, one should be able to 'trap' the entire chorus when one pans on it, and not only the entire group, but even the air or the ground about them, for Jean-Marie never wants to 'cut out' the group, rather to film it with some space above and below, to the left and to the right. Likewise, the position of the Priest had to be such that one might frame him without having the nose of a chorister in the field, but also such that it be logical in its distance from the other groups. Finally one had to find the proper heights for the different framings on the chorus, and imagine the variations on the same axis, since we will not jump this axis until Shot 31 passing on to the left profile of the priest (whom we have up to then always seen in profile) when he revolts: 'Thy staff compels us, yet it does not compel Pharaoh to let us free!', to stay on this other side of the axis up to the end of the first act. As well, for Shot 22, we had to find and fix the proper distance, at the same time, to the chorus for the end of Shot 24 and of the two partners between themselves for this Shot 24 but also for all the other shots where we will only see one of the two partners. This proper distance having to be at the same time right for the staging of the action (theatrical), for the confrontations or for the complicity, and at the least, for the psychology of the actors between each other. Finally, last problem for us to be resolved from the beginning (since afterwards, the rules of the game laid down, we could no longer escape them except by the rules of a game of chequers, so that we did not break them, as much as for economic reasons — not to keep the chorus there all the time of the shooting, but to group together the shots of the chorus, then those of the soloists, to end up without singers — Jean-Marie couldn't shoot 'in order', which made the acrobatics still more break-neck) was the problem of the conductor, of Gielen, who had to conduct the chorus and the soloists, hence be seen by them in the best conditions, evidently not be in the field of the shot, even in the case of a pan which in the end covers 300 degrees of the ellipse as in Shot 24, and be in relation to the camera in such a horizontal and vertical (height) position that the singers (chorus or soloists) look at him without having the regard which they should have for the group with which they are in contact be 'false' but rather only slightly diverted, so that one feels a third pole, but that it only be felt, so that this distraction doesn't kill the dramatic relationships also. For this reason we played surveyor, dividing the terrain, marking the centre, measuring the heights, from Sunday, two days before the 'real' beginning of the shooting. All this work rebounding consequently upon that of the sound engineers who had, in their turn, to solve their problems or present them to us when they couldn't solve them alone — which happened rarely. . . .

Nini and not Ninni — for Gainfranco=Gianni=Nini, Nanni for Alvaro Nannicini, Cecco for Francesco.

Giustiniano: we had named him so in Paris when we had been there in October '73 with the Ford-Transit, on loan (already!) from the Florentines to that Pisan of a Benvenuti, to get it from the moulding workshop of the Louvre (where, incidentally, the worker/artisans are almost all Italians!) and to carry it to Cinecittà and have it covered with gold leaf: struck on seeing it no longer in granite as in the Louvre, but reproduced in plaster, by its resemblance to the small bull of *The General Line*. But, said we, it isn't *The General Line*, but *the just line*, and so we named it Justinian — Giustiniano.



and on the south Hans-Peter Böffgen. My post is 50 metres above on the hilltop of the amphitheatre overlooking the shooting. Our main job during the shooting is to guard that outsiders don't upset the activity on set as it requires the uninterrupted concentration amongst the Straubs, the crew and the musicians. When everyone is in place Jean-Marie calls out for 'Silence' and *absolute Ruhe*. Previous to this the sound-men have adjusted the sound-level in the tiny earphones that transmit the orchestral score for the shot to the four soloists and to Michael Gielen, the conductor, who stands on a platform before the musicians, but out of the sweep of the camera pan, with the score before him, one ear in the headphones for the recorded orchestral part and one free for the singers. During the recording sessions in Vienna in April and May two sets of tapes were made. One complete recording of the opera which is to be released by Philips later in the year, and one of the orchestra without the singers for the recording during the film. The music is divided into the measures (*Takte*) which constitute each shot.

The tapes that Hochet is using in his sound truck begin with three beeps at the beginning of the music. On them the orchestral part of the opera is transmitted to the soloists and the chorus which has a low frequency speaker set in its midst. Beside the sound truck sit Jeti Grigioni with the Nagra recorder that now tapes the voices of the singers, and Bernard Rubenstein, the assistant conductor, with the score before him to check the reading of the voices that are being recorded live in his earphones against the notes written in the music score. In this shot the camera pans left from MLS (medium long shot or the German *Halbtotale*) on the Priest to the three soloists, MLS, opposite him past the chorus and then, right, back on the chorus, MLS which stands between them. After further adjustments of the sound-level the shooting begins. It is an intensely hot sun. Some of the members of the chorus feel sick. Between the takes they go into the shade underneath the north portal. J.-M. wants to be sure to have at least two good takes and one usable spare before the shot is *gestorben* (killed). After each take, *ripresa*, is done Danièle writes down the length in feet of the shot which is recorded on the Mitchell, the objective of the lens used, and the notation B (*buono*) for good, R (*riserva*) for usable spare, and S (*scarta*) for incomplete or unusable take. After nine *ciak* (clappers) Straub is satisfied.

This whole explanation of the recording is, I find, not very clear, and at times even, quite frankly, wrong. Let's see if I can do better:

(a) the chorus of the Vienna radio had rehearsed all the choral parts of the opera for four months with its director Prof. Preinfalk in the disposition and formation decided by us and which it would have for the film; each one on his own account, the soloists did likewise; we had worked with Gielen, with Aaron and Gielen, and alone with Aaron, with Moses for the third act — each time making the trip, either to Brussels for Aaron and Gielen, or to Austria for Gielen and Aaron, or to Stuttgart for Moses;

(b) from March 29th '74 to Easter, two weeks, we are in Vienna where we are present at the rehearsals of the orchestra with Gielen, Keuchnig (a conductor of Vienna who helps to prepare the orchestra), and the 'official' assistant, Bernard Rubenstein, expressly come from Illinois. The week before Easter Louis Hochet arrives: we prepare with him the material which afterwards will be used in the transposal. There are the first rehearsals of the complete chorus and orchestra together. Louis begins to be able to judge the difficulty of the music which until then, he had only heard in bits from the record by Rosbaud which we had made him hear. Together we spend the Easter days at the house of Gielen on the Mondsee (lake of the moon!), and look over the latest problems. . . .

From Easter Tuesday until mid-May, rehearsals and recording, block by block — each 'block' corresponding to a shot of the film, from measure *x* to measure *y*, or even from one note of music in such measure to another note — of all the blocks, that is, of all the shots, that is, of the whole score. Working difficulty: the chorus, which is not composed of 'singing professionals', but of people who have a job and sing 'extra' in the chorus, from personal interest and in certain cases to earn some extra money, above their salaries, can only sing after 5 p.m. This meant that we had to establish a work plan where all the blocks including the chorus would be recorded in the evening, and in the morning all those without the chorus, with the orchestra alone or with the soloists (which, for the soloists who didn't like to sing in the morning, did not proceed unproblematically!).

Each block had to be recorded twice: a first time, orchestra and singers together, normally; then a second time, only the orchestra, *without* the singers, which was very difficult for the musicians and for Gielen, not having the support of the singers. This second recording, dry, without echo, and mono, made on a 4-track machine, was re-recorded by Louis each afternoon, during the pause after the morning recording session and before the one at 5.30, on narrow tapes simultaneously on two synchronised Nagra IVs, with three *mille* (beep-beep-beep) at the beginning of each block.

In certain cases there was a first mixing with Gielen who was there anyway at each 'transposing' session, for him to check his work while listening to it with a measure of distance. These two synchronised Nagras were 'piloted', 'piloting' being an electrical system, equivalent to the perforations of the magnetic tapes of 35 mm (or 16 mm!), which permits having an invariable length each time one re-records the sound — hence a definitive length and a guaranteed synchronisation;

(c) during the shooting, in August-September '74, Louis had two Nagras in his sound truck: one stereo Nagra IV — that is, with two tracks on one tape which permitted him to record, for example, the chorus on one track and the soloists on the other, or one soloist on one track and the soloists on the other, and so to have later, at the definitive mixing, a supplementary possibility to equilibrate the voices. This stereo Nagra normally started first, as for every film where one takes the sound live: then the camera started, the clapper-board was done which gave the synchronous sign between the image and the live sound recorded at the same time by the camera and the stereo Nagra; then Louis made

Danièle Huillet and Louis Hochet in the recording van.



Sebastian Schachhauser

Saverio then takes the *provino* for publicity stills. We break for lunch at one.

The chorus is sunburnt and ill-humoured. There are loud voices in German and Italian to be heard during the confusion of distributing the *cestino* (package lunch) to the choristers after their morning under the sun. In the afternoon clouds come up interrupting the shooting of Shot 22 with the short summer rainshower called a *temporale*. The camera starts on the Young Girl who sings: 'He will free us!', pans right on the chorus, LS/MLS, 'See Moses and Aaron!', and then at the end pans fast to the right around to the south on Moses and Aaron, LS/MLS, opposite the chorus, whose arrival the chorus has described. Straub cuts after 13 takes, but more will have to be done tomorrow.

#### Wednesday, 21st August

#### Shot 22, 21, 23

In the morning, takes 13–27 of Shot 22. At midday we shoot Shot 21, frontal long shot on the chorus: 'a lovable God!'. Eleven takes. Another explosion at the *cestino* about the distribution of the food. Paolo decides to let the musicians take care of it themselves in the church, while the crew will eat down in the amphitheatre. 2.15, Shot 23, another frontal long shot, high-angle view, on the chorus: 'Do you bring hearing, message of the new God?'. During a pause, while Saverio and Gianni check the camera for dust and hairs, *controllare la macchina*, which J.-M. has them do at the end of every reel, the chorus sits together in the shade underneath the archway of the north portal and sings Austrian Ländler to relax from singing Schoenberg's complicated music before filming equipment in the blaze of the sun. Finished after 6 takes. The assistants return from their posts and store the equipment in the trucks and in the *galleria*. The chorus changes out of costume up at the church and leaves at five.

the second Nagra in his sound truck start, a Nagra III (the one used for recording the *Chronicle* in Germany!) on which passed one of the two tapes which he had transposed in Vienna and piloted the orchestra alone which corresponded to the shot which we were rolling. (The other tape, exactly identical to this one, made at the same time in Vienna, we jealously guarded in our hotel room in Avezzano and, brand new, was the one which we transposed afterwards on to the perforated 35 mm magnetic tape to be used in montage.) Thus, it sent the orchestra block corresponding to the shot we were filming, preceded by the three beeps which carried on to the tape which was turning on the stereo Nagra: these three beeps were the synchronising signal between the two sound tapes. To prevent the orchestra from being carried over on to the stereo Nagra tape, Louis switched it off immediately after the third beep; he missed his mark but once out of about a thousand! It is this tape of the Nagra III, evidently, which the soloists heard by means of a receiver hidden in one of their ears (the other ear for them to hear themselves to be able to sing), the chorus heard by means of a small speaker (two, in some cases) hidden in their midst or out of the frame on the edge of the field, and Gielen by means of a headphone which covered both his ears, preventing him from hearing what those he was conducting were singing.

Finally, outside the truck, a third Nagra, Jetti's Nagra IV, recorded the two tapes of the orchestra and the live sound (the singers and the other noises) retransmitted from the Nagra III and the stereo Nagra and roughly mixed to permit a judgement, mainly about the synchronism of the singers with the orchestra. This was the mixing which Bernard Rubenstein, Gielen's assistant listened to with his headphones; in uncertain cases, Gielen could listen to this mixing over immediately and judge for himself, to make corrections, if need be. In the evening, at the hotel, from after dinner often until midnight, we listened to the day's takes, Gielen, Straub, Jetti and I (sometimes with a singer not already sleeping . . .) on this Nagra to check for a last time, the choices 'still warm' made after shooting. In addition, every day after each shot, I listened with Louis in his truck to the takes kept of the live sound to check them and be sure that there hadn't been any unnoticed accidents which perhaps might not have been heard in the evening on Jetti's 'mixed' tape.

A *provino* is a metre, a metre-and-a-half of film taken after a shot which is judged to be good, with the clapper-board on which *provino* is written in the frame, which the laboratory uses to test the density of the negative before developing it, and later to make samples of before printing the take. It has nothing to do with *Standphotos* or publicity stills. During the shooting we only allow work photos to be made; the stills of the film we have made from photograms taken from the discarded takes or from bits of the montage negative from the beginning or the end of a shot, once the montage negative is finished with and the first copy printed.

From experience we know that the first three days of shooting are always difficult: people who don't know each other having to get used to working together. From experience, we also know that the difficulties or ill-humour disappear quickly. In fact, after the fourth day the relations with the chorus got better, despite differences of language, and they all made a great effort to do their part in a job of work that was hard for everybody; many came to tell us how sorry they were to leave and how interesting they had found the work; the chorus took up a collection to give a sum of money to the costume ladies and the hairdresser, who they had treated poorly the first two days, as a going-away present. Our only lasting problem was that of the 'comfort stations': the trailer toilet, aside from the fact that it costs a great deal to rent, and that it is absurd, is a solution, perhaps, for a star or two. But for a hundred people it is completely useless and unusable! The technicians, the soloists and their families, Gielen, Bernard took care of their problems without speaking to us about them; as for the chorus members I had made an agreement with the farmers next to the church to let the emergency cases come there, against a remuneration . . .



Unfortunately, on the first two days, our scarcely organised choristers, hardly out of the buses which took them to the church, headed *en masse*, men and women, for the farmer's — who closed his door on the third day to everyone and did not accept, except on my pressing insistence, to revoke his decision and then only for feminine necessities. Prof. Preinfalk suggested to me 'to do as we did in the *Wehrmacht* and tell the three propmen to dig trenches, one for the men and one for the women, surrounded by branches'. This proposal which I went to propose to the three Pisans to ask their advice provoked a mad outburst of laughter — until Cecco had an idea of genius: the whole zone being 'registered' and under the protection of the Ministry of Fine Arts, it wasn't permitted for us to dig holes there! I let two days go by and went to relay the message to Prof. Preinfalk and his wife. It was repeated to the choristers, taken absolutely for serious, and there wasn't in consequence the least allusion to the subject, everyone, it seems, having taken care of this general problem individually.

Thursday, 22nd August

Shot 20, 24

7.50 a.m. Danièle arrives at San Pietro. The first Shot, 20, is without chorus, so she wants the whole chorus to stay inside the church until it is done so that they won't make any noise to interfere with the recording. The camera is set in high-angle view on a three storey *torretta*, MCS/MLS on the Priest. Then it pans right around the empty arena to the Man, Young Man, and Young Girl, MLS, who sing in excited expectation of the 'adorable God' that Moses is bringing. 25 takes.

The chorus comes down at noon. We set up the circular tracks in a semi-circle in front of Moses and Aaron for Shot 24. This is the entry of Moses and Aaron before the people. Moses, Günter Reich, speaks in the *Sprechstimme* (spoken voice) which Schoenberg devised for his part, announcing 'The Unique, Eternal, Almighty, Omnipresent, Invisible . . .', until Aaron, Louis Devos, interrupts him, singing 'He has chosen you before all peoples'. Thus Schoenberg indicates at their very arrival the unreconcilable difference of understanding between the prophet of the inexpressible Idea and the minister of the graspable Word. While the camera is on the two protagonists the music that the chorus sings is not recorded now. They will use the tapes already done in Vienna for most of the parts that are 'off'. At the end the chorus sings being taken live after the camera pans to it: 'Then are we all lost, for we see him not! Ha ha ha ha!'. After the lunch-break at 2.30 the weather becomes overcast and rainy. So we must wait for a while to recommence. After 3.30 it begins to clear and the sun is out for the last hour of shooting. 12 takes. After the chorus leaves J.-M. starts planning for Shot 31 on the Priest. He leaves with the crew at seven.

Gregory Woods (bottom left), and Nini, Nanni, and Cecco.



Leo Mingrone

Friday, 23rd August

Shot 30, 25, 31

Shot 30. 'A wonder fills us with terror'. The camera, at eye-level, to the left of centre MLS on the chorus pans left to the three soloists, MLS, and up to the Bush as the Voice is heard

The first twelve days of shooting were hard for the technicians. I had explained to each of them that we had to shoot without a day off all the time we had the chorus, for, if it were to begin to rain (it happens often in Italy that in mid-August the weather is spoiled by storms, and one must wait until September for it to change; and in this mountain region, when it rains, it is often several days in a row without interruption, unlike in Rome, where there are bad turns that don't last; we couldn't set the shooting for July which is the surest month, for the chorus wasn't free: concerts at Salzburg, etc.; and 1974 was an exceptionally dry year, not a drop of rain since the start of May! If the rain began, then it might well last for several weeks . . .) and we were unable to shoot for one or two weeks while the chorus was there, which represented an expense of 30,000 marks a day, we would have to interrupt the film . . . and interrupting meant never being able to finish it, for, even if we (by what miracle?) found the money to finish it later, the singers and Gielen were engaged for 1, 2, 3, years . . . concerts in the four corners of the earth, opera, radio, records: the culture industry is one of the most flourishing in capitalist society. So it was absolutely necessary not to lose a day while the weather permitted us to go on and shoot with the chorus. All the technicians had agreed to shooting without a day off for the first 12 days and to recoup the missing day off later, when the chorus would have left. But the fatigue, after the first eight days, began to make itself felt and everyone became more nervous, especially on the days of big heat! But everyone held up: Gielen, who was very afraid of the shooting, for technical reasons (no one had yet attempted what he did, with a music so difficult, and which has not yet entered into our cultural habits) but also for psychological ones, recounted in the end, his wife Helga told us, that these three weeks had been the happiest of his life, that he had discovered collective work. . . .

'off'. J.-M. tells me to move back out of view as my post stands just above this part of the hillside. Eleven takes.

At eleven we set the camera on a *torretta* in high-angle view LS on the chorus for Shot 25: 'Stay far from us with thy God, with the Almighty!' The conductor, Michael Gielen, explained to me that it was musically too difficult a chorus to put at the end of Shot 24 as it was in the original screenplay *découpage*, since even without it Shot 24 is nearly five minutes long. So J.-M. stopped after measure 565 in the score and made measures 566-620 a separate shot. The weather becomes bad, so after ten takes we break for lunch and then do six more at three.

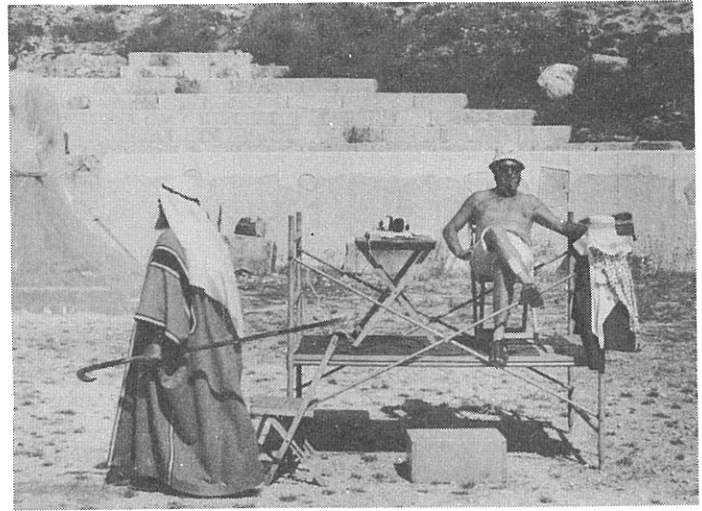
Shot 31 in light high-angle view CS on the Priest, in right profile. Cecco holds a board of white polystyrene against his face to reflect more of the fading afternoon light. Werner Mann, majestic in his black and white sacerdotal robes, cautions the chorus against the enthusiasm of the soloists, after the miracle of the serpent: 'Thy staff compels us, yet it does not compel Pharaoh to let us free!' Afterwards, when we come down after the shot is killed, J.-M. prepares for tomorrow's Shots. Gabriele and I stand in place for Moses and Aaron. The Straubs drive with today's material to the studios of Luciano Vittori in Rome to see the rushes of the film that Gabriele has already brought there during the week.

#### Saturday, 24th August

#### Shot 36, 37

8 a.m. Danièle arrives at the church while J.-M. has gone down to the amphitheatre. She says the rushes were fairly good but there were some calcium deposits on the prints which were screened. We carry some props down to the amphitheatre where J.-M. is to be seen picking up cigarette butts. He wears a white sun-hat he bought when in Egypt in May to film the two shots of the Nile which will end Act I. After helping Renata get Reich and Devos into costume in the church, I go to my post 30 metres away. Shot 36. The camera pans left from LS/MLS on the chorus past the three soloists to Moses and Aaron, who shows Moses' healthy hand. There are many test takes for the sound. There is always a general sound run-through of the music before the actual filming. Today it takes several to get the tone in Aaron's earphones neither too loud nor too weak. By fixing the positions of the different groups set against each other in the first act, Straub has underlined the formal, agonal quality, at once primitive and classical, of Attic drama. Here the only moving part is the eye of the camera. This fixed quality on the set is in total contrast to the constant mutability of the weather. The light can change every half hour here. It will be interesting to see how this human immobility in contrast to the constant flux of nature reflects in the film.

Reich (Moses) and Michael Gielen.



Hans-Peter Böffgen

We had been to Egypt once before, Christmas 1972, Jean-Marie and I, alone, without camera or photographic equipment . . . Roland Delcour, whom Jean-Marie had known as correspondent of 'Le Monde' at Bonn, was at that time in Cairo, and we had been invited to visit him. We stayed in Egypt for three weeks, half the time in Cairo, the other half travelling through the Egyptian countryside in train, by boat, in plane, by car, and on bike all along the Nile from Cairo to Alexandria to see the delta, and from Cairo to Aswan passing by Luxor. It was then that we fixed on the sites that we wanted to film (the single shot planned for in the filmscript then transforming itself into two shots), and that we made friends at Luxor with the young peasant, who later, when we did the shooting, went with us on the mountain to the site which we had chosen, allowing us to escape the curiosity seekers. . . . We wanted not only to find the site (sites!) where to film our shots but also to see how the people live, the objects, the gestures, the costumes — to bring back the objects which were indispensable for us and which we knew, rented in Rome from 'specialists', would be of a striking ugliness and falsity; the earthenware jar from which Aaron pours the water and the blood we bought from a temple guardian. He asked us 250 liras for it, just what it cost him to buy a new one! In English, the only language which permits one to communicate a little if, as a good European, one doesn't speak a word of Arabic, we told him, giving him 400 liras, that it was a souvenir from us to him, this small bit of extra money. He explained to us that his jar was good, that it held water well, which was true, as we had observed beforehand. For hours afterwards Jean-Marie had scruples asking himself if the man would find one as good, if it was good to have taken it from him. . . . A peasant of Luxor sold us the saddle of a dromedary for 10,000 liras, all that was left, since he had had to sell the dromedary some months earlier, and didn't know if one day he would have the money to buy another. There our Egyptian friend helped us, for he knew a little French from having worked on the digs of the French archaeologists (who, at Luxor, as at Alba Fucense, except that here the archaeologists are Belgians and the peasants are Italians, hire peasants for one or two months to dig and unearth; when the archaeologists don't come, there as well as here — here 30,000 people leave the Abruzzi each year to go in search of work to the north or in foreign countries — it is a catastrophe, for it is the disappearance of a source of ready money, this ready money being almost as rare for the peasants of Alba Fucense as for those of Luxor); he also helped by taking us to the artisans who shaped and polished, by hand, the alabaster cups which we brought back and used for the wine, in the night, poured from the goat-skin (Shot 62) and for the blood of the virgins (Shot 64). (A German music critic who, let us hope, hears better than he sees, thought, when the priest pours the blood from a cup of white alabaster into the hole of the altar, he saw a plastic basin. . . .) From a merchant water-salesman of Cairo we bought the black goat-skins for 2,000 liras, with, there again, an uneasy

conscience, for if for him it was a lot of ready money at the moment, what was he then to do to sell his water with only the two skins he had left? Even there we would have given up buying them from him, resigning ourselves to having them made new in Italy, if we hadn't seen that in refusing to buy them from him after he got the impression that we were interested in them, his disappointment was too great... We took the two oldest ones leaving him the newer ones. He must have thought that we really didn't understand a thing about it!

The kindness of the Egyptians (those whom we saw, for we met no bourgeois: the Egyptian bourgeois, even 'friends' of the Delcours, no longer came to see them for fear of being compromised, and it isn't by going around the streets of Cairo on foot, where everyone who is not poor travels by taxi, that one sees the middle-class!) is immense, even in the wretched neighbourhoods of Cairo where no European ever goes — except just passing through in a cab! — where they would have every reason to be hostile to us quite simply because neither Jean-Marie nor I had the pallor of centuries of undernourishment. But this kindness hit us still harder for the discovery, arriving at Cairo by plane, of a city almost like the Calcutta which we had seen in the only film of Louis Malle which ever interested us. In the country the poverty is often extreme, it is visible because the people are so worn out and tired that they don't take the slightest care of their animals, but, despite the disease bilharzia, despite the harvests, one after another without respite, profiting not those who make them but their exploiters, there is still the appearance of equilibrium of an agrarian civilisation (the people who go into town in the morning at dawn to sell vegetables, fruits, animals, the husbandry of the riverside, the artisans' ingenuity, the complement of the weariness due to undernourishment which is a calm, a slowness, a tempo of living which are also, in spite of everything, riches which we have forgotten); in Cairo on the contrary, with its seven million inhabitants ceaselessly increasing, there is the misery of the city, desperate even if one tells oneself that it is there that revolt fomented. After this first trip, what we hadn't as yet clearly decided about was clear: we wouldn't go to Israel after having been in Egypt.

In May 1973 we returned with Ciccio (Renato Berta) and a 16 mm Beaulieu camera and some Kodak reversible film to make our two shots — under cover, for we couldn't demand authorisation saying it was for *Moses and Aaron*, and we didn't want to lie. Everything went without obstacles, except that Jean-Marie, who had cut his finger on a snow-plough when we had run into a snow-storm at Campotosto in the beginning of May as we were going to see the lake again to take the definitive decision to shoot not at Campotosto, but at Matese, was travelling by bicycle on the roads of Luxor with his left hand in the air to stop the pain caused by the rush of blood to his finger's wound and under an already well-heated sun while he was stuffed with antibiotics, with Ciccio, his wife Ombretta, and me behind him in case he should collapse, for the Italian doctors had told us that it was very dangerous to go into the sun with antibiotics in the body (?); and also, except for the fact that the same Ciccio who persisted, despite our advice, and as a good Swiss unaware of why the locals covered themselves from head to foot, in doing the shot in the mountain of Luxor, for three hours (we did it over a dozen times, for the movement with an amateur camera tripod, was very difficult, as well as the speed), with naked chest, took so much sun that the following night he slept nude because of the heat and caught some kind of bronchial pneumonia: the three days in Cairo on return, while Ombretta visited the city, he spent in bed at the hotel, was sick in the plane and didn't feel better until setting foot in Rome!

Huillet, Berta (with naked chest), Straub, Zulauf, and Unterpertinger during the shooting of *History Lessons*.



Sebastian Schachhauser

During lunch Basti reports that a man came this morning to announce that the amphitheatre was his property. The Straubs have a permit to use the amphitheatre from the Soprintendenza alle Antichità e Belli Arti di Abruzzo-Molise which has supervised the recent reconstructions here. This will not be the first time they will have to do with an expropriated *padrone*, as they had to deal similarly with the owners of the Villa Pamphilij in Rome for shooting the fourth act of *Othon*. We discuss the matter, but decide the work at hand is more interesting.

I will go with Leo within a few days to see the said proprietor who is in fact a woman, the man who came being her major-domo: she did not pretend to have ownership of the amphitheatre, having in fact been expropriated by the Ministry of Fine Arts, but of the pathway that leads down to the amphitheatre, single entryway, the only one connecting the road to the church. After discussing the matter, explaining that we aren't the Americans (Huston had shot the exteriors of his *Bible* at some 100 km from there, on the other incline of the Abruzzi, and the rumour must have spread that one could get some money out of it, once a film was being shot) but that

Shot 37 at first CS on Aaron, the camera pans left by Moses and by the Priest onto the chorus in a long shot. 'Through Aaron Moses lets us see, how he himself has beheld his God.' From its position south of centre by Moses and Aaron the pan of the camera takes in the very top of the storage shack standing outside the amphitheatre in the direction of Monte Velino, so we cover the roof over with bits of shrubbery. The weather changes from cloudy to rainy and then starts to clear up. After five the chorus gets impatient to finish. The 24th take is good, so we wrap it up. With the feet and inches tapes measure from the Mitchell, 'West Hollywood', we take the outline of the chorus position and mark it out in the centre of the arena before the *torretta* for Shot 48. At night it is very tranquil here. There is a clear silver light, even without the moon which makes dark blue silhouettes. The Ursa Major (Big Dipper), Leopardi's 'Vaghe stelle dell' Orsa', is set just above the outline of Monte Velino as if about to dip on its snowless peak some of the Milky Way.

#### Sunday, 25th August

#### Shot 18, 33, 48, 38

Shot 18. The opening of the third section of the first act. The title, white on blackfilm, 'Moses and Aaron announce to the people the message of God' is Shot 17, measures 244 to 252. The Young Girl, Eva Csapò, the Young Man, Roger Lucas, and the other Man, Richard Salter, recount the passage of Aaron on his way to meet Moses in the desert. The camera in a light low-angle view is medium close shot on Eva and pans left from her to Roger and then to Richard. This is their last Shot to be sung and the first in which they appear in the opera. Eva and Richard are finished after this, and Roger comes back in a week to sing in Shot 60. It is very hot and the flies cause a problem for the microphones and keep flying around Eva. Danièle tries using some insect repellent. They do 26 takes.

The chorus, mute and looking ahead, stands in place for Shot 33 while Aaron works the miracle of Moses' leprous hand. The camera in light high-angle view takes them in a medium long shot from the left. During the lunch break we set the camera on the top of a three-storey *torretta*. In Shot 48, the only appearance of the chorus in the second act, the chorus stands below, south of the *torretta* within the lines we marked off yesterday. In this sharp high-angle view, compactly filled with

given that actually we do use this pathway to have the sound truck, Gabriele's car, the camera truck and one or two private cars pass through, we are prepared to make remuneration, on condition that it be reasonable. . . . We make an agreement for 60,000 liras in two payments, one right away of 30,000 liras, and the second at the end of shooting. No one otherwise tried to blackmail us, except the curate of the church which we use for the costumes, the material, etc., and where Gregory or Hans-Peter sleep. This one at first claimed that the fact of not being able to celebrate marriages in his church (which is not the village church, but a 'classified' monument, where the rich or snobbish come to get married from time to time) for a period of 5 weeks was making him lose 300,000 liras. . . . Jean-Marie and I went to see him: he ended up admitting to us that it certainly wasn't that much, but that he had bought a small house for his family (his sister and brother-in-law and their numerous children) and that he, having to pay by instalments, figured that a film . . ., that if he was paid 300,000 liras as a lump sum that that would cut down the payments by that much! We made a settlement for 100,000 liras then again in two payments, one at the beginning and one at the end of shooting. For the permit to shoot in the amphitheatre, the Fine Arts Ministry of Chieti was quite correct, thanks to a young intendant who has since been named to Perugia: no complications, free authorisation, because, as he said to us, 'in a democracy these sites should be freely at the service of the public, under the sole condition that there be no deterioration to them'.

On the other hand, the Superintendence of Monuments of Aquila was — sole exception — most incorrect: We had had authorisation to use the church by means of a 'rental fee' of 50,000 liras and a 'deposit' of 100,000 which was to be returned to us after the shooting. In addition we gave 10,000 liras to the old woman, the church guardian, when we returned the keys after shooting was over. When we asked for our deposit back, after having checked, Straub and I, that nothing, absolutely nothing had been damaged in the church, and ourselves conscientiously cleaned the church from top to bottom so that the old woman would not have to do it, the Superintendence refused to return our deposit on the pretext of damages which were, evidently, never enumerated to us. We let it drop, being too busy, with the film finished, with other problems, but I still wonder today what *maffiosa* operation is behind it and especially, why this dishonesty and these lies for a sum so small!

Before the start of shooting, Paolo had had a man with a blowing machine come to spread, it seems, anti-fly insecticide, which the communes sometimes rent. But Straub refuses to have this operation repeated, as he considers it too dangerous: these insecticides, he says, are a violent poison, the animals could come to eat the grass on the sides of the amphitheatre and that passes into their milk, etc. I side with his opinion: so we will combat the flies with a product that campers use, which we apply delicately with a paper napkin on the actor's faces and on the stem or the surface of the mikes. . . .

the angry *Volk*, the chorus moves its gaze from Aaron on its left, ahead to the Elders: 'Slaughter them, burn them, the priests of this false God!' This is the last shot of the chorus as a whole. Louis Hocht sets up the microphones in the direction of the south entry and J.-M. takes the chorus out and has them walk into the amphitheatre to record the sounds of their entry, for the 'Noise from the distance, quickly closer' at the end of Shot 45. They march in three times. With that the shooting schedule with the chorus is completed, J.-M. thanks them and bids them farewell until the radio concert of the Opera which is to be performed in Salzburg on the 21st of October.

Then we take the camera down and set it in low-angle view, close up for a 3/4 profile of the Priest. Shot 38. The chorus off calls for freedom and he bursts forth in admonishment: 'Madmen! Whereof shall the desert nourish you?' After this J.-M. sets up the tracks for a tracking in on Aaron in Shot 39. I stand in place for Aaron while J.-M. discusses the camera angle and lens objective with Ugo and Saverio. He wants to start with Moses and Aaron cut *americano* (3/4) and track to a close shot of Aaron and then have Aaron walk out of the frame to the left for the miracle of the Nile water turned into blood.

After packing up, we leave Hans-Peter at the church and I go into Avezzano to eat with Leo. Jean-Marie and Danièle come to the restaurant and eat with us. Danièle is busy filling out the pay vouchers that the crew is paid for daily expenses every ten days. J.-M. explains some aspects of financing the film through agreements with the Austrian ORF for the musicians and the participation of the German, French, and Italian television. Most of the people in the restaurant are working on the film and there is a general feeling of relief to have finished with this first stage of the filming. The beauty of watching the film being made is seeing it as a documentary on the fifteen years of work and preparation that have brought the Straubs to the simplicity of a well-informed concept in each Shot where everything has already been planned, recorded, and rehearsed, thus leaving the act of filming itself free to be a document on the work that has preceded it.

Letter of Schoenberg to Alban Berg, 8th August 1931:

*Peculiarly enough I work in the very same manner: the text is only during the composition definitively finished, even sometimes only afterwards. This proves itself extraordinarily. Naturally, and you have surely done it as well, it is only possible, when one has before all else a very exact conception, and the artistry consists indeed there, not only to keep this vision constantly alive, but rather by the working out of the details still to reinforce, enrich, and expand it!*

Monday, 26th August

Shot 39, 40

We spend the whole morning on Shot 39. Moses responds to the Priest: 'In the desert the purity of thought will nourish you . . .' and then Aaron interrupts him changing his words into the enchantment of wonder. The camera MCS on them tracks to CS on Aaron who stands in the foreground against the south entry and at the end walks left out of the frame. The shot is *gestorben* at one.

Shot 40. The Nile water turned into blood. CS on the jug and on Aaron's hands from his left side. Everything is rehearsed thoroughly before the blood, which Paolo has brought from a local slaughterhouse, is actually put in the jug. Aaron takes a forceful grip of the handle and inclines it down at the word 'blood' till it flows out. He sings: 'No, you are not mistaken: what you now see is blood!' Meantime the weather has become grey and rainy. After two takes Aaron changes position to another place and the camera is set up again as the ground was already blood-stained below him. Günter Reich, who is now free, comes up to my post and we talk while they are setting up again. He has a pleasant British manner in English. Born in Silesia, he had to leave because of the Nazis, so he grew up in Israel. He started out singing as a tenor, but when he came to Germany to study, his teacher opened his voice to bass-baritone. He sings with the Stuttgart opera. I asked him how he feels about having a role where he only sings seven measures in the whole opera (Shot 16) against the extraordinary tenor part of Aaron. He says that Schoenberg's *Sprechstimme* is marked in the score with a particular cross mark on the staff for every syllable and that he is just as responsible to Gielen's direction and Bernard Rubenstein's comments as Louis Devos. Finished at five after 4 takes.

Tuesday, 27th August

Shot 41, 32, 35, 34

Shot 41. This time Aaron pours out 'The clear water of the Nile'. This is the last of Aaron's *Wunder*. The camera CS on Aaron in left profile. He sings: 'Yet the Almighty frees you and your blood.' The chorus off sings: 'Chosen! Chosen!' which will

Louis Devos (Aaron) in Shot 35.



be taken from the Vienna tapes and mixed later with the band of Aaron's voice. This is the last scene of the first act to be filmed since the final chorus, 'Eternal God, we consecrate to Thee our offerings and our love' is to be the two pans over the Nile at Luxor and at Aswan that J.-M. shot in May (Shot 42 and 43). The two-minute-thirty-second Interlude, 42 measures, 'Where is Moses?' is blackfilm with the title 'Before the Mountain of Revelation' in white (Shot 44).

12.30, Shot 32 in low-angle view. The camera on the chorus pans left MCS/MLS to Moses and Aaron. Aaron shows Moses' healthy hand, and Moses leads it to his heart. Shot 35. CS on Aaron in left profile. Camera in light 'frog perspective' (low-angled view). 'Know yourselves therein: without courage, sick, despised, enslaved, persecuted!' Shot 34, a silent shot CS on Moses' leprous hand. The chorus 'off' sings during this shot. Nevertheless, Hochet takes ambiance so J.-M. insists on *absolute Ruhe* during shooting time. From five to eight the *contadini* (farm people) come to the church to try on their costumes for Shot 58. The simplicity of these costumes accentuates the primitive beauty of the faces of these hard-working people. Some of the women decide not to go through with it, so Paolo ask the *contadino* who lives next to the church and his wife and mother, and they accept.

### Wednesday, 28th August

### Shot 46, 49

Shot 46. MLS on the Elders. The men of the chorus are ranged in three rows with the Priest in the front on the right of the frame. Jean-Marie has them stand in place and we drive in nails to mark their position. The Mitchell is set on top of a two-storey *torretta* and directed down on them frontally. J.-M. uses the view-finder to decide on the objective. He and Danièle discuss it with Ugo and Saverio. The Elders sing 'Hear! Hear! Too late!' looking slightly to the right to indicate Aaron, and then they look straight ahead to indicate the approach of the chorus. Shot 49. At first on the Elders as in Shot 46. 'Aaron, help us! Give in!' The camera pans left on Aaron in right profile turned towards the people. He sings: 'People of Israel! Thy Gods I give back to thee, and thee to them, as is thy desire.' After the run-through shooting starts at 2.20. Devos is not feeling well, so we cut at five.

We go up to the church and carry the four pieces of polystyrene set on a wood frame that make up the altar and the pedestal for the Golden Calf down to the arena. J.-M. digs the space for the pedestal himself and we place it down, weigh it with rocks and fasten it for its burden. Before it we assemble the three pieces of the platform which fit together as a base with four steps for the cube centred on top which serves as the altar. The whole is painted a brown identical to the colour of the mixture of baked earth and straw used by the Hebrews to make bricks and which the Straubs found still in use in Alexandria. The altar which was made in Cinecittà has been stored in the church until now. After it is set in place, the steps are covered with boards to protect their surface. We then cover it with large sheets of plastic to protect it against the wind and fasten them against the wind. From now on Hans-Peter and I will divide the charge of keeping watch down here at night. Danièle gives us the old camping tent which belongs to them since '54 to use. I help Hans-Peter set it up. He chooses to stay down here for the first night. I sleep in the church. Jean-Marie asks him to watch at what time the moon comes over the amphitheatre.

'... on the chorus pans left' is wrong: there was no panning shot and the choir had already left.

Rehearsal with the Elders.



Hans-Peter Böffgen

We owe Aaron much grateful recognition: certainly, if he caught cold it is his fault, because, despite our biddings, he persisted with one take done, in getting half undressed to go to practise for the next one in the *galleria* which runs under one half of the amphitheatre and which is as cold inside as it is hot outside: the result could be expected. But, that day, he knew that we were doing the last shot with the 17 choristers and him, and that if we could finish the shot that day, we had no more to shoot with them but a shot without him, Shot 58, with the village people, and that we could then send them back to Vienna (the choristers always stayed on to wait at Avezzano, for two days after the last day of shooting with them, and the soloists and Gielen as well, until we had seen the rushes at the lab, to be sure that they could leave, that there had been no catastrophe at the lab, and nothing needed reshooting).

On the other hand, if we hadn't been able to finish on that day with him and them, we would have had to wait until he could sing again with our chorus members and to pay them during this time: hence he made a great effort, and while no one else thought it was possible, he made it: the last entire take of this shot, the twentieth, the one we have in the film, this moment when Aaron 'betrays', relents, is also the one where one most feels the effort and the pain of the singer. This 'mishap' was of use for us, for we would never have obtained, nor thought to obtain, this voice on the point of breaking, without this illness and without the courage and the will of Devos. The twentieth take done, the chorus spontaneously applauded Aaron; he wanted to try again, for he hopes to be able to 'do better': we try three more times, but each time his voice breaks, each time more quickly. So then it is finished, we take him to the hotel right away. Gielen, Reich, Straub and I cut a funny figure, for we know that the risk exists that after this effort he might not be able to sing for months. . . .

No, not at Alexandria: Alexandria is a city of the Mediterranean, close to an Italian city, poorer, more populous, also with traces of fascist-style architecture. We saw these bricks and brought one back for the Cine-Ars (!) of Cinecittà which was to make our altar in polystyrene (which we almost didn't get: fortunately we had ordered it 18 months before the shooting, for with the petrol crisis having broken out, this by-product of petrol was no longer to be found; and when it began to arrive again from America the price was five times increased!), we saw them by the Nile, between Aswan and Luxor, drying in the sun, as thousands of years ago: a small 'industry' (factory) on the edge of a village.

Thursday, 29th August

Shot 58, 57

Early morning. Cecco, Nanni and Ninni put the Golden Calf in a delivery wagon and transport it into the arena. Danièle is nervous about the Calf as the gold finish done in Cinecittà chips off easily and is difficult to retouch well. With great care we lift it up on top of the pedestal and fasten it inside with wire to the frame of the pedestal. J.-M. reports that the doctor has ordered Devos to rest for at least three days. He has a slight fever and won't be able to sing until he is well. This upsets the shooting schedule and is no happy prospect for the film. We must wait and see after three days. About 11 a.m. Shot 58 is ready. The *contadini* come down from the church in their costumes.

J.-M. directs the men and women beggars to pass from right to left in front of the altar. He tells them not to look at the *cosa nera* (the camera) as they go by. The camera is on tracks set diagonally to the left of the altar. It starts on the procession. The beggars lay their cloaks on the altar and the beggarwomen lay fruit and bread on it. After they pass the camera tracks back for the entry of the aged men from the right towards the altar. For these two groups the music is already taped. As the aged men move towards the altar they will be heard to sing: 'The last moments, which we have yet to live, take them as offering.' After this the camera pans left to the Elders by the altar who sing live: 'They have killed themselves!'

During the *cestino* I hear Danièle discussing 'le Gregory' with Jean-Marie. Ninni and I are to carry the litter on which lies the sick woman in Shot 57. The camera in light high-angle view on her as she sings and raises herself in the direction of the Calf. Gielen is set up on the side of the altar so that the sick woman, Elfriede Obrowsky, can follow him and still look up in the direction of the 'image of the Gods'. When she has sung we carry her left out of the frame and the camera tracks slowly in on the front part of the altar. J.-M. directs us to continue carrying her until the track is finished because he wants Vaglio to record the sound of our exit. After a while my hands start to hurt from carrying the litter. I try to concentrate on the sinuous melody that my passenger sings. We finish after 16 takes. Mario,

The necessity of bringing forward shots which were to have been filmed later and of pushing back those which called for Aaron's presence worries me, not only because I must quickly find the best decision for organisation and economy trying not to forget any of the factors, but, most of all, because I know (and I am alone to know, except for perhaps Louis because, since he has been on the film for two years with us, he knows a part of the difficulties involved, Jeti because he has a rapid sensibility, and Gabriele because he was with us for all the pre-shooting preparations; the others, Saverio and Gielen included, are so used to seeing Jean-Marie 'function' as Brecht would say that they don't even envisage that the machine all of a sudden might get derailed!) what nervous tension it represents for Straub to have to set his wires up another way, to not make an error in judgement, not to be overcome; I hope that his nerves will hold. The possibility that Aaron may not be able to sing at all, that we must push aside to think only about the daily work — tell ourselves to climb one mountain at a time. When I have periods of discouragement, when I am not sure of being strong enough or tough enough to get through to the end, I tell myself that if Mao and his peasants got that immense country going, it would be dismal if we couldn't get to the end of a film. And it works, I begin to get moving again. At night when we go to bed at one or two in the morning (sometimes three if it is an evening when we had to go to Rome to see the rushes), I fall asleep like a rock — to get up without fail at five and spend the time until six or six-thirty on the balcony of the hotel room examining the sky to see where the clouds are going, if the weather will be good . . . 5 o'clock, that's the time on the other hand when J.-M. goes to sleep worn out from having thought over what he has to shoot; two hours later it's time to wake him up. . . . Fortunately, we have the luxury of being able to take a good hot bath to wake us up, and the Italian coffee is effective!

It is out of the question to wait without shooting until Aaron is again in condition to sing, for Gielen has to conduct the Gurrelieder and his rehearsals begin two days after the end of the shooting scheduled for him. In the case of a catastrophe he would give up the Gurrelieder, but we want to spare him that and the legal, economic, and career difficulties that that would pose for him; aside from his anxiousness, of course, to conduct the Gurrelieder right after *M & A*. We had asked everyone to keep a few days in reserve for us beyond the last day of scheduled shooting, but, after the experience of Vienna where everything was finished without delays (at the price, at times, of what nervous tension!) with an immense optimism and a complete lack of conscience of the possible atmospheric breakdowns (even in Italy! especially in Italy, where everything is unstable and open to risk, the weather, the land, the people), they arranged their time without keeping this reserve for us!

Before directing anything whatsoever, Jean-Marie asks for chairs and sets them up so that the group of peasant men and women on one side, and that of the old men on the other, can sit down outside of the field of the frame between each take. They are all very courteous, very calm, and all is finished by midday. I pay out the 8,000 liras promised (for several days beforehand I was raking in bills of a thousand and five thousand everywhere, and I had asked Leo to pass by the bank to change some bills of ten thousand to have all the accounts ready for each); I didn't have them sign, an operation which I detest (except with the technicians, who have it as a habit, but who are always amazed, even those who have already worked with us, that I pay them at the beginning of the week, hence in advance, and not at the end after the work is furnished. . . . Since I don't see why people be asked to anticipate their work; and besides, I am quite content to dispose of this money without carrying it around with me any longer or keeping it at the hotel). They are content because we had told them that it might be that it would last all day and they were finished in two hours. We are content for we had told Friedl Obrowsky that if all went well, we might perhaps be able to do the shooting with her in the afternoon, that she should 'get into voice' and rehearse with Bernard in the morning; she didn't come for nothing, we are able to do the shooting.

the son of Sig. Pancrazio, *custode* of the amphitheatre, helps me to set up the tent. As soon as I am in my sleeping bag I fall asleep.

#### Friday, 30th August

#### Shot 10

8 a.m. I wake up when the Straubs arrive at the amphitheatre. Because of Aaron's indisposition, they have had to change the shooting schedule until he can sing. The camera is set on a one-level *torretta* close up on Moses for Shot 10. J.-M. discusses the camera movement for this nine-minute shot with Saverio. It remains on Moses, here without a veil, until the end of his dialogue with the Voice from the Thornbush. After he declares, 'My tongue is awkward: I can think, but not speak', the camera pans up to the thornbush and slowly left around the whole amphitheatre, during which the Voice sings of its chosen people, over to the mountain on which it then stays fixed. The pan is about 300 degrees around, passing along the line between the top of the amphitheatre and the sky until it stops on the figure of Monte Velino in the distance. Because of its length, over nine-hundred feet of film, each take uses an entire reel of material. Shooting starts in the sun at 10.30 but after three takes the clouds over Monte Velino have completely covered it from view. At noon we stop and wait for the clouds to lift. In the afternoon Velino becomes visible again, so shooting recommences. Killed after eight takes. The beginning of this scene, measures 1 to 5, is blackfilm with the title 'The Calling of Moses' (Shot 9).

#### Saturday, 31st August

Nothing to shoot today. We are attendant on Devos' good health. In the afternoon we practice Shot 60. Midnight the Straubs come into the amphitheatre to look at the moon for a later Shot, but it is very cloudy.

Günter Reich (Moses) in Shot 10.

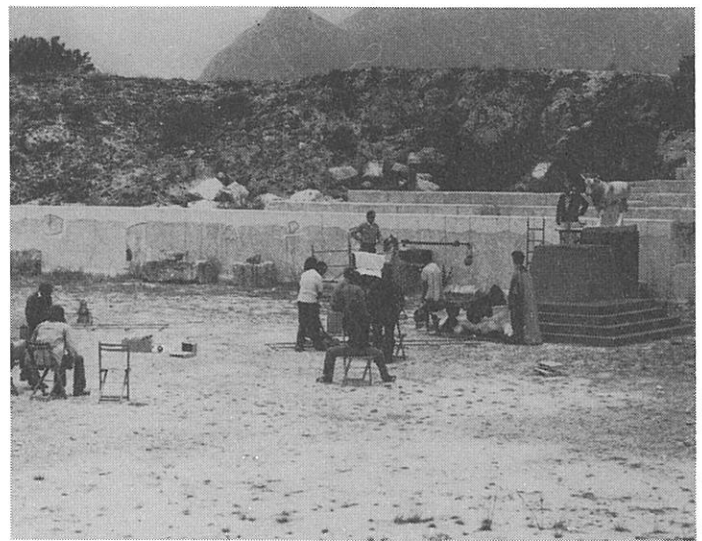


#### Sunday, 1st September

#### Shot 59, 60

Shot 59. On a nearby hill the twelve Tribal Princes and the Ephraimite ride down a path on horses, pass by the camera on the curve of the path and go farther to the left out of the frame.

Rehearsal for Shot 57.



Hans-Peter Böffgen

No; it was what had been foreseen in the filmscript: in montage, we said that it was dumb, that it was much better to see Moses from the first note, as he slowly raises his hands into the frame: to accomplish such a movement is difficult for an actor, why cut out the beginning of it? And this kind of hesitation, why destroy it? So Shot 10 begins with the first note of the opera.

What Gregory doesn't know, for he was on guard in the amphitheatre, is that after having rehearsed Shot 60 with the three men on the camera and the three propmen, one of the most difficult to set up, with Cecco, Gabriele and Dietmar Schings, come to see us from Frankfurt, and Leo, we had been to look over the entry to the path which is the sole passageway to arrive at the site where we wanted to shoot with the horses. Hochet and Vaglio follow us to have a look for themselves at the entry to the path for the next morning. It is a hill facing the hill of the amphitheatre, on the other side of the main road from Avezzano. An unpaved road leads off the paved road: it is this one that, apart from some tractors, the garbage-trucks take on their way to empty their garbage a bit farther on. . . . For the path which leads from this unpaved road to the quarry which is at the foot of the hill where we wanted to shoot with the horsemen the next day, but also later, at night, with the man who runs by burning, this path leaves from the centre of the garbage-dump of the city of Avezzano. . . . The entry to this path, which we had still seen and checked three days before with Gabriele, we were no longer able to find. Going back and forth we finally understood why: the garbage had been turned over, more exactly construction rubble, on top of the entry of the path. . . . It is late, the offices are closed, no question of finding anyone from the city to help us; and tomorrow is Sunday! We send Louis off, tell him that we will inspect, for him to go and rest; Cecco leaves as well to get Nanni and Nini and some shovels from the village. We stay there waiting until I work myself into a rage ('Let's see if men can't work their way through this too') and start clearing off the junk with my hands; it is still day, at night we couldn't get much done. J.-M., Gabriele, Leo, Dietmar Schings do likewise: Leo and I even have slight wounds on our hands from the ends of some cutting metal. At the end of two hours Cecco has not yet returned but we have cleared off sufficiently enough for the cars to pass; Gabriele with his new 4CV Renault (which I suspect him having bought to replace the old one he had, to be sure not to have a car which would let us down in the middle of shooting, but he never wanted to admit it), passes over it again and again to flatten out the ground at the risk of ruining his beautiful new car; 'A car is made to be used', he says. . . . When Cecco, Nanni and Nini arrive it is the black of night, but the work is practically finished: by the light of the headlights they fill in the last holes. The next morning none of the rest of the crew will notice a thing. We ask Dietmar what he thinks about the *métier* of a cinéaste-garbage cleaner; that, when they ask him what he saw of the shooting of *M & A* on his return to the television at Frankfurt, he recount this evening.

We go to wash and eat and then Jean-Marie and I return in Gabriele's auto to examine the positions of the moon in the amphitheatre. It is indeed very cloudy!

The night between Saturday and Sunday: the clouds continue to gather; about one o'clock the rain begins; at five when I wake up, it is raining in streams and the clouds continue to arrive. . . .



The camera pans with them as they ride by and stays for a second on the mountain, still the Velino in the distance. At midday they arrive at the amphitheatre. The Tribal Princes come with their horses from a riding academy in Tagliacozzo near by.

Shot 60. The camera is set on tracks on the right of the altar. At first CU of the Ephraimite, in low-angle view, who sings 'Princes of the tribes, pay homage with me, to this image of regulated powers!' Then the camera tracks back to MLS on the Tribal Princes who are kneeling before the altar. They rise at the approach of the Young Man, who menacing with a bar goes to the first step of the altar and sings: 'Smashed be this image of the temporal! Pure be the outlook on eternity!' The Ephraimite, Ladislav Illavsky, walks right, grabs him around the neck, throws him to the ground, and goes left out of the frame followed by the twelve Tribal Princes. *Gestorben* around three. J.-M. prepares the tracking shot in Shot 26 for tomorrow.

#### Monday, 2nd September

Shot 26, 27, 29, 69

Shot 26. The camera at first CS on Moses. He says 'Almighty, my power is at an end, my idea is impotent in Aaron's word!' The camera then tracks back to cut them both *americano* MCS. Aaron threatens: 'Be silent! The word am I and the deed!' and snatches away Moses' staff. Moses, in consternation, turns to him in right profile.

Aaron takes Moses' staff, Shot 26.



Lode, as Devos is called to distinguish him from Louis Hochet, is recovered from his fever. He is in good voice today. Though he speaks in French with us, Devos, a Belgian, has little difficulty with the German text. There are 6 takes between 11.30 and 12.30. Shot 27 CS on Aaron who stands right side in the frame turned to the chorus. He throws the staff to the ground and sings: 'This staff leads you: see the serpent!' After the *cestino*, Shot 29. The camera on the left MCS on Moses and Aaron in low-angle view. Aaron holding the staff sings: 'Know the might that this staff imparts to the leader!' He steps over to the right to restore it to Moses and returns to his place on Moses' left. At four Cecco, Nanni, and Ninni set up the Mitchell just outside the south entry of the amphitheatre and hook it up by cable to the generator. I sit by it on guard until they come back in the evening to take film of the moon rising over the hill to the east where Shot 59 was filmed yesterday.

While sitting there I work on my translation of the libretto into English that will serve as a basis for the subtitles which we will do in January. Little Mario keeps me company. He asks me if I am a *tedesco* like the other people here. I draw him a map of North America to show him where New York is. About seven Saverio arrives and the others after him. The full moon comes up at 20.10. J.-M. says this Shot 69 is a tribute to the composer of 'Pierrot Lunaire'! Gianni says that we should take advantage of this occasion without Hochet to make a lot of noise while shooting as they usually do in Italian films. They roll 1,400 feet, 20 minutes' worth of film. We pack up the equipment and they leave by nine. The amphitheatre is bathed in moonlight. The Golden Calf wrapped in plastic looks like a veiled bride. A cat runs through the bushes.

We are supposed to be on the hill for the horses at eight. At 6.30 it is still raining: I let Jean-Marie sleep and go from one balcony to another observing the progress of the clouds. . . . I don't know what to decide: there is no improvement in view, but on the other hand to give up shooting with the horsemen today is a catastrophe: one part works and couldn't be free tomorrow, it risks snowballing disorganisation of the whole work schedule, since Aaron is feeling better and thinks he'll be able to sing tomorrow. In the course of a trip from one balcony to another, I meet Vaglio in the corridor: he goes with me on to the other balcony and tells me in his singing accent: 'Where we live in Nice when the weather is like this in the morning, at ten o'clock the weather is fine. You'll see, at ten o'clock the weather will be fine, we should go.' Well, the decision is made, I am only half convinced but I decide to change nothing. I wake up Jean-Marie who says it is madness but he decides anyway to get up. We get to the hill at 8.30, everyone arrives slowly, but not the least horseman or horse in sight. I am not worried for I know all these swagglers and I was sure that they would be late; they are no peasants, but the sons of comfort. The rain has stopped but the sky is still completely overcast. Even so we take the camera out and begin to get ready. Cecco, our great prophet as to the weather tells us that on this hill he is less sure of himself than in the amphitheatre where the peasants had taught him to 'read' the light or the clouds on Monte Velino. . . . At 9.30 we are ready, but still no shadow of a horse to be seen. I ask Gabriele to go to Avezzano, where the horses were brought from Tagliacozzo, about 30 km distant, the evening before by the owner of the ring, precisely so that they wouldn't have to part at dawn this morning to be on time for the shooting, to see what is going on. Renata and Rino have prepared all the costumes down in the quarry, the clouds break, the azure appears. It is as yet no more than a tiny bit of sky but Vaglio triumphs. 10 o'clock Gabriele returns: the horses had been left in a field in the open sky and this morning they were completely drenched! The horsemen had had to rub them down, let them dry and rub them down again, for a humid horse cannot be saddled, under pain of wounding him by splitting his skin. . . . Only now they are arriving. In a quarter of an hour the first ones arrive, at eleven everyone is dressed and ready. The first take (we will do three) is still with a cloudy sky, the third has no more than a tiny little cloud which quickly crossed the field to the right. . . .

In the afternoon the sky becomes dark and menacing; our horsemen have to kneel down, get up and kneel down again eleven times. For the pampered sons that they are, they act well: the only one to complain of his knees hurting is the owner of the ring. We ask one of the horsemen what the said owner is giving them from the 500,000 liras that we pay him for horses and horsemen: 'Nothing, a meal. And then he knows that we like riding and this time, to go back to Tagliacozzo this evening, we can ride free.'

Lode is Louis in Flemish; Devos is a Flemish Belgian, the reason he speaks German well. What's more, Straub worked with him particularly on the pronunciation of the texts, first during the rehearsals at Brussels or at the Mondsee with Gielen, then at Vienna during the recording: all the points that were still weak were circled or underlined in red, and Lode worked over them again on his own, between May and August, such that the progress between the text recorded at Vienna and that recorded at Alba Fucense is great.

Tuesday, 3rd September

Shot 45, 47, 51

Shot 45. The camera in light high-angle view CS on Aaron in front view. He stands before the west side of the arena. Firstly he directs his eyes to his left to indicate the Elders who sing off 'Forty days! How long still?' When he sings in answer to them he bends his head down, then looks to his right to indicate the entry of the irate chorus, whose sound Hochet has recorded. Jean-Marie encourages the natural theatricality in Devos' expression. He never tells him to make an expression, but leads him to create one. Shot 47. Aaron stands as before, but the camera is now in sharper high-angle view atop a three-storey *torretta*. As Aaron's treachery increases, so does the distance of the camera. When Aaron sings, 'on this height' he gestures to his left in the direction of the mountain. Bernard Rubenstein is sometimes not as satisfied with the correctness of the singing as is Gielen. J.-M. at times uses this as a reason for further takes. He asks Bernie if the taping followed the score. Bernie replies 'O.K.', but without enthusiasm, and then J.-M. announces one more take for Bernie. 3 p.m. Shot 51. Aaron stands before the Golden Calf after he has relented to the people. The camera in low-angle view on the Golden Calf and CS on Aaron who stands left in front of it. He sings: 'This image witnesses that in everything that is, a God lives!' and points up to the Calf, concluding 'Revere yourselves in this symbol!' The chorus: 'Their physical visibility', Shot 50, which precedes this, will be whitefilm.

After this come the orgy scenes of the second act, Shots 52 to 71. 5 p.m. It rains heavily so we quickly cover up the altar and Guistiniano. After it clears J.-M. and Danièle work on the positions of Moses and Aaron before the altar in Shots 73-79. We nail Moses' place before the altar and Aaron ahead to his left. Danièle holds the *Drehbuch* for J.-M. while he looks through the view-finder to judge the distance between them. J.-M. who doesn't know how to wink, must use his hand to keep one eye shut when he looks through the *Sucher* (view-finder).

After dinner at Carmelo's, a good inexpensive restaurant in Avezzano, Leo and I pass by the hotel room of the Straubs. Each evening after eating, they listen with Jeti and Gielen to the day's tapings to be sure the sound and the music are good.

Wednesday, 4th September

Day of rest. I stay in the amphitheatre. J.-M. and Danièle are gone to Rome to see the rushes. They buy three boxes more film material and more Agfa tapes for the Nagra recording.

*There is only one way to connect directly to the past and to tradition: to begin everything over again, as if all that had gone before were false; to grapple once again with the essence of the thing most exactly, instead of reducing oneself to developing the technique of a pre-existent material.*

Arnold Schoenberg, 'Aphorisms, Anecdotes, Sayings', 1932/49.

Thursday, 5th September

Shot 72, 74, 75, 76, 73

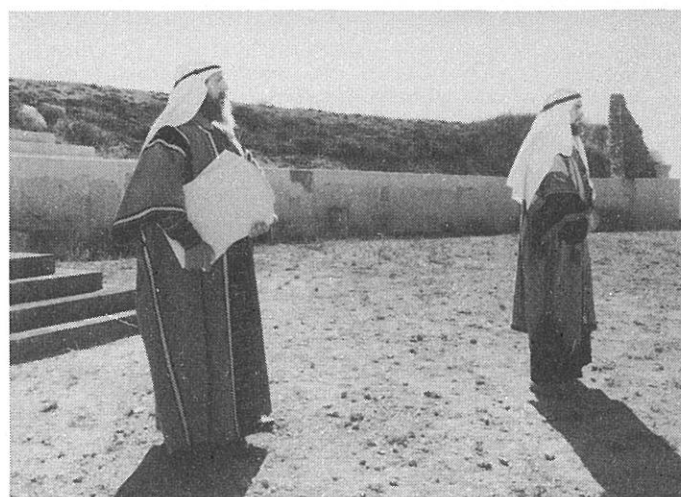
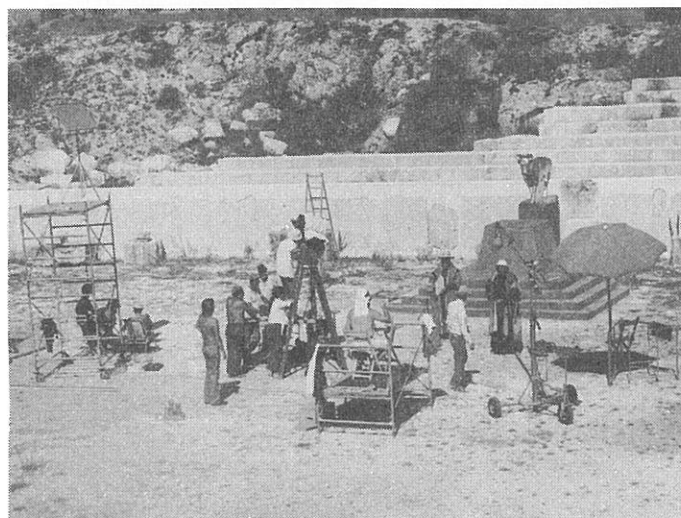
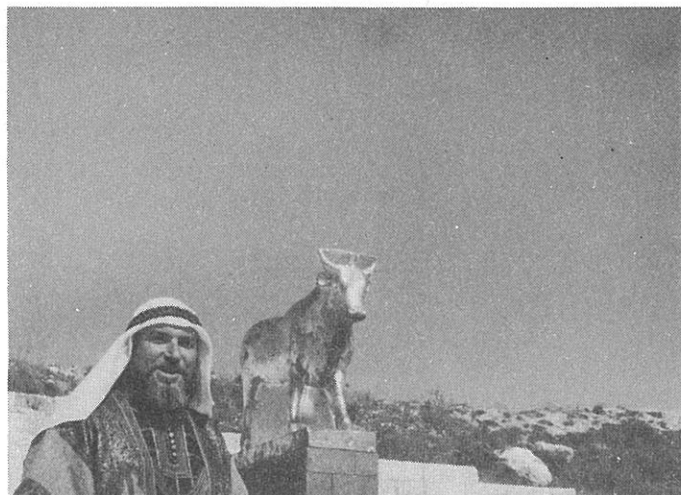
7 a.m. Shot 72 in the early morning. Gielen comes down dressed in a leather costume with a helmet to play the Watchman. Jean-Marie sets him up on top of the north-east side of the amphitheatre to the right of the mountain. Lens objective 50 takes in the expanse of the mountain in the early light. The camera is set on the *ruotolette* (six-wheel dolly) that the Straubs brought back from Rome yesterday. Saverio lets me look through the eye of the Mitchell to see how much the lens takes in. Custom in Italy is that anyone not directly working on the camera who looks through the camera has to buy drinks for the whole crew. Gielen looks in the direction of the mountain, then turns and cries: 'Moses is going down from the mountain!'

10.30, Shot 74. Moses: 'Aaron, what has thou done?' Aaron: 'Nothing new!'. Moses stands before the altar with the tables of the law. Aaron on his left and in front of him. The camera set in light high-angle view on their right in the space that separates Moses on the left and Aaron on the right. Aaron stands in right profile, Moses 3/4 frontal view, each looking ahead, avoiding each other's glance. Shot 75. Close-up on Aaron in right profile: 'As always: I heard the voice within me.' Moses (off): 'I have not spoken.' Aaron: 'Nonetheless I have understood.' The tables which Moses carries are marble. One set is inscribed with an old Hebrew text of the Decalogue chiselled by a stone-mason who works for the Cimitero Israelitico in Rome. The other three pairs are blank. They are rather heavy so Nanni helps Günter to hold them between takes. During *cestino* I wonder if there will be a *temporale* as often happens in the afternoon. J.-M. says, *Le temps, comme l'histoire, ne se repète pas*. 2.30, Shot 76. MCS in high-angle view on Moses who with the tables on his right side turns to Aaron: 'The imperishable, say it like these tables, perishably, in the speech of thy mouth!'

Louis Devos (Aaron) in Shot 51.

Rehearsal on Thursday, 5 Sept.: Vogel, Cecco, Nini, Nanni, Huillet, Straub, Gielen, Reich, Vaglio, Devos.

Reich (Moses) and Devos (Aaron) in Shot 74.



Hans-Peter Böffgen

Vaglio, on the giraffe, records this dialogue with a single mike (the Neumann U87) panning slightly from Moses to Aaron and from Aaron to Moses; I am worried, for Georges doesn't know a word of German, so he has no marking points to know when to pass from one to the other, and the least retardation on his part can produce a detestable 'fading' which would oblige us to start this very long, and, for the singers, very difficult take, all over again (for the synch, but also for Aaron who is still vocally worn by his illness). I ask Georges if he is quite sure of himself; he says, 'It's O.K.' So I don't interfere. And, in fact, he succeeds perfectly at each take in his recording.

4 p.m. Shot 73. The camera in light low-angle view close-up on the Golden Calf. Moses (off) says: 'Begone, thou image of the inability to grasp the boundless in an image!' Hochet takes Moses' voice direct. After, during the already taped chorus 'off': 'All pleasure, all joy, all hope is gone!', the Calf disappears through a fade-in.

#### Friday, 6th September

#### Shot 77, 78

Shot 77. The camera on a *torretta* in high-angle view CS on Aaron in right profile. The heart of the combat between Aaron's arguments for life in the world: 'I love this people, I live for it and want to preserve it', and Moses: 'I love my idea and live for it!' Almost three minutes long. After much practice shooting starts at eleven. Aaron looks straight ahead throughout turning slightly towards Moses during their dialogue.

Afternoon, Shot 78. The camera, still in high-angle view, CU on Moses in front view. Moses has the tables raised above his head: 'Then I smash these tables, and will pray God that he recall me from this office!' Then he throws them to the ground to his right. This is the last discourse between the protagonists in this act. Moses does 4 takes, breaking two pairs of tables.

Sleeping in the tent, I am awoken by the wind at midnight. It feels like a storm. I go and fasten the plastic around the altar and the Calf and secure the tent. Nonetheless the wind soon blows down the tent and I get wet and tangled within. At 2 a.m. Hans-Peter comes down with a flash-light and helps me to take my things to the church.

#### Saturday, 7th September

#### Shot 80, 79, 12

I get up early and go down to the amphitheatre. Lay out the tent to dry and take the plastic off the altar. The puddles of last night are gone. Jean-Marie and Danièle are relieved to find nothing damaged. We set up for Shot 80, the last of the second act. Camera in high-angle view MCS/MLS on Moses now on his knees. During practice Renata is concerned about Moses' veil when he bends over. She wants to pin it, but J.-M. says to let it flow as it will. At the end, Moses: 'O word, thou word, that I lack!' grabs his head in his hands and sinks, despairing, to the ground. 11 o'clock, shot 79. A pan from left to right of the thornbush on the hillside of the amphitheatre to run against the chorus's reacceptance of Moses' God, even though through the words of Aaron.

Afternoon, Act I, scene 2, 'Moses encounters Aaron in the desert', title white on blackfilm for Shot 11, measures 98–123. Shot 12. The camera in high-angle view, LS, on Moses with his staff in his right hand and the veil that he is not wearing in Shot 10, faces Aaron who stands opposite him to the right in the frame. The drama of confrontation distanced like a show-down in a western. It's a windy afternoon. Aaron's veil flies around a lot. In this opening music Schoenberg introduces the four sets of twelve tones on which the rest of the opera is structured in Aaron's vocal line. Moses counters these operative flights with the reflective weight of his *Sprechstimme*. Aaron: 'Thou, son of my fathers, does the great God send thee to me?' Moses: 'Thou, son of my father, brother of the spirit, from whom the Unique shall speak forth: perceive me and him and say what thou understandest.'

#### Sunday, 8th September

#### Shot 13, 14, 15

Louis Devos tunes up his voice on the piano in the church while we set up for Shot 13. Camera in high-angle view as in Shot 12. Aaron comes down at 10.45. CS on him in left profile. Moses stands facing him off. Hochet sets up mikes for their verbal duel. To begin shooting Jean-Marie checks first to see if Hochet is ready with the tape. Then he checks with Saverio for the camera. Then he says 'Vas-y, Louis!' and Hochet starts the orchestra tape which begins with three beeps for the measures of each Shot. Gielen standing visible to them with the working score in front of him cues them in and conducts. Aaron sings: 'Imagination of the highest fantasy, how it thanks thee for that thou dost excite it to form images!' Gnostic theorisation versus the theistic idea. Moses (off): 'No image can give thee an image of the Unrepresentable.'

12.30, Shot 14. Moses: 'Unrepresentable, because invisible, because immeasurable, because unending, because eternal, because omnipresent, because almighty. Only one is almighty.' The camera in high-angle view on Moses in front view. The set-up of the camera cuts Aaron off from Gielen. So Bernard Rubenstein conducts him in singing 'Unrepresentable God.' (At lunchtime Georg Brintrup arrives from Rome with news that Misti had four kittens.) Afternoon, Shot 15. High-angle view CS on Aaron, this time in right profile. *Gestorben* at three. During shooting a discarded cigarette burns three large holes in the sleeve of the canvas coat Jean-Marie has had for 25 years. Renata is going to see if she can patch it up.

Slightly? The first time Aaron turns towards Moses not slightly but in an extended, already menacing manner while saying to him 'So mache dich dem Volk verständlich, *auf ihm angemessene Art*' (So make thyself understandable to the people, *in a manner suited to it*). The second time, at the end of the shot, the last time one sees Aaron in the film before finding him bound on the ground again in the third act, Aaron turns violently towards Moses, with a closed fist, saying to him: 'Die auch nur ein Bild, ein Teil des Gedankens sind' (That are also only an image, a part of the idea).

Moses smashes the tables of law, Shot 78.



It was hard to find the distance for this shot: Straub wanted the two 'antagonists' to be removed one from the other, at the same time for realistic reasons (in the desert where the space is without limits, two men who meet and call each other back and forth have no reason to do it while mincing their steps) and for theatrical reasons, but neither did he want this distancing to bother the two actors, who had to hear each other, technically nor psychologically (at least not too much!). So he began by asking Günter and Lode to find the distance which seemed right themselves; Günter wanted to be rather close to Lode, too close for the taste of J.-M. who said nothing. Luckily Lode for himself wanted to be far away from Moses, at a distance which corresponded to what J.-M. had in mind: Günter, who is good-natured, let himself be persuaded. . . .

In the evening of September 15th after having seen the rushes, we go to the house to see the kittens: they are just eight days old, and all four of them greet us puffing out menaces — until they realise that their mother is feasting our homecoming; then they calm down. We will give them their names, for the two males, Liebknecht (*amabile servo*) and Aronne (because he has a

**Monday, 9th September****Shot 16, 14**

Shot 16. Last shot for Moses and Aaron before they come back to do the third act on the 19th of September. The camera atop a three-storey *torretta* in high-angle view MCS frontal on Moses. He sings: 'Purify thy thinking, loose it from what is worthless, consecrate it to the true', the only seven measures of the music sung by Moses. Danièle wasn't satisfied with the music in Shot 14 yesterday. Aaron sang 'Unrepresentable God' too low. So they do a retake. After this Gielen and Rubenstein are finished as the remaining music for Act II is taped already. The *macchinisti* leave for Rome to get the lights at Cinecittà for the night scenes in Act II.

**Tuesday, 10th September**

Day of Rest. I work on translating Act III. About 6 o'clock five dancers of the New Dance Forum of Cologne arrive to look at the amphitheatre and try on their costumes for tomorrow. It begins to rain heavily for two hours. Everyone goes up to the church where it is damp and uncomfortable. We left pools of water in the arena. Danièle is concerned, for the dancers are scheduled to dance in the morning.

**Wednesday, 11th September****Shot 55, 54, 56**

Morning. The amphitheatre is already dry. The pools left ridges of weeds in lines marking the arena's surface. The dancers come down in costume and Rino, the make-up man, does up their faces after a copy of the masks in Malraux's 'Le Musée imaginaire de la sculpture: la statuaire'.

At nine the truck arrives from the slaughterhouse carrying the newly killed beast to be set beside the altar for Shot 55. It is set along the side of the altar on the right.

This shot must be done with care and rapidity for the cattle must be brought back to the slaughterhouse by

black spot on one eye and the air of a pirate, like Devos for several weeks during rehearsals because he had done underwater fishing and had seriously infected one eye — he had to have cortisone injections and wore a black patch; J.-M. had gotten used to the idea of having an Aaron with an eye-patch and was almost disappointed at the disappearance of the patch already at Vienna!); for the two females, Elba, because the father was a cat from the Isle of Elba, red and black, which, the mother being black and white, produces two tricolour daughters, and Kapek, from the name of the chorus delegate with whom for months I discussed the hotel rooms to be booked for the chorus members, the means of travel, the modalities of payment — the Austrian chorus members wanted absolutely to be paid in marks for they had no confidence in the lira, but certain members wanted to spend their vacation holidays in Italy after the shooting and so wanted liras . . . etc. — she too was russet coloured. The two males stayed together at the house of friends in Rome who have a terrace, Elba is at Monte Porzio Catone with Renata's sister, who has a garden, and Kapek in Paris. . . . We brought her there when we went to do the mixing of the film in Paris, Louis not trusting the Italian installations, and we, in any case, wanting to do the optical sound in Paris where they do better work as well with the 35 mm optical sound as (and here, absolutely) with the 16 mm optical sound! With Gabriele and his Renault and about fifty cans of film (working copy, sound, etc.), and the stereo Nagra that Louis left with us after the re-recording in case we had other re-recordings to do, for in the Rome studios there was no stereo Nagra to be found, and with Kapek then hidden under a road-map we pass through customs, for none of all this, neither film, nor Nagra nor cat had been declared. On return, for the passage of the Italian frontier, it was the same thing, except that Kapek had stayed behind with my mother where she still is.

From illustrations of African masks he took the inspiration in painting the faces of the dancers. In the 12 months preceding the shooting we had been four times to Cologne to set up the dances with Jochen Ulrich and his dancers. These dances especially displeased the German music critics — doubtless because they are incapable of recognising people who know how to do their profession when this professional work is not presented in academic fashion. Jochen is the only one to be treated as poorly as we are, and we are pained about it. What always astounds me is that bourgeois critics allow themselves to be provoked so easily!

Gabriele and Leo went to look for our two young men at the slaughterhouse, for they were supposed to arrive with the freezer truck at eight, but I am sceptical; and I was right for they weren't there: Gabriele and Leo had to go looking for them at Avezzano, which is why they arrive an hour late. When I point out to them that twenty people were kept waiting for their arrival, one of them rapidly runs off a story to me of one of their friends who was to have died this very morning, etc. A story of pure invention which makes me burst out laughing. The truth is that after the rain of the night before they had figured that we wouldn't be shooting this morning and had stayed in bed!

noon to be refrigerated or the meat will start to go bad, and instead of paying the morning's rental for its use, Straub will have to pay for the beast. Along with it they have brought the head and shank of another animal to set on the altar as an offering. The camera is set in high-angle view before the altar. By the beast are two real butchers who have come with the truck, dressed in skins like the dancers. One holds the cattle's front leg back while the other begins to cut it underneath. The camera then pans to the left on the altar where the beast's head and shank are set in offering before the Golden Calf. At my post I sit copying out the camera changes Danièle has made in the revised *Drehbuch* which belongs to Bernie Rubenstein, who is leaving to fly to America today.

After the truck leaves with the animal, we set up for Shot 54 with the dancers. Each one has a butcher's knife which the Straubs brought back with them from Egypt. They dance with them in front of the offerings on the altar. The camera in high-angle view on a *torretta* to the left of the altar and farther back than before. Afterwards, the cattle parts are wrapped up in plastic and put in the cool shade of the *galleria* for the lunch break.

The rails are set up for a track forward in Shot 56. The rails are sprinkled with talc so as not to make noise against the rubber wheels of the dolly wagon. The dancers rehearse the two parts of their dance. Nanni practises the movement of the track-in with Saverio and the camera on the car at the end of the second dance. Hochet plays the music for them while Vaglio picks up the sound of their movements with a directional mike. Finished at 4.30.

#### Thursday, 12th September

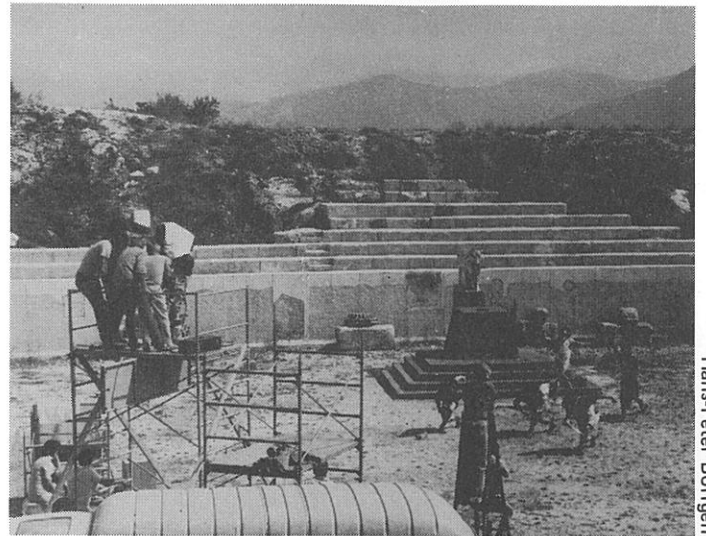
Shot 28, 63, 64, 70, 71

The camera on top of a *torretta* to the right of the altar for Shot 28. A shot of the serpent after Aaron throws Moses' staff to the ground. A professional animal dealer for the cinema arrives in a station-wagon with a cobra. The camera is directed on an empty patch of the arena through which the cobra is to move from bottom to top. The owner carries it in a little box and handles it with a forked stick. In his left hand he has a shield of protective glass. The intense heat of the sun makes the snake lethargic and uncooperative. It doesn't move very much. The prop-men try coaxing it towards them by attracting it to the black cloth they flash before it. But it doesn't get excited. The owner gets a little excited, though. Jean-Marie informs him that he doesn't work with the careless method of the normal Italian cinema and that they will keep shooting until they get some usable footage. The cobra does move a bit but usually to the shade by the altar. They run five reels of film on it.

3 p.m. rehearsals for Shots 63/64. Four Priests stand on the first step of the altar with four maidens, each carrying a bowl and a butcher's knife. In front of them are the four virgins to be sacrificed, their backs to the camera. In the church Renata dresses the *contadini* in their costumes for the shots tomorrow night, to check that they fit.

Not only because we would have to pay for it: above all because it would have been an animal killed in vain, if it can't even be eaten afterwards as a result. We didn't want under any conditions to have an animal slaughtered especially for the film so we found this solution with the director of the slaughterhouse.

Rehearsal for Shot 54, Jochen Ulrich is on the step-ladder.



Hans-Peter Böttgen

The imbecile who brought the cobra didn't have the slightest notion about the psychology of his animal. Every time that the cobra, after a moment of calm, was about to do something interesting, he would hit it on the tail, in consequence making it part in the other direction. He called it without noticing that the sound bounced around the ellipse of the amphitheatre and that the cobra heard it from the opposite direction to the one which this idiot wanted to make it go. Unless, as Saverio had it, the poor animal had been so terrorised by his 'tamer' that it would systematically head in the other direction on hearing him! After some time he proposed drawing it along with a nylon thread saying that the whole of *The Bible* of Huston (Noah's Ark) had been done with nylon threads for the animals (or electric shocks for the lions to make them move). When J.-M. and I had gone to discuss the contract with this fellow who rents animals to film productions and who, it seems, had made a television series entitled 'The Friend of Animals' (in Africa, etc.), I had said to Jean-Marie that this fellow actually detested animals. I was not mistaken.

After this, he proposed that we put the camera in the other direction. At that point Jean-Marie gets angry and tells him that he isn't making an Italian film. Naturally, the other man gets annoyed. Ugo, Saverio, Gianni, and Cecco break in and tell him that J.-M. is right, that he doesn't know anything about his animal. Then he wants to discuss the matter for he thinks we won't want to pay him later. I tell him not to fear, that I will pay the sum agreed on, but for him to do me the pleasure of leaving the amphitheatre and go and wait in the church or somewhere else. After he leaves, we can finally shoot in peace with our serpent, and wait until it finds its way to doing what we want it to do. No more noise, no more screaming, it begins to move . . .

The four priests (Marco Melani, Adriano Aprà, Walter Grassi, Husam Aldin M. Ali), the four nude girls (Marina, Silvia, Carla, Gioia) and the four who carry the knives and the cups (Pia, Leonora, Karin, Sidonie) are all friends or friends of friends: J.-M. didn't want to have film extras who, especially in Italy, pass from one 'nudist' film to another, but people whom we

After eight, when it gets dark, Ugo Piccone starts directing the disposition of the lighting for Shot 63. The camera in light low-angle view, MLS, directly in front of the altar at about 5 metres distance. When the lights are set up we take our posts. The amphitheatre is completely surrounded with the assistants on guard. The local boys have found out that tonight we are shooting with naked virgins, so we spend considerable time chasing them away. When all is ready, Danièle and Rino remove the cloaks from the four Virgins who stand in front of the Priests with their backs to the camera. They raise their arms in a gesture coordinated with the music sung off: 'O Gods, exalt your priests, exalt us, to the first and last pleasure.' The Priests then embrace them in their left arms, the maidens move to their sides and the priests take a *Schlachtmesser* in their right hand and raise it high to strike. J.-M. takes three *Aufnahmen* (takes). Shot 64, CS on the altar. The hands of a Priest pour blood out of a vessel.

At ten we set up the lighting outside the south entry for Shot 70. The camera is below on the left side of the path leading down into the arena. It is directed in low-angle view, MLS, to the level ground above. A naked youth, Enzo Ungari, comes into the frame on the left, rips the clothes from the body of a girl, Bianca Florelli, who stands on the right, lifts her up and carries her running out of the frame past the camera towards the altar. Shot 71 high-angle view, MCS, on the youth before the altar who carries the naked girl at first on one knee and then left still carrying her out of the frame. The camera pans up to the altar where a fire is burning. Against this, the last chorus of the orgy scenes: 'Gods, who gave the soul . . .' will be heard off. Vaglio takes the sound of the burning twigs in the silence of the night air. They wrap it up and leave at two.

Rehearsal for Shot 64.



Hans-Peter Böffgen

Friday, 13th September

Shot 65, 61, 62

At 5 p.m. Danièle arrives to prepare for tonight's shooting. Gabriele fetches two *damigiani* of red wine, each one containing 24 litres, in the *paese* and we carry them to the grotto where we will be filming later on tonight. The crew begins to work setting up the cable-lines for the camera by the remains of the Roman theatre north-east of the amphitheatre and close by the main forum of the excavations of Alba Fucense. The Mitchell and sound equipment are taken to the site and set in place for Shot 65 in low-angle view towards to middle of the hollow of the theatre. Meantime jars, earthenware, and other breakables are taken to the top of the hill into which the theatre is dug, including a wooden cart bought from a local farmer. When it is night the lights are set up. By 8.30 everything is ready and in one magnificent take everything possible is hurled down from the top. They shoot 150 feet of film, over a minute long of demolition.

After this the slow process of transporting the equipment to the grottoes begins. The generator truck goes first, then the cables are laid and the sound truck and camera hooked up. The people from Alba Fucense who have agreed to participate get into costume in the church. The lighting is set up inside the grotto for Shot 61. The camera, MCS, on a young man, Mario Pancrazio, standing at the entrance to the grotto, who inspects a sabre given him by an old man. It then pans right on two women, MCS, inside the grotto who exchange presents of fabrics and then continues on to a young man who places a necklace on a

knew and whom it doesn't disturb to be shown nude. And he wanted four girls who wouldn't be the thin sticks in fashion, but girls built a bit like those Renoir painted as his countrywomen. He asked each girl to choose the 'priest' who would kiss her; to some it made no difference. Others preferred one to another.

Equally for the couple at the end of the night: Enzo and Bianca live together, it was a pleasure for them to shoot it and for us to shoot it with them.

It is the white alabaster bowl that a blind and completely conditioned critic took for plastic. . . . We only do two takes, for Jean-Marie, who has chosen Husam to do this gesture, is amazed by the immediate rightness of what he does. 'No European', he says, 'would be capable at first attempt of a gesture so realistic, so 'everyday', and at the same time so liturgical'.

Enzo is entitled to all our compliments: four times he carries Bianca running out of the frame for Shot 70, eight times he makes the effort to raise himself to carry Bianca out of the frame for Shot 71, without a murmur, despite his being tired, and the lateness in the night, and without departing from his good spirits. Once we have to interrupt a take, and Jean-Marie who sees that Enzo is becoming exhausted, gets furiously mad with Ugo guilty of the noise which forced us to cut. Ugo, contrite, makes his excuses. Indeed this shooting at night is very wearing for everyone: we begin to prepare at about four in the afternoon, and we will stop on the last night at six in the morning; meantime we have to change sites three or four times, transport all the heavy material, the projectors, transformer, camera, etc. Especially for Cecco, Nanni, and Nini, even if we all help them, it is too much. If we were to have to do such a thing over again, I will have learned that it is better not to plan more than one change of place in one night, even if the places are close to each other, so as not to wear out the people too much.

Ugo, on the contrary, was at that point the single dynamo for he was finally able to be an operator *sul serio*, set up the 35 kilowatts of lighting, come and ask Jean-Marie if he was content, explain to him why he had done such and such a thing. We had spoken together about the night lighting before the shooting, when we had taken him to see the amphitheatre; J.-M. sometimes asks for a few corrections of detail, but we have no more problems with Ugo since the shooting of the *Chronicle*, where the very first days were dreadful, but where, after a week's time, Ugo came to offer his excuses and swear us eternal friendship. As Saverio says he's a spoiled child, son of a wealthy family (of the Abruzzi, incidentally!), but ready to take risks in his profession, gifted with a great sensibility for lighting, and who has learned with us what it means to shoot a film with live sound and to respect the work of the sound engineers, that the image does not have priority over the sound, but the same importance, no more, no less!

girl. The people are quiet and tired and the young people are sleepy by the time the shot is killed at 1 a.m.

Once again the equipment is moved and set up near by in front of the ancient stone wall of the grotto in low-angle view on two men, Paolo Benvenuti and Signor Pancrazio, MCS, who drink wine together. The camera pans left and down CS where six pairs of hands (of the assistants) with bowls have wine poured into them one after another. Then the camera pans up again to the left on to a burning torch which is set in the stone wall. Against this the chorus 'off' 'Blissful is the people' will be played, celebrating the enthusiasm and the exaltation of the people.

We finish shooting at 5 a.m. as *Venus il pianeta ch'ad amar conforta* is in bright company with the moon. After the cables are wound and the equipment packed up, we leave at daybreak and drive to our several beds.

#### Saturday, 14th September

#### Shot 67, 68, 66

I pass a tranquil afternoon in the amphitheatre. At four Danièle comes and we drive to the site by the ruins of the medieval Castello Orsini at the entrance to the village where Shot 68 is to be taken. She and J.-M. have been up since eight this morning after two hours sleep. I do a practice jump from the rock from which the assistants will leap to suicide tonight. The rock cuts down about 1 metre (5 ft.) to the ground. It doesn't seem bad except for the nettles on the ground which I suggest be covered with blankets. We then drive to the site on the hill where the Tribal Princes rode by and begin to carry up the cables to set up the equipment and lighting for Shot 67. A special effects man comes from Rome to be the man who runs by burning. He has on an asbestos suit which is covered by his costume. The camera is directed in light low-angle view to take him *halbtotal* (MLS) as he runs in from left and out to the right with his back to the camera. After practising the run the first take begins. The back of his cloak which is soaked in inflammable gas is ignited and starts burning as he runs for 10 metres by the camera. At the end of his run he dives to the ground and is covered with blankets which extinguish the fire at his back.

After 6 takes it is *gestorben* and we pack up to move to Castello Orsini for Shot 68. It takes two hours to get the cables hooked up and the lighting and camera carried up to the rock. Jeti, Leo, Paolo, Basti, Gabriele and I change into our costumes. We do a few practice jumps. One after another the six of us go up to the edge of the rock and jump off. The camera is in low-angle view below on the right, directed MCS/MLS on the edge of the rock. We do a first take. J.-M. says it's a rather routine interpretation of a *salto mortale*. When we are in line before the rock to do the second take, I think the thoughts of a suicide before life and death. They are not unfamiliar. When my turn comes to jump it is hard to see ahead because of the light shining in my eyes, but falling I see Basti below me and shift to try to avoid falling on him. On touching ground there is a dreadful pain in my left ankle which makes me squint to keep silence until the end of the shot. My left ankle starts to swell, so Harald Vogel, the production assistant, takes me to the hospital in Avezzano. After I leave they do 4 more takes and then start transporting again to the south entry of the amphitheatre by which a man, Cecco, falls on his sword in Shot 66, the camera MLS/MCS on the man sitting under a tree who falls on his sword.

#### Sunday, 15th September

Day off for the crew. I spend my first day in a hospital. The people are very friendly. The old men reminisce about the campaign in Ethiopia and the visitors tell me of their relatives in the States. I read Chandler's 'Red Wind' and try to sleep. In the evening the Straubs visit.

#### Monday, 16th September

#### Shot 52, 53

In the morning I am taken for an X-ray. At ten they tell me I have a small fracture in my left tibia. My leg is wrapped in cotton and set in plaster. The technician says I can leave when the plaster is dry. I must wear it for thirty days. At six Hans-Peter arrives with his friend Anna to take me from the

Only three, one was cut right away. At montage we kept the one where Gregory jumps and goes to break his leg, not only because it was in the end the best one, but also because we thought we owed it to Gregory!

Cecco doesn't fall on a sword in the film, he stabs himself. He is magnificent, our greatest actor: he kills himself with the art and the culture of someone who has seen the major part of the Italian operas (at Pisa, when he doesn't work on a film, since the Tirrenia studios have closed up shop, he is electrician at the opera-theatre, and he sees a host of performances). It is funny and moving at the same time. Fortunately, for it is the last shot of the night and we are all exhausted: some are sleeping under the trees, Jean-Marie works with the lucidity of a sleepwalker, I don't sit down so as not to risk falling asleep. Cecco's talent gives us back energy.

hospital. During the day they filmed the two shots which begin the orgy scenes with the animals in the amphitheatre. Shot 52, LS in light low-angle view on the animals, a camel, two cattle, etc., who stand in front of the altar.

Shot 53, the camera stands left next to the north portal in high-angle view LS on the amphitheatre through which animals of all kinds are led past the altar from the south entry.



Sebastian Schadhauser

The asses and the cows come from the village; the white camel is brought to us from Pisa ('That's why she walks bent over', Saverio says) by truck, and her trainer this time is very kind; the camel is charming, very sweet and pretty; she is very fond of her trainer; but she has never worn a saddle, and doesn't want to let it be put on her back. J.-M. tells the keeper not to insist, she mustn't be upset, we will put the saddle on the ground beside her. He made her sit down in front of the altar. We put the saddle near her: at first she looks at it distrustfully, then, when she is sure that no one is going to put it on her by surprise, she begins to chew the little tufts of grass around her. The asses and the cows look at her with curiosity. We will shoot three very long takes, for, for such a shot one must film and allow life to carry on its own flow. Georges takes the sound, for we hold out for the breathing and the noises of the harness or of the cart — very beautiful.

At first we had envisaged, evidently, a passage of a herd as in a western — to discover, speaking to the peasants during the preparation of the film, that it wasn't realistic there where we were shooting, and doubtless, neither for the Hebrews with their herds! Each family has one, two, five cows but which are never together into a herd. Each peasant must come with his cow or cows. In addition to all the peasants of Alba Fucense who are willing to come with their animals we find in two neighbouring spots two more important herds, one of 15, one of 12 animals. They bring them to us for midday. The sheep come from Alba Fucense as well. For the goats it is more complicated: the year before there had still been some at Forme. But a few months before shooting they disappeared: the *Forestale* (Water and Forests) obliges the peasants to keep their goats enclosed on the pretext that they ravage the countryside (a farce, when one knows how and on what scale the speculators ravage, pillage and destroy Italy!). The peasant say rightly that goats are not animals that can be kept enclosed. So they sell them. We must find goats a bit farther on, and higher up, at Santa Iona, discuss their transport, come to agreement on 100,000 liras (everything included, truck for transport, petrol, shepherds) and promise the peasants — nothing was signed with them, but they kept their word as did we — that, should an accident happen to a goat (for example, if a goat is scared entering the truck and tries to jump off it might break a limb: and that is irreparable, different for a sheep for which one can put its limb in a plaster-cast; it must be slaughtered), we would pay the price of the animal. At midday as planned, goats and sheep are punctually there.

But Paolo arrives saying that there is a problem: the peasants of the village who were to bring their animals for 5,000 liras each plus 5,000 for the leader over and above that for the animals, try, he says, to blackmail him saying they won't come for less than 8,000 or 10,000 liras per animal and man. I tell him to tell them from me that I am sorry but that my budget cannot be extended at will and that if it is so that we will shoot without them, with only the two herds of 27 animals, the sheep and the goats. Paolo brings the message and then comes to tell me that they are all getting dressed in the church and that there are even more than had been planned, if he should send them back. I tell him no, to take everybody.

We have the keeper of the camel get dressed as well, which hadn't been planned either, but because we like him a lot and we tell him that he will close the procession on foot holding the camel by the reins. Gabriele, Paolo, and Leo are on the outside of the amphitheatre to organise the procession, under orders from Jeti who, since we no longer need his Nagra and the sound is simpler to record, has become an efficient assistant: he gets along well with the peasants, never screams. The first take is not very good, the start is magnificent with the sheep jumping over the goats, but there is a big space left because the cows' departure is not well synchronised as yet. We start again a second time: it is better, the rhythm picks up. The third time is good, we don't want to tire or upset the animals uselessly, we stop. The next day we make sure that there were not accidents with the goats. The peasants go to change their dress, then come to take their money: I have a long list with their names and the number of animals. Not the least discussion. But there is a drama going on in front of the church: the camel refuses to get back into her truck, she is sitting down on the ground and moans. With the freedom all of a sudden, the asses, the sand — she doesn't want to leave any more to go to her zoo. She has to be hauled by force into the truck, and this revolt, which I learn about in its aftermath, the payments finished, strangles my heart.



## Tuesday, 17th September

Pack things up at the church. The Straubs take a room for me in their hotel. Walking with my plaster cast is strange but not painful.

## Wednesday, 18th September

8 a.m. We leave Avezzano in a caravan of 3 trucks and 3 cars for the 180 km journey south to Lago Matese. Arrive about 2.30. We all check in for the night at the hotel by the lake. Then we drive down to see the site in the dried-up basin of the lake where they are shooting tomorrow. At dinner Günter Reich and Louis Devos arrive. We all sit at a long table for this last supper. After dinner at the bar, we play *calcetto* and *flipper* and play all the loud rock 'n' roll numbers on the juke-box.

## Thursday, 19th September

## Shot 82

We drive to the lake-side in the morning mist. Lake Matese is situated in the centre of the Monti del Matese so that the sun takes a few hours to clear the humidity which settles over the lake during the night. Meantime the camera is set up down in the lake-bed on rails for a track forwards in Shot 82. This dialogue between Moses now in power and Aaron, his prisoner in chains, is the text of the third act of the opera which Schoenberg never set to music. In the manuscript of the score on the last sheet of the second act is written *End of the second act/Barcelona/10.III. 1932/Arnold Schoenberg*. In '33 he had to leave Berlin, passing from New York to Hollywood. Schoenberg mentions beginning work again on the third act in his letters during his years in America: *But I have already conceived to a great extent the music for the third act, and believe that I would be able to write it in only a few months* (1949), but it remained in fragment, and in the year of his death he wrote: *Agreed that the third act may simply be spoken, in case I cannot complete the composition* (1951). Jean-Marie has rehearsed the text with Reich and Devos so that their recitation follows the rhythmic patterns he intends. The camera at first LS on Moses, Aaron, and two warriors, Hans-Peter Böffgen and Harald Vogel. Moses, without veil as in the first opening shot, stands left in the frame with his back to the camera and turned to the lake. Aaron on the edge of the water lies right with his head on the ground, bound. On his right stand the two warriors. The camera tracks forwards to MCS on Aaron in high-angle view: 'Never did thy word come unexplained to the people!' Moses: 'To serve, to serve the idea of God, is the freedom for which this people is chosen.' The camera pans upwards left CS on Moses still with his back to it in low-angle view. Moses ends with an address to his chosen people: 'But in the desert you are insuperable and will reach the goal: united with God!' This long dialogue is difficult and several takes are cut before the end of the full four-and-a-half minutes it takes because of the trouble in reciting it correctly. In the one good take of the morning before we break for the *cestino*, an aeroplane flies overhead. Then it begins to rain hard for over an hour so they can't get started again until 3.30. The water-line is about 5 metres closer than in the morning and Aaron's place is now set in the mud. They do two good takes so that the shot is killed at five. J.-M. seems content that it is done. The crew returns to the hotel where we begin to break up. Some leave for Rome. I go to Avezzano with Paolo, Hans-Peter and Anna.

## Friday, 20th September

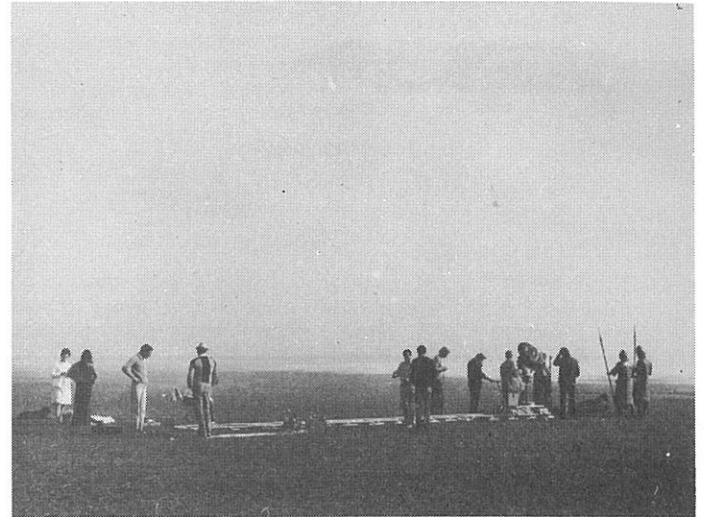
Paolo goes to Alba Fucense to pack up the rest of the equipment. At night we eat at Carmelo's. Jean-Marie writes on my plaster-cast: *Je le ferais encore, si j'avais à le faire?!/Pierre Corneille*.

## Saturday, 21st September

The Straubs go to Alba Fucense to finish up packing and to say good-bye to the people in the *paese* who have worked with them. At four we depart from Avezzano and drive to Rome.

Rehearsal for Shot 82.

Rehearsal for Shot 82: Devos, Böffgen, Vogel, Nanni, and Straub.



Sebastian Schachhauser

Here again we owe our deepest tribute to Aaron: when, after the storm, faced with the water which has risen, we hesitate to ask Aaron, whom we know has had a sort of relapse and arrived with a bit of fever for which he has taken antibiotics, to lie down in the mud to continue, and say to ourselves that since we have the two days in reserve as planned, it would be wiser to wait for the next day to begin again because although we no longer need his voice, he still does!) he comes on his own to find us and says that he is ready to try. Afterwards, he will tell us that bedded in the mud for the whole of the second part of the third act, where only Moses is left in the frame, he prayed that Moses succeed in finishing without making a mistake, without a 'loss of voltage'!

So we finish shooting that very afternoon. In the evening it began to rain, it rained the whole night, all the next day, and the days following almost for a month without letting up: The meteorological 'rupture' which we were worried about since the beginning had arrived!

# Filmography

## Machorka-Muff (1963)

### Machorka-Muff

Production Straub-Huillet (Munich)/Atlas Film (Duisburg)/Cineroxa (Munich)

Production Manager Hans von der Heydt  
Director Jean-Marie Straub  
Assisted by Danièle Huillet  
Script Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. Based on the story 'Hauptstädtisches Journal' by Heinrich Böll  
Photography Wendelin Sachtler  
Filmstock 35 mm Kodak Double X  
Camera Arri Blimp 120  
Editors Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub  
Music Johann Sebastian Bach (Musical Offering, BWV 1079: 'Ricecar a 6'); Francois Louis ('Transmutations')  
Sound Janos Rözner, Jean-Marie Straub (Nagra)  
Running Time 17 min. 33 sec.

Erich Kuby (*Erich von Machorka-Muff*), Renate Lang (*Inniga von Zaster-Pehmunz*), Rolf Thiede (*Murcks-Maloche*), Günther Strupp (*Heffling*), Johannes Eckardt (*Priest*), Heiner Braun (*Minister*), Gino Cardella (*Waiter*), Julius Wikidal (*Bricklayer*).

Filed in ten days on location in Bonn and Munich, September 1962.  
First shown (out of competition) at the Oberhausen Short Film Festival, February 1963.

*Nicht Versöhnt oder Es hilft nur Gewalt, wo Gewalt herrscht* (1965) [*Not Reconciled, or, Only violence helps where violence rules*]

### Not Reconciled

Production Straub-Huillet (Munich)  
Director Jean-Marie Straub  
Script Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, based on the novel 'Billard um halbzehn' by Heinrich Böll  
Photography Wendelin Sachtler, Gerhard Ries, Christian Schwarzwald, Jean-Marie Straub  
Filmstock 35 mm Kodak Double X  
Camera Arri Blimp 120  
Editors Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub  
Music Béla Bartok (Sonata for two pianos and percussion: First Movement, bars 1-10); Johann Sebastian Bach (Suite No. 2 in B minor, BWV 1067: Overture)  
Sound Lutz Grünau, Willi Hanspach (Nagra)  
Running Time 53 min.

Heinrich Hargesheimer (*Heinrich Fämel, aged 80*), Carlheinz Hargesheimer (*Heinrich Fämel, aged 35*), Martha Ständner (*Johanna Fämel, aged 70*), Danièle Straub (*Johanna Fämel as a young woman*), Henning Harmssen (*Robert Fämel, aged 40*), Ulrich Hopmann (*Robert Fämel, aged 18*), Joachim Weiler (*Joseph Fämel*), Eva-Maria Bold (*Ruth Fämel*), Hiltraud Wegener (*Marianne*), Ulrich von Thüna (*Schrella, aged about 35*), Ernst Kutzinski (*Schrella, aged 15*), Heiner Braun (*Nettlinger, aged 35-40*), Georg Zander (*Hugo/Ferdinand (Ferd) Progulske*), Kathrin Bold (*Ferdi's Sister*), Erika Brühl (*Edith*), Werner Brühl (*Trischler*), Helga Brühl (*Frau Trischler*), Lutz Grünau (*1st Abbot*), Martin Trieb (*2nd Abbot*), Karl Bodenschatz (*Hotel Porter*), Wendelin Sachtler (*Mull*), Anita Bell (*Old Woman playing cards*), Margrit Borstel (*Die Meisterin*), Eduard von Wickenburg (*M*), Huguette Sellen (*Robert's Secretary*).

Filed on location in Cologne and Munich, in 6 weeks, August/September 1964, and 2 weeks at Easter 1965.  
First shown (*hors festival*) 4 July 1965 during the Berlin Film Festival.  
Awards in Bergamo (1965) and two in Pesaro (1966): Prize of the young Critics and the Directors' Prize given by G. Amico, M. Bellocchio, B. Bertolucci, J.-L. Godard, J. Ivens, J. Jires, and P. P. Pasolini.

## Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach (1968)

### Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach

Production IDI Cinematografica/RAI (Rome)/Franz Seitz-Filmproduktion/Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film/Straub-Huillet/Filmfonds/Telepool (Munich)/Hessischer Rundfunk (Frankfurt)  
Producer Gianvittorio Baldi  
Production Manager Danièle Huillet  
Director Jean-Marie Straub  
Assistants Georg Föcking, Aldo Passalacqua, Joachim Wolf, Horst Winter, Günter Maag

Script Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet  
Photography Ugo Piccone, Saverio Diamanti, Giovanni Canfarelli, Hans Kracht, Uwe Radon  
Filmstock 35 mm Kodak Four X  
Camera Mitchell 300 Blimp  
Special Retakes  
Photographer Thomas Hartwig  
Editors Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub  
Music Johann Sebastian Bach:

Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, BWV 1050, First Movement, bars 147-227 (harpichord cadenza and closing tutti);  
Prelude 6 from the *Little Clavier Book for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach*, BWV 128;  
Minuet 2 of the Suite in D minor from the *Little Clavier Book for Anna Magdalena Bach*, BWV 812;  
Sonata No. 2 in D major for viola da gamba and obbligato harpsichord, BWV 1028: Adagio; Trio-sonata No. 2 in C minor, BWV 526: Largo; Magnificat in D major, BWV 243: 'sicut locutus est' and Gloria;  
Partita in E minor from the *Little Clavier Book for Anna Magdalena Bach*, BWV 830: Tempo di gavotta;  
Cantata BWV 205 ('Der zufriedengestellte Aeolus'): bass recitative and aria;  
Cantata BWV 198 ('Trauer-Ode'): final chorus; Cantata BWV 244a ('Trauermusik'): soprano aria;  
*St. Matthew Passion*, BWV 244: opening chorus; Cantata BWV 42 ('Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats'): introductory sinfonia and recitative for tenor;  
Prelude in B minor for organ, BWV 544;  
Mass in B minor, BWV 232: 1st Kyrie Eleison; Cantata BWV 215: opening chorus, bars 1-181; Ascension Oratorio, BWV 11: final chorale, 2nd part;  
Clavier-Uebung, BWV 671: 3rd part ('Kyrie, Gott heiliger Geist');  
Italian Concerto, BWV 971: Andante;  
Cantata BWV 140 ('Wachet auf'): 1st duet, bars 1-36;  
'Goldberg Variations', BWV 988: Variation 25; Cantata BWV 82 ('Ich habe genug'): last recitative and aria;  
*Musical Offering*, BWV 1079: Ricercar a 6, bars 1-139;  
*Art of the Fugue*, BWV 1080: Contrapunctus XIX, bars 193-239;  
Chorale for Organ, BWV 668 ('Vor deinen Thron tret ich'): bars 1-11;

and by Leo Leonius:

Orchestras Convention Latin Sunday motet (11th after Trinity) from the Florilegium Portense  
Musica Antica Ensemble of the Concentus Musicus (Vienna), conducted by Nikolaus d'Harnoncourt; concert group of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, conducted by August Wenzinger  
Choir Hanover Boys' Choir, directed by Heinz Hennig  
Costumes 'Casa d'Arte Firenze', Vera Poggioni, Renata Morroni  
Wigs 'Rocchetti', Guerrino Todero  
Sound Louis Hochet, Lucien Moreau (Nagra)  
Sound Recordist Paul Schöler  
Propmen Hans Eberle, Max Jörg, Walter Eder, Max Strobl, Heinz Krähnke, Peter Algert, Jürgen Zanner, Jürgen Schlobach  
Musical Instruments Martin Skowronek (Bremen), Carl August Gräbner (Dresden)  
Running time 93 min.

Gustav Leonhardt (*Johann Sebastian Bach*), Christiane Lang (*Anna Magdalena Bach*), Paolo Carlini (*Dr Hölzel*), Ernst Castelli (*Steger*), Hans-Peter Boye (*Born*), Joachim Wolf (*Rector*), Rainer Kirchner (*Superintendent*), Eckart Brüntjen (*Prelect Kittler*), Walter Peters (*Prelect Krause*), Kathrin Leonhardt (*Catharina Dorothea Bach*), Anja Fähmann (*Regine Susanna Bach*), Katja Drewanz (*Christiane Sophie Henrietta Bach*), Bob van Asperen (*Johann Elias Bach*), Andreas Pangritz (*Wilhelm Friedemann Bach*), Bernd Weikl (*Singer in Cantata BWV 205*)  
Wolfgang Schöne (*Singer in Cantata BWV 82*), Karl-Heinz Lampe (*Singer in Cantata BWV 42*), Count Nikolaus d'Harnoncourt (*Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen*); Karl-Heinz Klein (*Bass voice for duet in Cantata BWV 140*), Bernhard Wehle (*Soprano voice in Cantata BWV 140*), Christa Degler (*Voice of Anna Magdalena Bach in Cantata BWV 244a*).

Filed in 8 weeks on location in Preetz, Stade, Hamburg, Eutin, Lüneburg, Lübeck, Nürnberg, Freiberg/Sachsen, Leipzig, Grosshartmannsdorf/Sachsen, East Berlin, Regensburg, and Haseldorf, August/October 1967.  
First shown at the Utrecht 'Cinemanifestate', 3 February 1968.  
Special award at Prades and British Film Institute, London (1968); German critics' 'Bambi' prize: Best German film of 1968.

## Der Bräutigam, die Komödiantin und der Zuhälter (1968)

### The Bridegroom, the Comedienne, and the Pimp

Production Janus Film und Fernsehen (Frankfurt)/Straub-Huillet (Munich)  
Producer Klaus Hellwig  
Director Jean-Marie Straub

Script Jean-Marie Straub. Incorporating the play 'Krankheit der Jugend' by Ferdinand Brückner, abridged and produced by Jean-Marie Straub; and extracts from the poetry of Juan de la Cruz: Romance 7, first stanza; 'Cantico espiritual', stanza 20; Romance 22

Photography Klaus Schilling, Hubs Hagen

Filmstock 35 mm Kodak Double X and Four X

Camera Arri Blimp 300

Editors Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub

Music Johann Sebastian Bach (from the Ascension Oratorio, BWV 11)

Sound Peter Lutz (Nagra)

Sound for theatre sequence Klaus Eckelt (Nagra)

Running time 23 min.

James Powell (*James*), Lilith Ungerer (*Marie [in the play]/Lilith [in the film]*), Rainer Werner Fassbinder (*Freder [in the play]/the Pimp [in the film]*), Peer Raben (*Alt [in the play]/Willi [in the film]*), Irm Hermann (*Désirée*), Kristin Peterson (*Irene*), Hanna Schygulla (*Lucy*), Rudolf Waldemar Brem (*Petrell*).

Filed in 5 days on location in Munich, August 1968.  
First shown at the International Filmweek Mannheim, October 1968.  
Short film premium of the Federal Government, Bonn.

*Les Yeux ne veulent pas en tout temps se fermer ou Peut-être qu'un jour Rome se permettra de choisir à son tour* (1969) [*Eyes do not want to close at all times or perhaps one day Rome will permit herself to choose in her turn*]

### Othon

Production Janus Film und Fernsehen (Frankfurt)/Straub-Huillet (Rome)

Executive Producer Klaus Hellwig

Production Manager Danièle Huillet

Directors Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet

Script Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, based on the play 'Othon' by Pierre Corneille

Photography Ugo Piccone, Renato Berta

Filmstock 16 mm Eastman Colour 7254

Camera Eclair-Coutant

Editors Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub

Sound Louis Hochet, Lucien Moreau (Nagra)

Assistants Leo Mingrone, Anna Raboni, Sebastian Schadhauer, Italo Pastorino, Elias Chaluja

Running time 83 min.

Adriano Aprà (*Othon*), Anne Brumagne (*Plautine*), Ennio Lauricella (*Galba*), Olimpia Carlisi (*Camille*), Anthony Pensabene (*Vinius*), Jean-Claude Biette (*Martian*), Jubarite Semaran [i.e. Jean-Marie Straub] (*Lacus*), Leo Mingrone (*Albin*), Gianna Mingrone (*Albiane*), Marilu Parolini (*Flavie*), Sergio Rossi (*Rutile*), Edoardo de Gregorio (*Atticus*), Sebastian Schadhauer (*1st Soldier*), Jacques Fillion (*2nd Soldier*).  
Filed in 4 weeks on location at the Palatine Hill and in the gardens of the Villa Doria Pamphili in Rome, August/September 1969.  
First shown in Rome, 17 January 1970 (previously at Rapallo Festival, 4 January 1970).

### Geschichtsunterricht (1972)

#### History Lessons

Production Straub-Huillet (Rome)

Directors Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet

Script Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, based on the novel 'Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar' by Bertolt Brecht

Photography Renato Berta, Emilio Bestetti

Filmstock 16 mm Eastman Colour 7254

Camera Eclair-Coutant

Editors Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub

Sound Jetti Grigioni (Nagra)

Music Johann Sebastian Bach: chorus from *St Matthew Passion*, BWV 244 ('Eröffne den feurigen Abgrund, o Hölle, zertrümme, verschlinge, verderbe, zerschelle den falschen Verräter, das mörderische Blut')

Assistants Leo Mingrone, Sebastian Schadhauer, Benedikt Zulauf

Running time 85 min.

Gottfried Bold (*the Banker*), Johann Unterperntinger (*the Peasant*), Henri Ludwigg (*the Lawyer*), Carl Vaillant (*the Writer*), Benedikt Zulauf (*the Young Man*).

Filed on location in Rome, Frascati, Terenten (Alto Adige), and on the island of Elba, June/July 1972.  
First shown at the International Filmweek Mannheim, October 1972.

### Einleitung zu Arnold Schoenbergs Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene (1972)

#### Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene

Production Straub-Huillet (Rome) for Südwestfunk (Baden-Baden)

Director Jean-Marie Straub

Script Jean-Marie Straub

Photography Renato Berta, Horst Bever

Lighting Karl-Heinz Granek

Filmstock 16 mm Gevaert reversal and Eastman Colour 7254

Camera Eclair-Coutant (Rome) and Eclair 60 (Baden-Baden)

Editors Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub

Sound Jetti Grigioni (Nagra), Harald Lill

Mixing Adriano Taloni

Music Arnold Schoenberg ('Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene')

Running time 15 min.

Günter Peter Straschek, Danièle Huillet, Peter Nestler, Jean-Marie Straub

Filed in Rome and Baden-Baden, July/September 1972.  
First shown at the International Filmweek Mannheim, October 1972.

### Moses und Aron (1975)

#### Moses and Aaron

Production Janus Film und Fernsehen (Frankfurt)/Straub-Huillet (Rome)/RAI (Rome)/ORTF (Paris)/Taurus Film (Munich)/NEF Diffusion (Paris)/Oesterreichischer Rundfunk (Vienna)/A.R.D. (Frankfurt) represented by Hessischer Rundfunk (Frankfurt)

Production Manager Danièle Huillet

Directors Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet

Script Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, based on the opera 'Moses und Aron' by Arnold Schoenberg

Musical Director Michael Gielen

Assisted by Bernard Rubenstein

Photography Ugo Piccone, Saverio Diamanti, Gianni Canfarelli, Renato Berta

Filmstock 35 mm Eastman Colour 5254

Camera Mitchell 300 Blimp

Editors Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub

Sound Louis Hochet, Ernst Neuspiel, Georges Vaglio, Jetti Grigioni (Nagra)

Music Arnold Schoenberg: 'Moses und Aron'

Propmen Francesco Ragusa, Alvaro Nannicini, Gianfranco Baldacci

Assistants Paolo Benvenuti, Hans-Peter Böffgen, Leo Mingrone, Sebastian Schadhauer, Gabriele Soncini, Harald Vogel, Gregory Woods

Orchestra Symphony Orchestra of the ORF (Vienna)

Choir Choir of the ORF (Vienna), leader Gottfried Preinfalk

Costumes 'Cantini', Renata Morroni, Augusta Morelli, Mariateresa Stefanelli

Hair-stylist Guerrino Todero

Shoes Pompei

Choreography Jochen Ulrich

Running time 105 min.

Günter Reich (*Moses*), Louis Devos (*Aaron*), Eva Csapò (*Young Woman*), Roger Lucas (*Young Man*), Richard Salter (*Man*), Werner Mann (*Priest*), Ladislav Illavsky (*Ephraimite*), Friedl Obrowsky (*Invalid Woman*).

Dancers Helmut Baumann, Jürg Burth, Nick Farrant, Wolfgang Kegler, Michael Molnar

Filed on location in the amphitheatre of Alba Fucense and at Lago Matese, August/September 1974.  
First shown at Film International, Rotterdam, February 1975.  
Ecumenical Jury Prize, Cannes 1975: Faithful adaptation of the opera by Arnold Schoenberg.

### I Cani del Sinai (project for June 1976)

Production Straub-Huillet (Rome)/RAI (Rome)

Directors/Editors Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet

Script Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, based on the book 'I Cani del Sinai' by Franco Fortini

About the issues of the Israeli/Arab conflict and its reflection in Italian society. It will be shot in 16 mm Eastman Colour 7247, in Italian, and the author Franco Fortini will be in the film. Running time approx. 40 min.

Straschek: "So far you were able to realise all your projects though under severest difficulties. Each of your new films meets with worldwide interest; the first monograph has been published in English. There is hardly a parallel case in film history of someone becoming so world famous and accepted in so few years with a few films as you two have become already."  
Straub: "But you know better than I, that there is no such thing as film history."

The films of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet are available with English subtitles from:

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