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Technology, Liveness, and Presence in Straub-Huillet's Film of Schoenberg's *Von heute auf morgen*

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Schoenberg knew that fashions can be destructive.

—Jean-Marie Straub

Today is not the first time available technologies and materials have inspired the imagination.

—Theodor W. Adorno

This essay examines Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's "live opera film" *Von heute auf morgen*, an adaptation of Schoenberg's twelve-tone opera of the same name, completed in 1928, first staged in Frankfurt in 1930, and a thinly veiled attack on what its composer viewed as the "here today gone tomorrow" quality of much contemporary modernism. Shot in Frankfurt on 35mm in 1996 and performed by the Radio-Sinfonie-Orchester Frankfurt with Michael Gielen conducting and Christine Whittlesey and Richard Salter in the leading roles, the film premiered in Paris on February 12, 1997, and was first broadcast on German television by Hessischer Rundfunk and Westdeutscher Rundfunk on January 7, 1998.<sup>1</sup> In a process Patrick Primavesi has described as "a revolution in the history of opera films," image and sound were recorded simultaneously, creating a new encounter between cinema and liveness a decade before the first cinecast opera (the New York Metropolitan Opera's *Magic Flute* of 2006).<sup>2</sup> Situated unambiguously within the Brechtian tradition of political modernist filmmaking, *Von heute auf morgen* eschews what Martin Barker has termed the "technical transparency" typical of livecasting.<sup>3</sup> It not only challenges the notion that liveness in film is

“something impossible to conceive,”<sup>4</sup> but also counters, I will argue, the claims of two of the most widely cited scholars in the field of Performance Studies: first, Peggy Phelan’s assertion that when “performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology”;<sup>5</sup> second, Erika Fischer-Lichte’s contention in *The Transformative Power of Performance* that while technical media “might simulate effects of presence, they are unable to generate presence itself.”<sup>6</sup>

Schoenberg’s drama is a comic *Zeitoper* set in the period of its composition; its libretto, by Schoenberg’s wife Gertrud (using the pseudonym Max Blonda), incorporates a radio and telephone into the narrative. That the opera itself should engage with media technology is significant in the context of the questions of liveness and reproduction raised by Straub-Huillet’s adaptation, and it is a reminder that Schoenberg was in fact an enthusiastic, if critical and demanding, advocate of the technologies of reproduction who, with considerable conceptual dexterity, managed to span Fischer-Lichte’s apparently “unbridgeable chasm” between “performance and a fixed, reproducible artifact.”<sup>7</sup> This brings Schoenberg into unexpectedly close proximity to some of his more political contemporaries, not least Walter Benjamin, who claimed in his famous 1935 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of [its] Mechanical Reproduction” that “mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual.”<sup>8</sup> As will become clear in what follows, Straub-Huillet’s *Von heute auf morgen* demonstrates how “the total function of art is reversed” through the cinematic construction of liveness, that “[i]nstead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice—politics.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Schoenberg and technology**

As early as 1913, in a remarkable letter to Emil Hertzka concerning a proposed film

adaptation of his “drama with music in one act” *Die glückliche Hand*, Schoenberg spoke enthusiastically about the new technology of cinema, suggesting that his drama should be accompanied by footage hand-painted by Oskar Kokoschka, Wassily Kandinsky, or Alfred Roller. The result, he wrote, would resonate “for the eyes alone” (“bloß fürs Auge klingen”).<sup>10</sup> Later in his career, for example in the essay “Art and the Moving Pictures,” he enthusiastically welcomed cinema’s ability to manipulate different perceptions of time through montage:

I had dreamed of a dramatization of Balzac’s *Seraphita*, or Strindberg’s *To Damascus*, or the second part of Goethe’s *Faust*, or even Wagner’s *Parsifal*. All of these works, by renouncing the law of “unity of space and time,” would have found the solution to realization in sound pictures.<sup>11</sup>

For Schoenberg, film—like music—can affirm what Adorno and Horkheimer, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, term the “holiness of the *hic et nunc*”: it is a medium of the present and of presence that can formulate a relationship with the past in the here and now.<sup>12</sup> What is more, in a remarkable radio discussion about his music entitled “My Destiny,” broadcast by Berliner Rundfunk on March 31, 1931, Schoenberg even claimed that his music was ready for a cinema of the future:

Am I now supposed to orientate myself by a phenomenon of our times like the American film industry, one which has managed to destroy a good thing by sheer exploitation? When I think of films, I imagine future ones, which will inevitably be artistic. And my music will go very well with them!<sup>13</sup>

That Schoenberg was also not averse, in principal at least, to composing for films, is further demonstrated by the fact that he did sketch compositional ideas for MGM’s film *The Good Earth* (Sidney Franklin, 1937) while in exile in Los Angeles. In 1936 he was approached by

Irving Thalberg of MGM, who had apparently recently heard *Verklärte Nacht*, with a commission to write film music for Franklin's film. Negotiations were subsequently dropped when Schoenberg stated his conditions: a fee of \$50,000 and a guarantee that not a single note be altered. Musical sketches for the project run to over thirty pages and are tonal, although the melodies are "chromatic and the harmonies [...] moderately dissonant."<sup>14</sup> As Walter B. Bailey concludes, "Schoenberg clearly had the necessary descriptive skills to create a film score."<sup>15</sup>

In an article on "Schoenberg and the Cinematic Art," Sabine Feisst offers a number of telling examples of Schoenberg's willingness to consider film in conjunction with his music, evidence which goes some way to relativizing the claims made by Theodor W. Adorno, Gertrud Koch, and others for Schoenberg's translation of the Biblical Prohibition of Images into music:<sup>16</sup> Schoenberg approved of Klemperer's suggestion that an abstract film be used for the *Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene* (*Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene*, 1930)—Klemperer proposed László Moholy-Nagy as director—and considered deploying film rather than elaborate staging for the Golden Calf episode in *Moses and Aaron* (*Moses und Aron*, 1930-32), "given that the music is, in and of itself, descriptive."<sup>17</sup> Schoenberg appears, however, not to have been especially conversant with more experimental cinematic practices: although he recommended Hanns Eisler to Walther Ruttmann in 1927 and doubtless knew Joris Ivens's *Rain* (*Regen*, 1929) through Eisler and Adorno, he admitted, in correspondence with Klemperer, that he had not heard of Moholy-Nagy. It is nonetheless striking, in the context of his contact with Eisler and Adorno, that their assessment of the potential of film—rather than its achievements thus far—comes very close to Schoenberg's own. In *Composing for the Films*, they even cite Schoenberg's *Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene* as a precedent:

The opportunities presented by technology for the art of the future are unimaginable,

and even the most lamentable film contains moments in which these possibilities become apparent, if only for an instant. [...]

The shocks of new music, which, not by chance, derived from its increasing reliance on technology could achieve what is needed. Schoenberg's music for an imaginary film, *Threatening Danger—Fear—Catastrophe*, demonstrates with pin-point accuracy the precise place where new musical means should be deployed.<sup>18</sup>

Schoenberg enthusiasm for technology extended beyond a fascination for cinema to embrace a range of technologies of recording and amplification. To cite two examples: first, the composer was not averse to finding technological solutions to the problem of staging the inconceivable. In *Moses and Aaron* a lengthy stage direction describes how the voice of God in the Burning Bush should come from singers off-stage, thus invisible to the audience, and separated from one another, singing into “telephones.” The disparate voices would thus, by means of what is in effect a literal *deus ex machina*, be “unified for the first time in the auditorium.”<sup>19</sup> Second, during the recording sessions of his four string quartets in 1936/37 by the Kolisch Quartet, Schoenberg recorded brief expressions of gratitude to the engineers at United Artists, noting that a perfect performance of his String Quartet No. 2 had, until this point, remained within his head, unrealized in public performances of the piece.

Phonographic recording had now, finally, not only made this possible, but also provided a platform for shared intimacy:

Although the premiere of this quartet was exceptionally well presented by Master Rosé and his wonderful string quartet, one knows that perfection cannot be expected at the very first performance. So it was this Second String Quartet about which a gentleman once asked me whether I had heard it already in a perfect manner. I had to answer, “Yes, during the composing.” Now, since the Kolisch Quartet exists, and thanks to my friend Alfred Newman, who gave me the opportunity to record these compositions,

everybody—and even myself—are in the position to hear it in a perfect manner, in a perfect performance.<sup>20</sup>

The presence of a radio and telephone in Schoenberg's *Von heute auf morgen* should be seen in the context of his enthusiastic embrace of the creative potential of the new media.

However, it must also be acknowledged that much has been made by commentators of his critical comments about radio, recording, and sound films, not least in his spirited reply to a 1930 questionnaire from piano manufacturer Albert Rudolf Ibach and in two brief essays from the early 1930s.

Schoenberg's response to the questionnaire opens with a flourish: "Quite certainly the radio is a foe!—and so are the gramophone and sound-film. An inexorable foe, irresistibly on the advance; opposition is a hopeless prospect."<sup>21</sup> However, beyond the rhetoric, it becomes clear that his objections are quite specific, not aimed—as has too often been assumed—at the technologies of broadcast and recording *per se*, but at specific technical insufficiencies on the one hand and contemporary broadcasting policies and practice on the other. Specifically, he attacks the "coarse tone," the sound quality, of contemporary radio broadcasts and the undifferentiated "surfeit of music" resulting from indiscriminate programming.<sup>22</sup> Indeed his comments even conclude with a more optimistic assessment, one less well-known perhaps than the very quotable (and much quoted) opening condemnation of the new media:

the surfeit of music could have one good result: every human being might, after all, some time, somehow, be moved, touched, taken hold of, gripped, by music. [...] And when I reflect that the discovery of book-printing has resulted in virtual extinction of illiteracy, my optimism returns.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1931 essay "Space-sound, Vibrato, Radio, *Etc.*," the specific object of Schoenberg's disapproval is even more clearly stated. Of Berlin Radio he writes "they make music badly

but transmit it a good deal worse!";<sup>24</sup> in detail he objects to the experiments with stereophonic *Raumton* (literally "space-sound") and the sound studio's deliberate use of an "echo effect." Here again, there is no generalizing attack on the broadcast medium itself, only on what Schoenberg believes to be its misuse. Similarly, in the 1933 essay "Modern Music on the Radio," Schoenberg again criticizes German broadcasters for failing to broadcast the highest musical registers adequately, creating what he describes as the musical equivalent of a "lady sawn in half": "only a few stations, for examples those in Britain and Italy, satisfy me in this respect."<sup>25</sup> In the same essay he readily acknowledges, however, that the "thinly scored" quality of much modern music "should really make it very suitable for broadcasting."<sup>26</sup>

### ***Von heute auf morgen and technology***

As already suggested, Schoenberg's first opera should be viewed in the light of what I have identified in his texts on radio as a much more nuanced and constructive view of the potential of broadcast media and recording than has hitherto been suggested by commentators. For this reason, I would challenge the claim made by Larson Powell that the film's sophisticated deployment of recording technology—it being the first opera film shot in a studio with live sound throughout—is a riposte to Schoenberg's conservative views on technology. Powell views Schoenberg's opera as "his own triumph of the older medium of music over the technological one of mass media" and even asserts that there is a "technophobia of Schoenberg."<sup>27</sup> It is my contention that Schoenberg certainly lampoons the "here today gone tomorrow" quality of what radio has to offer—the opera's title hardly leaves any room for doubt here—but that this does not imply a critique of the new (or mass) media *per se*.

In a lengthy exposition of the opera contained within a letter to Wilhelm Steinberg,

director of the Frankfurt Opera, of October 4, 1929, Schoenberg made this clear when he described *Von heute auf morgen* as a denunciation of “the so-called modern, the merely modish,” and of behavior that is “‘pseudo-complex’ in the modern manner”—clearly it is *false* or faddish modernism that is the object of the composer’s critique.<sup>28</sup> It is, of course, improbable that a composer who was enthusiastic about the architecture of Adolf Loos and the paintings of Wassily Kandinsky—and who had himself painted virtually abstract paintings—could have been an out-and-out opponent of modernism; it is the fashionable social and political expressions of modernity, more than artistic modernism itself, which are ridiculed in *Von heute auf morgen*. Despite reservations about the libretto, Eisler readily acknowledged the radical nature of the music, describing it as “a great technical accomplishment,” and Schoenberg himself concluded at the end of the essay “Composition with Twelve Tones (1),” that *Von heute auf morgen* proves “that every expression and characterization can be produced with the style of free dissonance.”<sup>29</sup> My aim in this essay is to demonstrate that Straub-Huillet’s landmark “live” film is in fact a realization of the potential of technology identified by Schoenberg as a thing of the future and that its “liveness,” its assertion of the *hic et nunc* of performance, is a manifestation of that quality of presentness and presence identified by Adorno as the defining quality of new music.

Over a period of four decades prior to *Von heute auf morgen*, beginning with the Heinrich-Böll-adaptation *Machorka-Muff* in 1962, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet directed the most substantial body of literary and musical adaptation in European cinema. They continued their project together until Huillet’s death in 2006 and Straub has also made around twenty films since then. Uncompromisingly rigorous, their adaptations, in the Brechtian, materialist tradition of political filmmaking also associated with Jean-Luc Godard, occupy a space between documentation and fiction. They believed passionately that literature, music, and painting provide unique access to the history and culture of a nation,

more so, for example, than historical records. To this end they appropriated writers as diverse as Heinrich Böll, Pierre Corneille, Bertolt Brecht, Stéphane Mallarmé, Franz Kafka, Friedrich Hölderlin, Sophocles, Cesare Pavese, Elio Vittorini, and Marguerite Duras, and also, on four occasions, turned to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and Schoenberg for subject matter, and twice to the paintings of Paul Cézanne.

In a much-cited interview about their Kafka adaptation *Class Relations* (*Klassenverhältnisse*, 1984), based on the novel *The Man Who Disappeared* (*Der Verschollene* also known as *Amerika*), Straub explained his approach to adaptation:

First of all you have to know what interests you. Most people don't know that anymore. And you have to know how things relate to your own experiences, i.e. whether they affect you or not. Because you don't "film" a book, you engage with it, you want to make a film of a book because it has to do with your own experiences, your own problems, your own loves and hates. I begin by copying out.<sup>30</sup>

A decade or so earlier, Huillet had summed up the attraction of fiction as source material:

Fiction matters to us because mixed with documentary material or a documentary situation you have a contradiction which can generate a spark. Fiction is important to start the fire.<sup>31</sup>

Quoting Benjamin's essay "On the Concept of History," Straub memorably characterizes the revolutionary method of wrenching material from the past to make it relevant in the present—Walter Benjamin's "now time" (*Jetztzeit*), Adorno and Horkheimer's aforementioned *hic et nunc*—as a filmic "tiger's leap into the past" ("Tigersprung ins Vergangene").<sup>32</sup>

With *Von heute auf morgen*, and after twenty-five years, Straub-Huillet completed a trilogy of films based on the music of Schoenberg. The first part of this project, *Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene* (*Einleitung zu Arnold*

*Schoenbergs Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene*) of 1972 is a polemical, Marxist, essay film, a Brechtian montage of archive footage and text recitations directed, in part, against American imperialism in Vietnam. The music itself is, of course, an accompaniment for a film that didn't, doesn't, and couldn't exist, a film which stays obedient to the Second Commandment, the Prohibition of Images (*Bilderverbot*). The second film of the trilogy, *Moses and Aaron* of 1974, is a scrupulous screen adaptation (albeit with pre-recorded orchestral sound) of Schoenberg's incomplete opera, a protracted disputation on the *Bilderverbot* which breaks off with Moses's declaration of defeat, containing the famous words: "Thus I too have fashioned an image, false, as an image must invariably be."<sup>33</sup>

This, manifestly, makes *Moses and Aaron*, and beyond it the trilogy as a whole, a meta-discourse on screen adaptation itself, on the rendering, translation, staging, or visualizing of texts and music. Screen adaptation does, one might argue, fall foul of a kind of cinematic second commandment. As Schoenberg put it, in the self-penned text for the second of his *Four Pieces for Mixed Chorus* of 1925: "You should not create an image. For an image restricts, confines, fixes that which should remain boundless and inconceivable."<sup>34</sup>

According to Koch, the dialectical relationship between "expressionist graphicness" (represented by Aaron and his Golden Calf) and the "Prohibition of Images" (represented by Moses and his commandments), which constitutes the explicit program of *Moses and Aaron*, is key to an understanding not only of Schoenberg's work as a whole, but also that of Straub and Huillet. As has already been noted in relation to the Burning Bush, in *Moses and Aaron* the composer found a technological solution to a theological problem, with the invisible voices being "unified for the first time in the auditorium" through the use of telephonic technology. The stage directions here recall the important part played by a telephone, only three years previously, in *Von heute auf morgen*, by means of which a key protagonist, the suave and urbane tenor *à la* Richard Tauber (sung in the film by Ryszard Karczykowski), is

able to be vocally present and physically absent.

Technological apparatus, an electrical “sleight of hand,” can, it would seem, help to bypass the Prohibition of Images which Adorno, in the 1955 essay “On Understanding Schoenberg,” claimed was one of the dialectical components underpinning his entire oeuvre: “one could say that Schoenberg translated the Old-Testament Prohibition of Images into music; it is this which makes his music so disconcerting.”<sup>35</sup> Straub-Huillet incorporate a discourse on image and sound making and on the apparatus of cinema into their third Schoenberg film.

### **Straub-Huillet and liveness**

First, a few technical observations about Straub-Huillet’s film. *Von heute auf morgen* is an analogue film in 35mm, black and white, with mono (non-Dolby) sound; the studio shoot lasted seventeen days and followed two years of preparation and rehearsals. On average there were around ten takes for each shot.<sup>36</sup> Aware that they would not be able to recreate the conditions of filming, the directors made sure that on every occasion they had useable takes on two different film cassettes; if there was a technical problem, for example at the laboratory in Paris where the film was processed, there would always be a fallback option. The singers were recorded using hand-held boom microphones and shielding techniques were devised to minimize the unwanted recording of the orchestral sound on the vocal channels.

The film begins with a Brechtian flourish superficially akin to the “scene-setting introduction” Barker identifies as a topos of livecasting (elsewhere he refers to them as “grandeur shots of the auditorium”):<sup>37</sup> a one-minute-twenty-second 250° pan across the Hessischer Rundfunk studio in Frankfurt where the film was shot, as the Radio-Sinfonie-Orchester Frankfurt under Gielen tunes up. This distancing frame, which draws attention to

the radiophonic quality of the production and its *mise-en-scène*—and thus functions very differently from the “transparent, unobtrusive, and invisible” camerawork of livecasts<sup>38</sup>—is followed by an outside shot of a graffito found by Straub-Huillet on a Frankfurt wall which reads: “Where have you buried your smile?” or “Where is your hidden smile?” (“Wo liegt euer Lächeln begraben?”). Seen together, these prefatory shots amount to a self-reflexive declaration of intent: this film will not fall prey to the category error identified by Adorno and Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* whereby “real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies” and wherein the illusion prevails that “the outside world is a straightforward continuation of that presented on the screen.”<sup>39</sup> The graffito also acts as a reminder that the opera, so often analyzed with stultifying seriousness by commentators, is a comedy, and indeed a frequently very amusing one. As a kind of intertitle, albeit one held for an uncomfortably long time (1 minute 55 seconds), the graffito also draws attention to the film’s intermediality, its status as a “merged medium” incorporating language, music, theatrical performance, radio, cinema, architecture (as set design) and, as we shall see, painting.<sup>40</sup>

The opera, which takes up the remainder of the film, lasts around 55 minutes and is divided into 62 shots, each cut marked by a change of camera position—the cinematographer is Straub-Huillet-regular William Lubtchansky—and coinciding with a break in the score, so that nothing had to be cut away or bridged acoustically at the editing stage. It is, as one critic put it in an online review shortly after the film’s release: “an extreme testimony of Straub’s filmmaking: cinema as an inalienable proof of faithfulness to the text and determined veneration of rigour.”<sup>41</sup>

Straub-Huillet, like Eisler before them, read Schoenberg’s opera politically as a document of the death throes of the Weimar Republic, as what Eisler famously termed “an apocalypse on a domestic scale.”<sup>42</sup> This is stylistically underscored by the film’s conspicuous

debt—in terms of set-design, lighting, and performance even—to the silent films of Carl Theodor Dreyer, a particular favorite of Straub-Huillet, and specifically to his domestic comedy of 1925 *The Master of the House* (*Du skal ære din hustru*), in which a female housekeeper cunningly and hilariously outwits a bullying husband.<sup>43</sup>

An anachronistic Nazi radio, a *Volksempfänger*, and a beer bottle with a Star of David on it suggest to the attentive viewer not only a connection between this film and the first two parts of Straub-Huillet's Schoenberg trilogy, but also that there is—as Schoenberg himself emphasized in one of his few utterances on the opera—more at stake here than a mere family feud. As the composer wrote in his 1929 letter to Wilhelm Steinberg (partially quoted above):

Just one more thing: the tone of the whole should actually be very *light*. But one ought to feel or sense, that behind these simple events something else is hidden; that these everyday characters and happenings are being used to show how, above and beyond this simple story of a marriage, the so-called modern, the merely modish exists only “from today till tomorrow”, from a shaky hand to a greedy mouth—not only in marriage, but no less in art, in politics and in attitudes towards life.<sup>44</sup>

This attitude towards the “modish,” and a respect for “high culture,” for autonomous and “difficult” art, is something that Straub and Huillet very clearly share with both Adorno and Schoenberg—their attachment to it is evident in their choice of source materials: Corneille, Sophocles, Hölderlin, Bach, Brecht, Kafka, Pavese, Cézanne, et al. This is something that has not only alienated them from some experimental left-wing filmmakers—including British filmmaker Peter Gidal, an outspoken opponent of their work<sup>45</sup>—but that is also not always shared by other, more iconoclastic Brechtian filmmakers, including Alexander Kluge, who once admitted in relation to Adorno's fondness for high culture:

I am, however, completely indifferent to some of the questions that were important to

[Adorno], whether the four last String Quartets by Beethoven are the whole world or not. I am not a critic, and it doesn't interest me. It would only be a concern for me if I needed them for a film. We must defend other areas than the older generation defended.<sup>46</sup>

In their staging of *Von heute auf morgen* Straub-Huillet reclaim a much-despised libretto, criticized by Eisler, Brecht, Adorno and others, reading it as a prescient “proto-feminist” discourse on the dangerous proximity of aestheticism and fascism:

Schoenberg knew that fashions can be poisonous. Poisonous. That they can spread out like poison gas. That people breath in these fashions and are turned into cripples almost without knowing it. And that it is happening faster and faster. Each fashion lasts for a shorter period. They chase after one another.<sup>47</sup>

They also highlight the unexpected triumph of the wife (Christine Whittlesey) over her philandering husband (Richard Salter) as a rejection of the topos of the *femme fatale*. In interview Straub situated the libretto in a venerable tradition embracing the Biblical “Eulogy of Love” (1 Corinthians 13), Meister Eckhart, St John of the Cross, and Bach’s duets,<sup>48</sup> also placing it in direct opposition, for example, to the representation of the heroine as *femme fatale* in Alban Berg’s *Lulu* (1929-35) and, more generally, that operatic tradition in which, to quote Kluge once again, “when the theme is redemption a woman is sacrificed in the fifth act.”<sup>49</sup> As Straub explained in interview:

Schoenberg wouldn't write an opera based on a text he despised. He'd never have managed it. [...] There isn't a single American film with such a precise, finely honed, and complex text as this one. Such dialogues! I'm more and more amazed by them—every time.<sup>50</sup>

In the same interview Huillet put it even more categorically: “people who say the text is bad

are plain wrong.”<sup>51</sup>

The unique production process, involving the recording of the singers and orchestra live, also makes *Von heute auf morgen* a documentary, one in which we see and hear the singers at work, as was the case in Straub-Huillet’s study of Bach’s music and Gustav Leonhardt’s performance of it in *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (*Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach*, 1967). In this context, one can concur—albeit in a spirit of affirmation rather than disapproval—with Fischer-Lichte’s claim that “[any] attempt to reproduce a performance turns into an attempt to document it.”<sup>52</sup> As Primavesi notes, the effort put in by the performers is always foregrounded: “the exertion involved in singing remains visible.”<sup>53</sup> The product is not a fiction stitched together during post-production, but a record—in Straub and Huillet’s sense a Marxist, materialist one—of a performance, of “original sound documents,” analyzed anatomically.<sup>54</sup> It is this materialist documentation which acts as the contemporary ground on which the historical discourse, to which I have already briefly alluded, is built. This is Benjamin’s “tiger-leap into the past” and what Kluge has, in a more positive vein, affirmatively defined as Straub-Huillet’s “rigorous, analytical search for authenticity, coherence and truthfulness.”<sup>55</sup>

As ever with Straub-Huillet, their film is not only a radical staging of a cultural classic, but also a meta-textual discourse on film itself and its history. As a whole the film owes, as already noted, a considerable and acknowledged stylistic debt to Dreyer’s *The Master of the House*, and there is also a manifest self-citation in the film in a prominent Cézanne print which adorns a wall of the living-room set (the painter was the subject of Straub-Huillet’s first documentary, in 1989). The picture in question is *Houses on the Hill* of 1900-1906 (McNay Art Museum, San Antonio). What is striking—and also quite un-naturalistic—about the constellation of objects of which the Cézanne print forms a part, is that it can be read as a deconstruction of film into its constituent parts, a mini-history of cinema told in clockwise

rotation. We have the print itself exemplifying the visual component of cinema—the representation of reality on a white two-dimensional surface, the canvas as screen, film as “moving pictures.” The table lamp below and to the right can be read as the cinematic apparatus—like the projector it casts shadows and makes visible. To the left is a telephone, which plays a decisive role in the opera in allowing the tenor to be acoustically present but physically absent, and thus represents dialogue—the theatrical and literary element—and its extension beyond the confines of the theatre. This, clearly, is the function fulfilled by early cinema, which borrowed from the stage and dismantled its three walls. This is still evident in the silent films of Dreyer and Lubitsch, for example, both cited by Straub and Huillet as intertexts for this film. Most strikingly the radio, prominently located to the left of the telephone, is— as already mentioned—in the Brechtian sense, a distancing anachronism. It is not a set from 1929, but rather a National Socialist *Volksempfänger* of a few years later. This almost altar-like composition of objects, a kind of technological still-life or *vanitas* (see Fig. 1), not only deconstructs film—here at the service of that most bourgeois of arts, opera—but also alerts the attentive spectator to the ideological component of cinema. Moreover, Straub-Huillet, with no little *hauteur*, place their film alongside two artistic pioneers—the composer most obviously associated with “the emancipation of the dissonance” and the painter generally held to be a precursor of cubism.

[INSERT FIGURE ONE AROUND HERE. THE CAPTION SHOULD READ: Fig. 1 Straub-Huillet, *Von heute auf morgen* (shot 34)[DVD Editions Montparnasse]

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*Von heute auf morgen* not only pursues a discourse on the materiality of film as image, music, and word, but also offers an illuminating connection between the two domains of modernism identified and examined by Peter Wollen in his seminal essays “The Two Avant-gardes” and “‘Ontology’ and ‘Materialism’ in Film”: the experimental, generally structural, avant-garde on the one hand and Brechtian political modernist filmmaking on the other.<sup>56</sup>

These are, Wollen argues, both political in their deconstruction of conventional cinematic representation, yet also mutually antagonistic. His conclusion is that a “combination” of Brechtian cinema and the avant-garde could avoid the pitfalls of illusionism on the one-hand, and avant-garde introspection and self-referential tautology on the other.<sup>57</sup> *Von heute auf morgen*, it seems to me, represents a step in this direction.<sup>58</sup> With characteristic hyperbole, the Austrian author and filmmaker Peter Handke, a long-term supporter of Straub-Huillet, described the effect on him of Straub-Huillet’s next film, *Sicilia!* (1999), in the following terms in a letter to Straub and Huillet: “you have discovered, presented and exploded cinema and film [...] as if for the first time.”<sup>59</sup> This, I would suggest, is also true of *Von heute auf morgen*.

Christian Metz claimed that the cinema’s “strength, or its weakness, is that it encompasses earlier modes of expression.”<sup>60</sup> Wollen asserts in *Signs and Meanings* that “the filmmaker is fortunate to be working in the most semiologically complex of all media, the most aesthetically rich.”<sup>61</sup> If one views multi-mediality as its strength, film has the potential to be the ultimate critical apparatus, a kind of dialectical machine *sui generis*—images set against words, words against sounds, sounds against images and so on. Similar claims have been made for opera of course, although here, even in recent decades, the technologies of mechanical reproduction have often remained epiphenomal; with a few exceptions—including Benjamin Britten’s “TV opera” for the BBC *Owen Wingrave* of 1970—such technologies have only acquired a constitutive function for opera within the new medium of livecasting. Benjamin’s observations on cinematic montage provide the intellectual bedrock for Straub-Huillet’s understanding of film in this context. The struggle, Godard claimed in the 1970 Dziga-Vertov Group film *British Sounds*, “is between images and sounds.” The definition of cinematic specificity in the collision of, or rather between, different “languages” was neatly summarized by Kluge, Edgar Reitz and Wilfried Reinke in a much quoted and

discussed essay from 1965:

What we get is a massing of subjective and objective, literary, acoustic and visual moments which are all in conflict with one another. The lacunae dividing the individual cinematic moments emerge as a result of the montage and are one of the many expressions of this conflict. Because cinema employs such an array of expressive modes, a film's substance is located between the different modes of expression. [...] The convergence of linguistic, acoustic and visual forms, and their integration through montage, makes film capable of more complex statements than any of these forms individually.<sup>62</sup>

It has already been noted, in the context of its two opening shots (the studio “grandeur shot” and the graffiti) that Straub-Huillet's film, not least as a documentary, draws attention to itself as a product of a mixed, impure, or merged medium. It shares the synthesis of liveness and filmic realism with the simulcast, but unlike the latter it eschews transparency and the “capacity to be invisible as technology” in favor of self-reflexivity and manifest hybridity.<sup>63</sup>

In Straub-Huillet's film the technologies of analogue sound and image recording are deployed to engage in both a historical discourse—on Weimar Germany, the history of anti-Semitism, modernism in music and film, the emancipation of women, among other things—within a framework that asserts the primacy of the presentness and presence of music, language, and their performance. The title of Schoenberg's opera obviously points to his own fascination with acceleration within high modernism: the acceleration of technological communication, stylistic trends, affect and affective expression, human intercourse.

By examining Schoenberg's fascination with technology and his critical-but-constructive engagement with the new media of film and radio, I have tried to demonstrate that *Von heute auf morgen* is not, as Larson Powell has claimed, a throwback to a nineteenth-

century conception of opera or “classical music.” The critique of radio and the superficial deployment of modern technology is, I would suggest, no more regressive, outmoded or Luddite than Straub-Huillet’s insistence on non-Dolby mono sound (the sound engineer was Straub-Huillet’s long-term collaborator Louis Hochet). Tellingly there is a very concrete convergence between the positions of Schoenberg and Straub-Huillet here in relation to sound reproduction: in his essay on *Raumton*, quoted above, Schoenberg challenges Berlin Radio’s contemporary experiments with stereophonic sound, suggesting that they do not promise a route to greater authenticity or realism, and comparing them with the illusory impression of depth generated by the stereoscope:

I spotted the mistake at once: with the stereoscope there were not merely two *different* lines of vision, two *different* distances from the picture, *different* views of light and shade (left and right), but above all: two *different* eyes.

What they are now trying to do at the Berlin Radio seems to come from a similarly wrong idea.<sup>64</sup>

On being asked why they opted for non-Dolby, mono optical sound for the film Straub replied in typically trenchant terms:

Because we both hate Stereo. And we hate Dolby even more. And even more than that we hate the so-called Dolby surround sound where you get shot at from behind. Where you suddenly get music or gunshots in the back of the neck. Woody Allen has no choice, he has to use Dolby because things in America have got to the point that you have no choice. But he uses the Dolby method as mono sound. If you have two people on the screen, what sense does it make to hear them from left and right?<sup>65</sup>

For Straub-Huillet the choice of analogue, direct, mono sound is not simply an aesthetic one, it is—in a typically Brechtian, politically modernist way—a political one. As early as 1975,

in interview with Enzo Ungari, they defined the method as anti-illusionistic: “In filming with direct sound, you can’t fool with the space, you have to respect it, and in doing so offer the viewer the chance to reconstruct it, because film is made up of ‘excerpts’ of time and space.”<sup>66</sup> As Ungari put it to Huillet, direct sound is “not only a technical choice, but also a moral and ideological one,” to which Straub responded that it is nothing short of a prerequisite for “truth.”<sup>67</sup>

According to Larson Powell, monophonic sound amounts to “flattening and emptying the conventional depth of the image, raising an ‘objection’ to illusionistic suturing,” while the use of direct sound is a further anti-illusionistic strategy insofar as it rejects the “illusion of being inside the apparatus”—instead the filmmakers as “historiographers of media” expose the apparatus of recording technology itself within their film.<sup>68</sup> He also views direct sound recording as analogous to what Adorno identified as the *Sachlichkeit* (objectivity) of Schoenberg’s music of the mid-to-late 1920s, including *Von heute auf morgen* – a music of “radiophonic liveness.”<sup>69</sup>

### ***Zeitoper and Zeitfilm***

The conclusion one can draw from these observations is that Straub-Huillet’s film is both of its time and of Schoenberg’s, what you might term a *Zeitfilm* of a *Zeitoper*. This question of truth and illusion, of fiction and reality, is indeed also addressed, self-reflexively, within the music and the words of the opera itself: in the final scene the wife notes, following the departure of their lovers, that she and her husband have shed their modish artificiality in favor of a relationship based on love: “Perhaps we’re faded stage players, and today they’re still shining stars in any color you please: But there’s a difference: fashion is their director; in our case the director is... Are they gone?... Then I’ll dare to say it: is love.”<sup>70</sup> The banishing of

illusions of modernity and theatricality amounts, within the narrative of the opera itself, to an assertion of the here and now. This is accompanied, quite concretely, by the musical banishing, for example, of the echoes and quotations of Wagner which accompanied the foppish tenor—he quotes from *Rheingold* as the husband ironically notes—in favor of Schoenberg’s own serialism, unadulterated by reminiscence.<sup>71</sup> This is perhaps why Richard Begam views the Wagner intertexts as so significant, referring to the quotations from the *Ring* cycle in *Von heute auf morgen* as “devastatingly ironic.”<sup>72</sup> The opera ends with the couple’s child (played in the film by Annabelle Hahn) asking, but not singing (one is reminded of the *Sprechgesang* of Moses), “Mama, what are modern people?” The answer, provided by the music and the vanishing of the “here today gone tomorrow” lovers, is the present and physical closeness of the family that has reconstituted itself after a flirtation with what Primavesi terms “the terror of fashion.”<sup>73</sup>

Stefan Hayn has noted an unexpected parallel here to one of Straub-Huillet’s most politically radical early short films, *The Bridegroom, the Comedienne, and the Pimp* (*Der Bräutigam, Die Komödiantin und der Zuhälter*, 1968), which ends with the prostitute Lilith ridding herself of her pimp (Freder, played by Rainer Werner Fassbinder) following her marriage to a black American (James, played by James Powell).<sup>74</sup> As she enacts her emancipation—shooting Freder with his own gun—she recites Straub’s own translation into German of St John of the Cross (named by Straub, as noted above, as an intertext to *Von heute auf morgen*) and is accompanied, non-diegetically, by Bach’s *Ascension Oratorio* (“Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen”). In both films the “happy end” is brought about by a woman’s decisive exclusion of intruders from the family unit; the act of emancipation is witnessed by the male protagonists, but they take no active part in it. Of course, this can be read autobiographically: in *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*, as the title suggests, Straub-Huillet stress the partnership between the composer and his wife—both Schoenberg-Blonda’s

*Von heute auf morgen* and Straub-Huillet's cinematic adaptation of it are a collaboration between husband and wife. In the opera, Straub-Huillet's adaptation, and in *The Bridegroom, the Comedienne and the Pimp*, the radical strength of love is guaranteed by the presence, in the present of the denouement, of the lovers, side-by-side. For Primavesi this represents "the power of love as a mystical experience, which the film presents as the flip-side of the apparently banal narrative of this opera."<sup>75</sup>

In both *The Bridegroom, the Comedienne and the Pimp* and *Von heute auf morgen* the (female) protagonists rid themselves of burdens from the past which enslave them in the present. In this sense both films are a vindication of liveness—of presence and the present—and thus of Benjamin's *Jetztzeit* and of Adorno's *hic et nunc*, of the awakening into the present of the kind that Schoenberg famously contrasted to purposeless dreaming in a letter to Kandinsky dated April 20, 1923: "I would give much that it might be granted to me to bring about an awakening."<sup>76</sup>

To conclude: the inter-medial collisions between the operatic hypotext and the cinematic realization in *Von heute auf morgen* are the sparks alluded to by Danièle Huillet in the remark on f(r)iction quoted above. Screen adaptation only "catches fire" when there is a dialectic of text (in the broadest sense) and reading; of past and present; of word, image, and sound; of fiction and documentation. In his essay "On the Musical Deployment of Radio," published in 1963 in the volume *The Faithful Répétiteur (Der getreue Korrepetitor)*, Adorno notes that new technologies can bring about artistic regeneration: "Today is not the first time available technologies and materials have inspired the imagination."<sup>77</sup> While lamenting, as he had already in 1934 in an essay entitled "The Form of the Record," the tendency of recording technology to create a "mere replica (*Abbildung*) of music" and thus "at best musical information about music," he also acknowledges "the artistic productivity of technology," and suggests that radio should learn from film, a medium which shares with music a tendency

towards “presence (*Präsenz*)” and “hereness (*Daheit*).”<sup>78</sup> He points out that he and Eisler had identified this very tendency already in *Composing for the Films* and quotes a passage from that volume in which they had claimed that it is film’s “quality of sudden illumination and vibrant variation which is most readily reconciled with technologization (*Technifizierung*) [...] the aspiration ‘to be present’.”<sup>79</sup> It is this aspiration, Adorno claims—both in his book with Eisler and, two decades later, in “On the Musical Deployment of Radio”—that modern music, and Schoenberg above all, shares with film. This takes us back to Schoenberg’s own remarks on the parallels between music and moving images in the manipulation of time.

In his essay “The Dialectical Composer,” written in 1954, Adorno concluded that Schoenberg’s music could best be summed up in the formulation “greatest rigor is at the same time the greatest freedom” and that its dialectical oppositions are to be found not within the artist, but rather “between the power within him and in that which is given.”<sup>80</sup> He concludes by describing Schoenberg’s uniqueness as a composer as a “dialectical process between expression and construction.”<sup>81</sup> It is this dialectic which also underpins the filmmaking of Straub and Huillet: *Von heute auf morgen* is critical-theoretical cinema at its most rigorous and most radical. Reworking Adorno’s claim in *Philosophy of New Music* that “Obstinate music represents social truth against society,”<sup>82</sup> I would suggest that Straub-Huillet’s obstinate film represents social truth against society, not just in the past of the hypotext, but in the present of the hypertext. It can only do this, however, by engaging self-reflexively with its own medium-specificity—the “self-weight of the apparatus”<sup>83</sup>—and by asserting, in the form of a montage of live sound and image documents, what Adorno in “On the Musical Deployment of Radio” termed “absolute presence,” the power of hereness and liveness.<sup>84</sup> In their insistence on live and direct (mono) sound Straub-Huillet invest the performance of Schoenberg’s *Von heute auf morgen* with both “the pure hic et nunc” of pre-phonographic music-making and the “corporeal intimacy” Adorno sees as one of the benefits

of its technological mediation.<sup>85</sup> In Straub-Huillet's adaptation, the new music of Schoenberg's *Zeitoper* is projected from today into tomorrow.

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<sup>1</sup> The broadcast was accompanied by a Westdeutscher Rundfunk-produced making-of documentary entitled *Eheverhältnisse* (Marriage Relations, Martina Müller, 1997). The soundtrack was released on CD by cpo (with the recording session dated 4-24 October 1996) and the film itself appeared in 2007 on the third disc of Volume 1 of the Editions Montparnasse Straub-Huillet series. The British premiere of the film was on 1 March 2019 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (introduced by the present author).

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Primavesi, "Apokalypse im Familienmaßstab: Anmerkungen zum Film *Von heute auf morgen?*" in Arnold Schönberg, Max Blonda, Danièle Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub, *Von heute auf morgen: Oper / Musik / Film*, ed. by Klaus Volkmer, Klaus Kalchschmid, Patrick Primavesi (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 1997), 101-126, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> Barker, *Live to Your Local Cinema* (Houndmills, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 54.

<sup>4</sup> Barker, *Live to Your Local Cinema*, 48.

<sup>5</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York, London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

<sup>6</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2008), 100.

<sup>7</sup> Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 75.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," translated by Harry Zohn: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>,

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accessed March 12, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Arnold Schönberg, “Zur geplanten Verfilmung,” in *Arnold Schönberg – Wassily Kandinsky: Briefe, Bilder und Dokumente einer außergewöhnlichen Begegnung*, ed. Jelena Hahl-Koch (Salzburg, Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1980), 127-129, p. 128. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are by the author.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold Schoenberg “Art and the Moving Pictures,” in Schoenberg, *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 153-57, p. 154.

<sup>12</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Verso, 1979), translated by John Cumming, 10.

<sup>13</sup> Typoscript reproduced and transcribed in the booklet accompanying the double CD *Arnold Schoenberg: Dear Miss Silvers: Originalaufnahmen 1931-1951*, ed. by Klaus Sander (Cologne: supposé, 2007), 5-6.

<sup>14</sup> Walter B. Bailey, *Programmatic Elements in the Works of Schoenberg* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), 24. For further details and analysis of three examples see 24-28.

<sup>15</sup> Bailey, “Programmatic Elements in the Works of Schoenberg,” 26.

<sup>16</sup> See: Gertrud Koch, *Die Einstellung ist die Einstellung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Sabine M. Feisst, “Arnold Schoenberg and the Cinematic Art,” *The Musical Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (1999), 93-113, pp. 97-8, footnote 9, p. 108.

<sup>18</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, Hanns Eisler, *Komposition für den Film* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 10, 38.

<sup>19</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Series A, VIII: Abteilung III: Bühnenwerke: Moses und Aron: Oper in drei Akten (I)*, ed. by Christian Martin Schmidt (Mainz, Wien: Schott Söhne, 1978), in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Josef Rufer, 2.

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<sup>20</sup> Transcription of Schoenberg's remarks at the conclusion of the first movement of the *String Quartet No. 2*, op. 10 (recorded December 31 1936). See: liner notes for *Schoenberg String Quartets Nos. 1-4: Kolisch Quartet [1936-37]*, archiphon CD, Arc-103/4, Verein für musikalische Archiv-Forschung e.V., 1992, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, "The Radio: Reply to a Questionnaire," in *Style and Idea*, 147-48, p. 147.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Schoenberg, "The Radio: Reply to a Questionnaire," 148.

<sup>24</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, "'Space-Sound', Vibrato, Radio, Etc.," in *Style and Idea*, 148-151, p. 149.

<sup>25</sup> Schoenberg, "Modern Music on the Radio," in *Style and Idea*, 151-152, p. 151.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. See also Theodor W. Adorno, "Die Form der Schallplatte," in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 19: *Musikalische Schriften VI*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Klaus Schulz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 530-534.

<sup>27</sup> Larson Powell, *The Differentiation of Modernism: Post-War German Media Arts* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2013), 155, 150.

<sup>28</sup> Josef Rufer, *The Works of Arnold Schoenberg: a Catalogue of His Compositions, Writings and Paintings*, translated by Dika Newlin (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 56.

<sup>29</sup> Hanns Eisler, *Materialien zu einer Dialektik der Musik* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1973), 109.

Schoenberg, "Composition with Twelve Tones (1)," 245.

<sup>30</sup> Wolfram Schütte, "Gespräch mit Danièle Huillet und Jean-Marie Straub," in *Klassenverhältnisse: Von Danièle Huillet und Jean-Marie Straub nach dem Amerika-Roman "Der Verschollene" von Franz Kafka*, ed. Wolfram Schütte (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1984), 37-58, p. 46.

<sup>31</sup> Interview in: *Herzog/Kluge/Straub*, ed. Peter W. Jansen, Wolfram Schütte (Munich,

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Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1976), 210.

<sup>32</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminationen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 251-61, p. 259.

<sup>33</sup> Schönberg, *Moses und Aron*, 499-502 (bb. 1112-1136).

<sup>34</sup> Arnold Schönberg, "Du sollst nicht, du mußt," in *Series A, XVIII: Abteilung V: Chorwerke I*, ed. Tadeusz Okuljar (1980), in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Rudolf Stephan (Mainz, Vienna: B. Schott's Söhne, Universal Edition AG, 42-45).

<sup>35</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Zum Verständnis Arnold Schönbergs," in *Gesammelte Schriften, XVIII: Musikalische Schriften V*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Klaus Schulz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 440.

<sup>36</sup> Primavesi, "Apokalypse im Familienmaßstab," 115. In his essay "On the Musical Use of Radio" ("Über die musikalische Verwendung des Radios") Adorno notes: "Innovations in musical recording technology could learn a thing or two from film. For example, there is no need to be embarrassed about cutting the final tape together from different segments, chosen from the best of ten or fifteen repeated shots." Theodor W. Adorno, "Über die musikalische Verwendung des Radios," in Adorno, *Der getreue Korrepetitor: Lehrschriften zur musikalischen Praxis* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1963), 240.

<sup>37</sup> Barker, *Live to Your Local Cinema*, 13, 20.

<sup>38</sup> Barker, *Live to Your Local Cinema*, 16.

<sup>39</sup> Adorno, Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 126.

<sup>40</sup> Barker, *Live to Your Local Cinema*, 71.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.cini.it/english/04attivita/laportasulretro/porta22.html>. Accessed 2005. This neat assessment of the film has subsequently been deleted.

<sup>42</sup> Hanns Eisler, *Materialien zu einer Dialektik der Musik* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1973), 232.

<sup>43</sup> Schönberg, Blonda, Huillet, Straub, *Von heute auf morgen*, 93.

<sup>44</sup> Rufer, *The Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, 56.

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example: Peter Gidal, *Materialist Film* (London, New York: Routledge, 1989), 26-31.

<sup>46</sup> Stuart Liebman, “On New German Cinema, Art, Enlightenment, and the Public Sphere: An Interview with Alexander Kluge,” *October* 46, (1988), 23-59, p. 40. Kluge’s misgivings about Straub-Huillet’s severity and their treatment of language as material are further evidence of this significant divergence. Kluge’s “critical theoretical practice” is not incompatible with that of Straub-Huillet, both are grounded in documentation for example, both owe a considerable debt to Adorno and they share a particular, critically-inflected fascination with opera, the subject of Kluge’s 1983 film *The Power of Emotions (Die Macht der Gefühle)*.

<sup>47</sup> Interview in Schönberg, Blonda, Huillet, Straub, *Von heute auf morgen*, 95.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Alexander Kluge, *Die Macht der Gefühle* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1984), 114.

<sup>50</sup> Interview in Schönberg, Blonda, Huillet, Straub, *Von heute auf morgen*, 91.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. It could be argued that Straub-Huillet here demonstrate the synthesis of “phenomenal and semiotic bodies” – the body as “embodied mind” – that Fischer-Lichte believes is only possible in live performance (Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 95, 99).

<sup>52</sup> Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 75

<sup>53</sup> Primavesi, “Apokalypse im Familienmaßstab,” 125.

<sup>54</sup> Interview in Schönberg, Blonda, Huillet, Straub, *Von heute auf morgen*, 90.

<sup>55</sup> Alexander Kluge, *BESTANDSAUFNAHME: Utopie Film: Zwanzig Jahre neuer deutscher Film / Mitte 1983* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1983), 582.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Wollen: “The Two Avant-Gardes,” in Wollen, *Readings and Writings: Semiotic*

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*Counter-Strategies* (London: Verso and NLB, 1982), 92-104. Wollen: “‘Ontology’ and ‘Materialism’ in Film,” in Wollen: *Readings and Writings*, 189-207.

<sup>57</sup> Wollen, “‘Ontology’ and ‘Materialism’ in Film,” 205.

<sup>58</sup> Further experiments in this direction are to be found in Straub’s short Maurice Barrès adaptation *Concerning Venice (History Lessons)* (*À propos de Venise (Geschichtsunterricht)*) of 2013, which shows the technology of its own sound recording within the frame, and the 2015 Venice Biennale installation *In Homage to Italian Art! (In omaggio all’arte italiana!)*, which uses a video recording of a degraded, subtitled celluloid copy of *History Lessons (Geschichtsunterricht, 1972)* for its source material.

<sup>59</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly Straub and Huillet made this ecstatic response public. The postcard sent by Handke to Straub-Huillet, dated 15 January 1999 is, for example, reproduced here: [http://www.elumiere.net/exclusivo\\_web/internacional\\_straub/documentos/lacartapostal.php](http://www.elumiere.net/exclusivo_web/internacional_straub/documentos/lacartapostal.php), accessed March 12, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, ed. Alessandra Raengo and Robert Stam (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2004), 3.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 154.

<sup>62</sup> Alexander Kluge, Wilfried Reinke, Edgar Reitz, “Wort und Bild,” *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 13, (1965), 1015-1030.

<sup>63</sup> Barker, *Live to Your Local Cinema*, 54.

<sup>64</sup> Schoenberg, “Space-Sound,” 149.

<sup>65</sup> Schönberg, Blonda, Huillet, Straub, *Von heute auf morgen*, 90.

<sup>66</sup> Enzo Ungari, Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, “Interview on Direct Sound,” in Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, *Writings*, ed. Sally Shafto (New York, Sequence Press, 2016), 156-160, 158.

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- <sup>67</sup> Ungari, Straub, Huillet, “Interview on Direct Sound,” 159.
- <sup>68</sup> Powell, *The Differentiation of Modernism*, 143, 151, 156.
- <sup>69</sup> Powell, *The Differentiation of Modernism*, 156.
- <sup>70</sup> Liner notes to Arnold Schoenberg, *Von heute auf morgen*, conducted by Michael Gielen, translated by Susan Marie Praeder, cpo CD 999 532-2, 1997, 51.
- <sup>71</sup> There is also a direct quotation from *Die Walküre*. See: Richard Begam, “Schoenberg, Modernism, and Degenacy” in *Modernism and Opera*, ed. Richard Begam and Matthew Wilson Smith (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press: 2016), 206-243, pp. 239-40. Primavesi also notes that the characters are constructions of “quotations, clichés and set phrases” (Primavesi, “Apokalypse im Familienmaßstab,” 105).
- <sup>72</sup> Begam, “Schoenberg, Modernism, and Degenacy,” 227.
- <sup>73</sup> Primavesi, “Apokalypse im Familienmaßstab,” 108.
- <sup>74</sup> Stefan Hayn, “Von Neuem euch erglänzt: Der Regisseur Jean-Marie Straub wird 70.” See: <https://jungle.world/artikel/2003/02/von-neuem-euch-erglaentz>, accessed March 3, 2018.
- <sup>75</sup> Primavesi, “Apokalypse im Familienmaßstab,” 123
- <sup>76</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987), 89.
- <sup>77</sup> Adorno, “Über die musikalische Verwendung des Radios,” 236.
- <sup>78</sup> Adorno, “Über die musikalische Verwendung des Radios,” 234, 227, 236, 245. See also: Theodor W. Adorno, “Die Form der Schallplatte,” in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 19: *Musikalische Schriften VI*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Klaus Schulz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 530-534.
- <sup>79</sup> Adorno, “Über die musikalische Verwendung des Radios,” 233.
- <sup>80</sup> Adorno, Theodor W., “Der dialektische Komponist,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, XVII: *Musikalische Schriften IV*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 198-203, pp. 200, 220-221.

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<sup>81</sup> Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, 117.

<sup>82</sup> Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, 116.

<sup>83</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Musik im Fernsehen ist Brimborium," in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 19: *Musikalische Schriften VI*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Klaus Schulz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 559-569, 564.

<sup>84</sup> Adorno, "Über die musikalische Verwendung des Radios," 231.

<sup>85</sup> Adorno, "Über die musikalische Verwendung des Radios," 210, 217.