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Montage in the Portrait Film: Where Does the Hidden Time Lie?

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Abstract: *Since the portrait film eschews biography in favour of the more elusive and emergent dynamics of subjectivity, this article explores the relationship between the off-screen duration of people's lives and the duration of their on-screen performances of Self. Pedro Costa's* Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie? *(2001) is a feature-length portrait of the filmmakers Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, set almost entirely within the confines of a film editing suite. Just as Costa's subjects are trying to reveal a hidden smile through editing, in this article I analyse the hidden time of Straub and Huillet's professional and personal lives, time that cannot possibly be squeezed into a feature-length film (without recourse to biographical storytelling), but which can nonetheless be read as the very material that fuels the subjects that do emerge in Costa's portrait. This article advances the idea of a polyvalent montage assembled from multiple modes of duration in particular, and argues that this kind of montage is capable of illuminating the complex trajectory of subjects in time. If the duration of subjects' lives is largely and necessarily elided from the time and space of the screen, the screen nonetheless remains an interstitial space where such elisions beget new durational possibilities.*

The heedless flow of time through the film image, separate from yet mirrored by the consciousness of the viewer, becomes intertwined with the dynamics of subjectivity as a metatextual condition of the portrait genre. Paul Arthur (114)

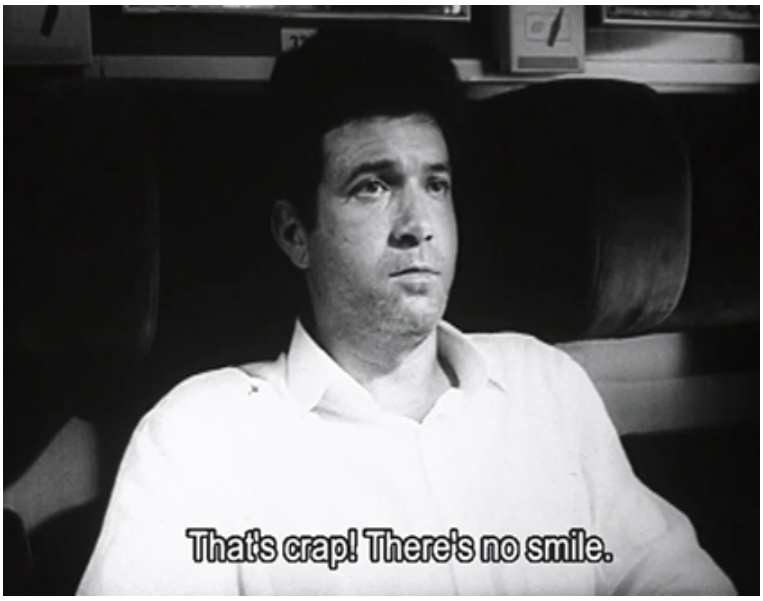

Figure 1: A hidden smile? *Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?* (Pedro Costa, 2001). Assírio & Alvim. Screenshot.

This article will analyse the interplay of duration, ellipsis and montage in the portrait film, an interplay that might more simply be described as the relationship between on-screen and off-screen time. The figure of "off-screen time" in this nonfiction and largely nonnarrative context is specifically used to invoke the lived time of subjects that is not included in a film, the actual duration of which can only be hinted at through on-screen duration. It is the nature of these hints that is worth exploring, since any expression of subjectivity in the present tense of the screen image is a product of past duration, just as that past duration is remodelled, in turn, in the present. Off-screen duration, in short, can be read in on-screen duration, and it is in the portrait mode in particular that this iterative dynamic is most alive. Although all filmmakers condense or edit time in one way or another, I will argue that in Pedro Costa's *Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?* (*Onde Jaz o Teu Sorriso*, 2001) we see a filmmaker especially adept at turning the enviously rich, but elided time of his subjects' lives into a productive and presently evolving performativity that is brimming with a sense of history and longevity. Costa's film, but also the portrait film more broadly, is not so much a condensation of time, as it is a study of people in the process of negotiating the past and the present simultaneously.

Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie? is a feature-length portrait of the avant-garde filmmaking couple Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. Peter Wollen describes these filmmakers as belonging to the more commercially oriented of two European avant-garde traditions (171), but they are nonetheless known for their rigor and restraint, for long-take filmmaking and for achieving moments of politically charged rupture in films where, as Barton Byg describes it in *Landscapes of Resistance*, "the reality of the world outside the film explodes with a violent, utopian force" (1). And if, as Byg suggests, the "action is always elsewhere" in Straub and Huillet's films, he argues that this is partly because none of their films "is a self-contained, original piece of fiction", each adapting historically resonant material (2). Straub and Huillet's films address and perform other texts, and thereby incorporate other experiences and other temporalities. Similarly, Costa must adapt for us what is in effect a preexisting "Straub/Huillet" text; one that is underpinned by their own lifelong investigation of historically minded re-presentations brought into action through a performatively blank style. But Costa is not alone in having to contend with the prior, public life of his subjects, since film portraiture has often traded in images of public figures.

Although my analysis is focused on Costa's portrait, I will tentatively propose that, because the portrait genre must negotiate the imbricated nature of on-screen and off-screen time, it therefore requires its own forms of montage. This provides for an alternate and complementary expression of the "metatextual condition" of the portrait genre as described by Arthur in the above quote, where the "heedless flow of time through the film image" becomes "intertwined with the dynamics of subjectivity". The portrait film not only renders an image of a subject by drawing upon the subject's living relation to their own past duration, but Costa shows us how the portrait film might use this durational dynamic as a tool of montage, a technique that compels us to pay heed to what is in fact the multiple flows of time through the film image. What will emerge throughout this enquiry is a picture of how the elided, the intermittent and the incomplete compete for our attention in film portraiture, less like figures lurking on the margins of legibility, and more like central characters in a drama of duration.

It should be noted that this reading benefits from a Tate Modern retrospective of Costa's work in 2009,[1] and a screening of another of his portrait films, *Change Nothing* (*Ne change rien*, 2009) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London in 2012. In both

cases, Costa discussed his working methods and his aesthetic and conceptual concerns, including his interest in the writing of Gilles Deleuze and in the possibilities of duration as a tool of cinema. On the one hand, this means that the artist's representation of his process and thinking informs my reading of the film, but it also opens this discussion up to the wider context of Costa's filmmaking, a practice that he claims cares little for matters of genre or the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction filmmaking, which in turn perhaps facilitates what Jonathan Rosenbaum describes as Costa's "fully realised moments" and "secular epiphanies" (3).

Paul Arthur defines the portrait film as one that exhibits "presentness" in a decidedly nondramatic form (95), eschewing biography in favour of a more presentational, but also performative, immediacy (96). He describes it as "among the most 'literal' or nonrhetorical of filmic genres", despite its occasional tendency to create "metonymy forged from the friction between subject and surrounding space" (96). Arthur suggests that long takes and simple, frontal framing are preferred over the use of montage, which he calls "an essentially metaphoric device" (95). It is safe to say that, by calling montage "essentially metaphoric" and contrasting it with long-take cinema, Arthur is invoking an Eisensteinian conception of montage. Taking both Costa and his films as its cue, however, this article is interested in a more Deleuzian conception of montage, with Deleuze seeing no real difference between time that flows through a long take, for instance, and time that flows through a montage, since "montage itself works and lives in time" (42). In a similar vein, the fact that Costa often exploits the long take is secondary to how he exploits montage to illuminate the dynamics of subjectivity; subjectivity that appears to evolve on screen, and even within the duration of a shot, but which is also a product of duration experienced previously. If montage works and lives in time, then so do its various ellipses, including past duration.

Costa's portrait is almost entirely confined to the space of an editing suite, where his filmmaking subjects are reediting their 1999 film *Sicilia!* It therefore engages with editing as content, while revealing the painstaking slowness of his subjects' editing practice and representing the duration of their lives together. In Costa's film, one of the things that brings the "literalness" of portraiture together with the complexity of montage is the fact that his subjects are mediated both by the editing Costa does and by the editing they do. Yet Costa also exploits the reflexive potential inherent in this scenario to illuminate the interplay between techniques of montage and an idea of subjects as products of the dialectical play between what they were and what they are becoming. Subjectivity might be understood as little more than our ability to edit the relationship between our past and our future and in this particular portrait, I argue, Costa shows just this kind of editing in action.

One site for exploring off-screen duration in a nonfiction film is filmmaking time itself, since the subject that experiences this time is the same subject we see on screen. Or, put another way, the performance of the on-screen subject may have subtly changed as a result of the time spent being involved in the making of the film. Likewise, a filmmaker's understanding of his or her subjects may well change over the duration of the collaboration. Filmmaking time emerges as a productive concern for Costa because his film is, in part, about filmmaking time. And, insofar as it is productive, it becomes a durational tool of montage—albeit one among many. Because he represents filmmakers in the process of editing, Costa is able to foreground the time that filmmaking takes and, by extension, to put us in mind of the duration of his own enterprise, should he choose to. And, were he to do this, it might be an effort less concerned with signalling his own experience of time, and more

about the time that his subjects have been "sitting" for the portrait. It takes time to make time, and as Sarah Wilson puts it, a portrait is itself in time:

> A portrait is not only both object and representation. It exists during its creation, as perception, and in memory, in reproduction, in description and as text; in its own time, through time and beyond time. (203)

While Straub and Huillet review and edit their footage, we watch as they watch shots roll by. A certain amount of time in Costa's film is therefore made up of the simple, unadorned flow of film and film time. As spectators we contend with this flow according to the motivations suggested by the work that these subjects do, but this in turn prepares us for thinking about the flow of Costa's film. It is uncommon in film for spectators to be so clearly guided to contemplate the image as though they are reviewing, rather than simply watching it, and this too creates an important context for recognising the duration of spectatorship. No longer is duration simply an imposition or a frame; rather, it becomes an open invitation to think about what sorts of editing choices might be available to a filmmaker. Duration, in the form of reviewing time, becomes a space where the spectator can think about duration as a tool of montage. And, by allowing us the time to watch Straub and Huillet review their footage, Costa ultimately invites us to consider that the subjects are there for us to review, just as they have been for him, and as they are for each other. This opportunity to review the subjects allows us an insight into both their becoming for the camera, as portrait subjects, and the portrait's own emergence into and through time. For instance, while reviewing one particular scene from *Sicilia!*, Straub reflects that he had been forced to supply his own clothes for the actor to wear. Huillet however reviews Straub's claim in turn, and Costa leaves us to reconcile the conflict. The English subtitles read:

> Straub: I found that shirt in the rubbish.
> Huillet: That's not true. You're mixing up shirts. I bought that shirt. In fact, I didn't buy it. I stole it. I stole it from a supermarket in Rome! It was what they call a bargain and I said to myself "What a shame!"

The point to make here is that Costa's subjects are emergent, contested and in flux; reviewing their understanding of who they are in relation to who they were and who they are for each other. It is not only a shirt that Huillet has stolen; in effect she also robs Straub of his false, but no doubt meaningful, recollection (assuming that Huillet is not herself mistaken). In narrative terms our central concern is likely to be with the nature of long-term relationships and the way that such relationships produce their own peculiar configurations of a kind of collaborative memory. Yet we also become mindful of the way that Straub and Huillet's collaborative filmmaking might itself be informed by these shared memories and their ever-evolving, inter-subjective living. It is instructive that when Straub announces, "You cannot expect form before the idea", Huillet performatively completes the sentiment with "for together they will make their appearance". The two filmmakers do indeed make their appearance together, with all the performativity that congeals into everyday practice over decades of living and working together.

Costa stated at the ICA screening of *Change Nothing* that he spent twenty-five days filming *Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?*; but he spent a year filming his previous feature, *In Vanda's Room* (2000), a film that saw him working with nonprofessional actors playing a version of themselves in a real-world, real-time milieu. One does not imagine that Costa wants us to give him special credit for spending a year filming *In Vanda's Room*, but it

is clear that he wants what a slowly evolving filmmaking process can provide to pass inside the film, and through his subjects. In a 2012 interview with James Mansfield in *Little White Lies*, Costa says: "I just don't want the shooting to end. I want the complication of life to be a part of the film, to make the film". Costa is invested in what duration makes possible, including real change, relationships that span time, reflection, possibility, growth and decay. Later on I will discuss an exchange between Straub and Huillet about Straub's incessant, tic-like coughing, which marks the beats of his own living (and smoking) duration. But it is in the opening of *In Vanda's Room* that Costa confronts us with a much darker corollary to Straub's relatively harmless coughing. The opening five-minute shot of *In Vanda's Room* is taken up with Vanda's violently hacking cough and drug-taking, establishing Vanda's cough as the much more imperilled side of what on-screen duration might communicate. How long can a person live like this? How long can a filmmaker dwell on, or a spectator listen to, this? Yet any regard we might have for ourselves is tempered by our concern for what it means for Vanda herself, or indeed what its stopping might mean for her. At least this is the kind of responsibility Costa encourages us to adopt by establishing in us a sense that our own living duration is in sync both with his long takes and Vanda's seemingly interminable struggle. With respect to *Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?,* the notion of "review" makes us more keenly aware of the choices that filmmakers make, while offering just one example of that which would typically be left out of a film, making its way back in. The opening of *In Vanda's Room* establishes this notion of review as an ethical concern in particular, and in the process it more clearly situates the spectator in a world of duration that they might share with filmmakers and subjects alike.

Adapting my title from Costa's film—Costa himself having borrowed it from some graffiti featured in Straub and Huillet's *From Today Until Tomorrow* (1997)—this article asks where the hidden time lies in order to offer a greater understanding of both subjectivity and portraiture as entities in time. In nonfiction genres, we dimly grapple with the idea that the duration of any shot is just a flicker when compared with the duration of the lives lived between and beyond shots, where the real time lies. Deleuze alerts us to this tension when he urges us to see cinematic representation as capable of more than a "chain of presents": "Perhaps it is necessary to make what is before and after the film pass inside it", he writes (38). Another of the ways that this kind of persistence might work is in a montage that is assembled not only from multiple audiovisual shots and elisions, but also, in fact, from multiple durational modalities; or through what we might call a polyvalent approach to duration.

As Noël Carroll has written, the polyvalent quality of a montage describes the shifting nature of its connective logic, as well as the potential within a shot to open up to different connections (177). In a polyvalent montage concerned with duration, where duration beyond the film becomes a source of multiple durational possibilities within it, polyvalence might describe the organisation of a sequence that is edited according to the duration of shots, before shifting from this dominant to an overtonal concern with the duration of people's lives. The spectators in this case must negotiate the sequencing and superimposition of different kinds of duration and, rather than doing so from a stable perspective, they must of course do it from the fluid perspective of their own duration. The spectators thereby become part of this shifting logic of a polyvalent montage of duration, since they elaborate on the pattern yet one more time. A formulation like this redirects our focus from a sense of montage as something made up of images and metaphorical potential to something more concerned with ways of being and knowing, whether before, during or after the cinematic event. A polyvalent montage of duration, therefore, describes an approach to montage that

creates connective and connotative possibilities out of different kinds of duration, both virtual and actual, short and long, on-screen and off-screen, in the subject and in the spectator, all in order to make duration as dynamic a concern as subjectivity itself and to circumvent the great limitation of nonfiction films: namely, their fleeting duration. The remainder of this article will elucidate a range of examples that show this polyvalent approach to duration in action and, through this analysis, it will reveal Costa's techniques for making his subjects manifest on screen with their complexity intact.

Where Are You Looking?

Figure 2: Where are you looking? *Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?* (Pedro Costa, 2001). Assírio & Alvim. Screenshot.

It is a feature of Costa's film that his subjects' battle to reveal a hidden smile on the face of one of their characters, through editing, is undertaken in a collaborative and often combative mode. So the question of who is looking and where they are looking is central to this portrait of a couple negotiating the tensions that arise during the filmmaking process; the same filmmakers who are trying to anticipate the effect of their choices on an audience that will also be called on to look and search. In their editing of a scene from *Sicilia!* that features strangers on a train, Straub and Huillet are trying to reveal a hidden smile on the face of a sceptical respondent who, they imagine, sees through the lies of his interlocutor. It is clear that, while the smile may never be revealed, if it lies anywhere it must lie in the psychology of the cut, which is perhaps the only place it can reasonably lay hidden—as opposed to simply being absent. By way of explanation, Straub turns towards the camera and says of this sceptical character: "His reaction is 'Liar I don't believe you' and then he smiles to himself". Straub explains that in trying to realise the cut, part of the dilemma he and Huillet face is that, if they linger on the liar, the audience must contend with the lie themselves. He continues:

> Whereas if we stop on the "o" of "Cadasto", on the exact frame, then the lie passes over to the other side, it's sent over. That way it's the other man who contemplates the liar—it's completely different.

Straub professes an interest in the psychology of montage, which, he tells us in Costa's film, lies "in between the shots, in the very montage and in the way the shots are linked to each other, it is extremely subtle psychology". Here, we see just that kind of attempt to make psychology work through the edit, passing from one shot to the next, in order to craft a particular experience for the spectator. This is a decision that creates a small gap where the spectator would otherwise be forced to encounter a liar. Invited to pass over this gap, the spectator instead encounters a *response* to a lie, as seen (or imagined) on the face of the liar's interlocutor. The question for Straub and Huillet is whether or not this response becomes sufficiently imbued for the spectators that they might glean the impression of a smile where it would otherwise remain hidden. All the while, we are conscious of just how much time the filmmakers are prepared to devote to a moment that is almost infinitesimally short, and how long Costa is similarly prepared to dwell on it. Therefore, in Costa's montage of filmmakers editing, we again become aware of his own deployment of radically different forms and scales of duration—including over forty years of Straub and Huillet's collaboration—and the psychological effects that this tension might afford.

Costa's focus on a hidden smile allows him to stage the kind of existential provocation that, as Deleuze points out, is "increasingly identified with living thought and with an unfathomable decision. Choice no longer concerns a particular term but the mode of existence of the one who chooses" (177). Of course, here it is Straub and Huillet who must choose and it is they, and the differences between them, that are revealed by their choosing. This idea is also reflected in Costa's titular invitation to consider where "your" hidden smile lies, a move that asks us to imagine our own existential game of "hide and seek" in parallel with that taking place in the film. The question posed in Figure 2, "Where are you looking?", accompanied as it is by three figures in three frames, challenges the spectator to search for something hidden on the screen, while simultaneously hinting that we might be looking in the wrong place. For my purposes, this is analogous to the idea that, if we are looking for duration on screen, we might be looking in the wrong place. In the context of a film concerned with what can and cannot be shown, Costa's provocation to look for our own hidden smile ultimately urges us to look at our own role in the production of the subjects on screen—to reflect on the existence of the one who chooses. And if we are expected to also engage with duration that is hidden from us by virtue of being off screen, then it must become hidden for and in the spectator if it is going to become productively missing. Just as the Spanish painter Diego Velázquez places the spectator into one of the many receding frames of his painting *Las Meninas* (1656), Costa, perched quietly in the corner, also does so here. Like that painting, one of the narrative structures available to Costa is that of *mise en abyme*: spectators scan a scene made by a filmmaker editing filmmakers editing films they have edited before. In such a context it is not only figure and ground that have an unstable relation, but time too becomes elastic and layered.

Huillet takes a rare turn in storytelling in this scene (Straub otherwise playing the verbose, philosophising role). The story is about an actor whose job was to look down at a certain moment. Yet, when the filmmakers discovered in rehearsals that they could only see the tops of his eyelids, they asked him: "Where are you looking?" When the actor responded that he was looking at the ground, Straub informed him that, while he may be looking at the ground, the camera could not see him looking at the ground. A cheat was required whereby the actor had to not look so far down that he couldn't be seen looking down. This story also serves an allegorical function, reminding us that spectators will look for something hidden, even if it cannot be found, as long as their search is mirrored by subjects who are also searching, or by a filmmaker's search for subjects that may lie substantially elsewhere. As

long as this mirroring is satisfied, then it will not matter if the subject remains hidden. The sort of spectator addressed by Costa's film will be happy enough with a hidden subject who, like the portrait of Straub and Huillet, is a work in progress—especially if the spectator is revealed in the process.

Among the three figures in this scene is an actor frozen on the monitor of the editing table. Meanwhile, Straub is performatively entering and exiting the edit suite via a door, and Huillet (in shadow) is in the frame only reluctantly and not for long. This is a spatial montage that seems to have everything in shot at once. While people may come and go from the frame, there is no particular space outside this one because the portrait subjects have nowhere to go. For Deleuze, it is when duration and framing combine to contain all that needs containing that an image of time itself is allowed to emerge. Deleuze says of Carl Dreyer's filmmaking, for instance, that "the more the image is spatially closed, even reduced to two dimensions, the greater is its capacity to *open itself* on to a fourth dimension which is time" (*Cinema 1*, 17; author's emphasis). It is worth recalling Costa's own testimony, offered at the Tate Modern retrospective, that he failed to "see" the door in his first weeks of filming, as though he too could imagine nothing beyond it, trapped as he inevitably was in a world of duration and work.

There Is No "There"!

Costa's film is not all smiles of course. As signalled earlier, there is a moment in the film where Huillet dryly bemoans the spectre of having to listen to her husband's incessant coughing—"mercy on the rest of us", she laments. Although Huillet might also be concerned for the spectator here, we nonetheless understand that our brief exposure to Straub's on-screen coughing is nothing compared to the irritation caused to her by years of coughing. If Straub's coughing causes Huillet irritation, her irritation amplifies our sense of his coughing because the irritation not only stretches into the past, but into the future too. Based on her past experience, of which we get just a glimpse, Huillet fears for her future comfort and invites us to conjure our own potential discomfort. This narrative about duration begins with Straub talking about working with a sixteen-year-old actor:

> Straub: Every time you [Huillet] said I had been coughing for 40 years, he would say: "Well, the day he stops, that'll be the end of him". So, I'll just have to go on.

The important thing here is that the *idea* of coughing, which can adhere to the gaps, carries more weight for us than any coughing we actually witness, because its meaning is projected so effortlessly onto past and future duration. Judging by Huillet's plea for mercy, the aggravation for her is the spectre of uncoughed coughs, even as it is her experience of previous coughing that lays the groundwork, and Straub's present coughing that supplies the catalyst. But, as with another expression of exasperation detailed below, it is not simply that Huillet narrativises Straub's coughing; this kind of narrativising is common to the documentary and the biopic. What is interesting to note in the context of portraiture is the way the past evolves in the present. It is not the metronomic evidence of incessant coughing that Costa gives us. Instead, we get the explosive expression of prior experience erupting only because enough time has been granted to the subjects to have an experience now of prior experience. What Costa creates from all this is an assemblage of multiple kinds of durational experience, many of which never occupy the screen as duration *per se*.

If there is already an interval between a subject and their own self-knowledge, or between sense and action, it goes without saying that there is a gap between a subject and their representation by a filmmaker on screen. This idea is obliquely illustrated in Costa's film when Straub and Huillet, claustrophobically confined to the editing suite, are beginning to encounter, if not themselves, then certainly their own limits.

> Straub: I'm sorry, but if you want to bring out this smile a bit better, you'll have to go back to the clap. Really! Do it for me, please. There!
> Huillet: Don't start "thereing" me. There is no "there"!

This is the second time we have seen Straub try to signal a cutting point by saying "there". The first time Huillet ignored it; but not this time, where she has reached a limit that she then goes on to argue is a result of a lifetime of ill discipline on Straub's part. While the subject of a portrait film is never simply "there", one could argue that insofar as Costa's film is about a relationship, the relationship is precisely "there"; that is, in the professional and personal contest between strong-willed artists—the gap between them. Alternatively, one might say that the subject is only not "there" because, like Henri Bergson's conception of time itself, it is in motion. Bergson famously says of time: "its essence being to flow, not one of its parts is still there when another part comes along" (12). Likewise, we must ask what part of the subject is still there when the next shot comes along? To what extent, and in what ways, are these subjects replayed, revised, missed and remembered across the cut? What we see in the inter-subjective construction of Straub/Huillet is one subject trying to pin something down for another who, like the film reel itself, has already moved on.

Arthur argues that, in thinking about *Portrait of Jason* (Shirley Clarke, 1967), we should avoid a too-linear, diachronic depiction of subjects as characters that can be derived from their past (96). This has the added benefit of avoiding a too-psychologising approach to portraiture and the temptation to fix a subject "there" in a specific historical narrative. Arthur celebrates instead the "*performance* of piquant stories" (96 author's; emphasis). Similarly, in Costa's film, we see an image of the portraitist as one who seeks to give sufficient scope to subjects to make themselves manifest for themselves in the first instance. What this also means is that if a portrait is itself in time, as Sarah Wilson suggests above, then it may not be the subject who is made manifest by the portrait, but the portrait that is made possible by, and in the time of, the subject (203). So, while Costa would have many reasons for leaving in the scrapping and sparring that goes on between Straub and Huillet, among these reasons is likely to be the durational work of subject formation that their negotiation represents—of one subject emerging for and in the other, but also for the portrait. Furthermore, the marital sparring we see here, as elsewhere in life, may simply be the typical negotiation of jointly held concerns that do not necessarily emerge at the same time.

The Recollection-Image

Like the lived time of subjects that lies largely outside the montage that would represent it, Deleuze's notion of "the Outside" remains what David Rodowick describes as a "composing" force in the present (195). The virtual promise of this composing force allows for the possibility that the past duration of subjects might persist in the living present of those same subjects, in the spectators who recognise that persistence, and in the filmmakers who facilitate it. After telling Straub to stop "thereing" her, Huillet says:

> Huillet: It's your fault that I missed it. Will you ever understand that being disrupted while concentrating fucks it up? It's something! After all this time editing films together how come you still don't have the discipline?

Clearly "all this time" has passed, and yet it persists here, after and beyond, framing the subjects' shared editing task, and the unfolding drama of the portrait itself. Even a spectator with no prior knowledge of the duration of Straub and Huillet's partnership is likely to experience a keen sense of its longevity here. For while Huillet offers only an indirect image of this past duration when she narrativises it, it is her embodiment of this elided time, as expressed by her present behaviour, that offers the most compelling evidence of its persistence (as it does with her concern about Straub's coughing). In this case, the unrecorded duration of the past expresses itself in a fully embodied exasperation. Also, unrecorded though they may be, Huillet's experiences are not unremembered. Indeed, her outburst draws upon her memory of years of editing together with Straub, which she transposes into a recollection-image that we could call "all this time". As Rodowick describes it, the recollection-image:

> "actualizes virtuality" by plumbing strata of pure memory, seeking out an image from the past through which to represent itself. In this manner the recollection-image is discernible from the actual image inspiring it. (91)

Deleuze is clear that the recollection-image is not itself past, or belonging to the past; it is a present tactic for making sense of a "pure recollection" that is preserved in a virtual past (98). The recollection-image is therefore a dynamic combination of affect and narrative that plays out in an evolving present, and its appearance here represents one of the film's more powerful instances of another duration puncturing the flat time of the screen. It also offers a glimpse of a polyvalent montage assembled from virtual images and remembered duration that merges with screen-time into a newly sedimented, secular epiphany.

Straub/Huillet: "A One-Frame Difference"

Costa's film expends much of its energy giving form to a relationship and artistic collaboration that spanned fifty years, a relationship that is enlivened even when it is being elided. But not all elisions are productive. As Barton Byg puts it in his study of Straub and Huillet's German films: "[a]lthough Danièle Huillet is clearly one of the most important women working in the postwar European cinema, she remains almost totally ignored by film criticism" (11). Byg suggests that there is an all-too-predictable sexism at play in the 1950s that nurtures the assumption that in this collaborative filmmaking relationship it must be Straub who is the true auteur. What rankles Byg in particular is that this bias should have persisted for so long; into the 70s and beyond. He writes: "[y]et in an interview in *Frauen und Film*, published in 1982, Huillet removed all doubt that the works of Straub/Huillet are truly collaborative and always have been" (11–12). Byg stresses that for Huillet it is "the products and not the names" that interest her, and that for her, biographical information about artists is "not very interesting" (14). He explains that throughout the 1970s, book and chapter titles "refer only to Straub as the filmmaker" and that in the early films "she was not credited as co-director … Once her name began to appear more prominently in the credits, some critics at least began to speak of Straub/Huillet, Straub and Huillet, or at least 'die Straubs' or 'les Straub'. A few even write of Huillet and Straub" (14). Byg also suggests that the two filmmakers represent two quite distinct filmmaking paths, claiming that:

> one could see in the alternation of these projects [i.e. their different interests] something of the love story that their career also represents, which is merely hinted at by the Marx quotation appended to the screenplay of *Chronicle*: that love involves contributing to another's self-realization through productive labor. (15)

The conjunction "Straub/Huillet" is a poignant one that can signal first one subject and then the other, or both at once. It blurs the distinction between these collaborators, but it also provides a dialectical irresolution to the notion of authorship in this filmmaking marriage, not only posing a question about where their respective tasks begin and end, but also where authorship starts and life itself begins. As Byg says of Huillet: "[e]ven the radical cinema she and Straub have developed collaboratively she does not ascribe to their creative will alone: 'Yes, but that came about also through our living'" (12).

Costa's montage is evidently a performative one. By regularly leaving his subjects off screen (often focusing on the editing table's monitor instead), Costa can freely move dialogue around to suit his needs. Costa was explicit at his Tate Modern retrospective about the freedom he allowed himself in relation to audiovisual montage. Although this liberty flies in the face of Straub and Huillet's own working methods (and much of Costa's), it nonetheless accords with the logic of the editing suite in a more general sense. Two and a half minutes into the film, Straub and Huillet debate an editing decision while we look upon the monitor, the image moving forwards and backwards under Huillet's control. Straub says, "I don't trust your fanaticism in cases like this". A minute later we hear, but again do not see, the following conversation:

> Huillet: This is you ... This here. And this is me.
> Straub: What?
> Huillet: A one-frame difference.
> Straub: Between us?
> Huillet: Yes.

Costa's montage encourages us to see Straub and Huillet in terms of the gap; to see them in the gap between sound and image, in the gap between past and present, and even in the gap between each other. Furthermore, while the "Straub/Huillet" conjunction attests to a dialectical entanglement of two artists working as one, it also locates a gap between them, and implies a gap in the subject itself. For those spectators with the extratextual knowledge (or suspicion) that Costa moved sound and image around to suit his needs, there is an understanding that there is more than a one-frame difference between the dialogue we hear and the image we see. We cannot even know for certain that dialogue unaccompanied by a synced image is not itself a collage. In this particular example, there is just a hint of things being too neat. One might wonder if the audio properly accompanies the image. One might also recognise that this dialogue occurs at a very convenient time for Costa, located as it is in the early, introductory minutes of his film. Of course Costa puts things in an order that suits him, but here my focus is on the question of audiovisual correspondence in particular and the ability to move one independently of the other. Finally, one may even be a little suspicious of Huillet's performance. Is she perhaps showing off just a bit here, signalling the rigorousness of their collaborative working method by highlighting how little they diverge? Or, maybe she is placating Straub, or letting him know that the fuss he creates is ultimately unnecessary? Whatever the answer, to the extent that a moment like this makes us conscious of Costa's performative manipulations (and there are not many opportunities to become so aware), his manipulation is less an analogue of the editing that his subjects are doing, than it is an

analogue of the way that his subjects playfully edit themselves and their enduring relationship while we watch. To put it differently, the performative becoming of Costa's subjects is itself a collage of past and present experiences, and Costa's montage is similarly nonlinear.

A final demonstration of Costa's polyvalent approach to duration is pertinent here. The montage begins with a three-minute, unbroken take, where Straub performatively edits the scene with his body in the doorway, appearing and disappearing at will, while sharing his insights about filmmaking with whomever might listen. Huillet, seen from behind, is cutting the workprint. Straub is explaining that there are those filmmakers who stick close to reality, and those who distort it. The great quality exhibited by the former, he suggests, is their patience. Straub then quotes the idea that genius is little more than a great deal of patience, before facilitating twenty-six seconds of "dead time", at the end of which he concludes: "Because if you have a great deal of patience it is charged with contradictions at the same time. Otherwise it doesn't have the time to be charged". This three-minute take finally ends when Straub reenters the suite, closes the door and announces: "Autumn is here again". On the sound of the door closing, Costa cuts to the image of a clapperboard from *Sicilia!*, over which Huillet says "holy shit". This bridges the cut to the next shot of Huillet, now in profile. She says: "He's mad. Straub! Can you tell me why the door is open and the light in my face?" Given that we just saw Straub close the door, Costa has evidently allowed a curious anomaly to enter the sequence. In this case, Costa's performative editing is much more visible, and his pointed insertion of the clapperboard shot from *Sicilia!* not only signals his manipulation, it is perhaps a sly joke, given that he is clearly distorting reality in ways that Straub would not approve of. So, at this point in the sequence we have been exposed to: a three-minute long take; a narrative about patience; a reference to the time of year outside (Autumn), but also to the larger timescale of one season returning *again*; "dead time" introduced by Straub; and the nonlinear time introduced by Costa as signalled by a second closing of the door. Not only is this montage already offering up multiple configurations of time and duration, it is not over yet. The sequence continues with another unbroken take of over three and a half minutes, a shot that ends with Huillet telling Straub: "In real life you don't make film shots". Throughout this long take Huillet is activating a work light on her editing desk, a light that automatically goes off when she starts the film rolling, and goes on when she stops. The light goes on and off twenty-four times, instigating an intermittent montage where Huillet effectively edits Costa's film, since it is she who is in charge of casting herself into darkness every time she brings her own characters to life, and vice versa. Coincidentally, Straub describes the problem of the sequence they are editing as having to do with a see-saw movement of the actor's head across two shots, and yet it is the see-saw movement of two films that is compelling here, each taking it in turns to reveal the other. Of course, it not as though Huillet simply disappears when her work light goes out; instead, we discover an intermittence that allows Huillet to emerge alternately as herself, when lit, and as the mediated effect of her work-life when she casts herself into darkness—another see-saw movement. The filmmaker Nathaniel Dorsky eloquently describes intermittence in film as something that "aerates life, and suffuses the 'solid' world with luminosity" (31). So too the not-so-solid subject is aerated and made luminous here. This intermittent montage concludes a seven-minute sequence in Costa's film that includes a greater number and variety of durational modalities than it does shots. And, if there is a temptation to see duration in film as that which is unbroken, the figure of intermittence provides an important cue for reading breaks, not as breaks in duration, but breaks into another dimension of duration.

Conclusion

Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie? consistently reminds us of the dynamism of subjectivity and the work involved for subjects who must labour to maintain their presence and coherence over time and across different states of being, both for themselves and for others. This labour is not only something that Costa recognises; it is something he shares in. Once asked how he earned the trust of his actors/subjects in *In Vanda's Room*, Costa replied:

> They had to see how difficult it was for me. They had to see that I came at 9am when they opened the coffee shop and the barber shop and that at 7pm I would close the door. I had to show them it was a common street. That was decisive. (qtd. in Mansfield)

Filmmaking time is not simply elided from a non-fiction film, it is indeed part of the duration that subjects experience, and contributes therefore to their understanding of other durations, and may even impact upon their ability to be patient. While Huillet conducts her own filmmaking, we witness her recollecting an image of "all that time", which is itself a montage assembled from both virtual and actualised images, emotively laced with exasperation and finished off with the dogged discipline of work. Since a polyvalent montage of duration is made up of images and durations that are both real and virtual, it transmits itself across strata, via the memory, knowledge and performance of subjects. In order for a montage to meaningfully articulate the duration of and in its own gaps, spectators must be sufficiently guided by it to supply the weight of experience to these gaps and to track the shifting, polyvalent logic of a montage that works not with duration, but durations. If a portrait film does indeed require its own forms of montage, this is because of the time that must be granted to subjects—both on screen and off—so that they might emerge presently, through an iterative process of editing their relation to duration past. Key to this is the idea that, while the past may be narrated in other nonfiction genres, what emerges in the portrait film is a living, evolving experience of the past, and with it the durational dynamics of subjectivity.

Notes

[1] This retrospective took place from 25 September–4 October 2009, at the Starr Auditorium, Tate Modern, London, UK.

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