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For once, the customary relationship for Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet between a physical setting and a written text becomes inverted. In Too Early, Too Late, the landscapes are the true "body of the text," while the off-screen texts become the "settings" for places (mainly rural) in France and Egypt--each one captured so that afterwards we feel that we've been there. A bit like jazz, where the passing human and animal traffic and elements such as wind function like improvisations on a fixed, given terrain. Ethical and beautiful as a documentary for the same reasons, it's a film of endless activity supported by a sustained distance, a complete absence of characters and a continual human presence; it is perhaps the most populated of all Straub-Huillet's films.

Jonathan Rosenbaum