The Poetry of Sound:
Jean Cocteau, Film and Early Sound Design

Laura Anderson, MMus

Thesis submitted to Royal Holloway University of London
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2012

Declaration of Authorship

I, Laura Anderson, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:
Date:

ABSTRACT

The Poetry of Sound: Jean Cocteau, Film and Early Sound Design

Jean Cocteau's (1889–1963) involvement in the musical sphere spanned genres such as ballet, oratorio, music hall and theatre pieces, and adaptations of his poetry for song. His creative exchanges with Satie, Stravinsky, the *Ballets Russes*, and *Les Six* are famous, and the fact that Georges Auric (1899–1983) composed the music for all of his films is also well known. However, no detailed study of Cocteau's film soundscapes as a whole has yet been undertaken from the director's perspective. Given that Cocteau had eclectic artistic interests, and clearly engaged with music and sound in his stage works, it is perhaps unsurprising to discover that he himself was actively engaged with the music and sound of his films.

In this thesis, I examine Cocteau's approach to music and sound in his cinematic work, tracing the development of his approach throughout his career. His films span a thirty-year period, from early sound film to 1960. I argue that Cocteau's film soundscapes constitute an important stage in the development of French film sound, and link his approach with the emergence of *musique concrète* and approaches to sound in New Wave cinema. His embrace of emerging technologies suggests links between his film soundscapes and developments in art music.

The thesis comprises case studies of Cocteau's film soundscapes and is presented in three sections. The first section outlines how he drew on Symbolist aesthetics and Wagnerian rhetoric in writing about and arranging his early soundscapes. The second section centres on his film adaptations; as music was not part of the source material for these films, Cocteau was forced to reflect on

its role to ensure that music did not become merely an accessory to a pre-existing artwork.[1] The final section invokes issues of musical self-reflection in a study of two films for which Cocteau chose Orpheus as his thematic material. Given that the Orpheus myth centres on the gap between sight and sound, I read Cocteau's soundscapes in these films as reflections on cinema itself. If sound design is understood to be the creative process that results in the complete soundscape, then Cocteau's decisions concerning the sonic atmosphere throughout these films merit the view of him as a proto-sound designer.

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[1] It must be noted that one of the adapted plays did include a hymn as part of the text.

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INTRODUCTION

Jean Cocteau: I am 'quite as interested in the use of sound as in the use of images'.[1]

Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) always insisted that he was a poet above all else. For him, poetry was not limited to the written word but could be created in a range of artistic forms, and he coined terms such as 'poésie de roman', 'poésie cinématographique', and 'poésie graphique' in order to reflect this. His career included explorations in a variety of media including literature, poetry, film, and the plastic arts. For him, the impetus to make a film rather than write a play or poem, draw, or even sculpt rested in the distinct quality of the cinematic medium to communicate an idea. Despite his keen interest in music, he is most famous as a playwright and film director, and the latter art form gave him the opportunity to explore both film and music together. He was involved with cinema from the early years of sound cinema to the last years of his life and enjoyed a lengthy collaboration with the composer Georges Auric (1899–1983). However, no detailed study of Cocteau's film soundscapes as a whole has been undertaken before now from the director's perspective, nor any attempt to investigate how his attitude may have been shaped by contemporary compositional trends.

This thesis outlines Cocteau's engagement with music and sound in his cinematic work and traces the development of his approach throughout his career. I shall argue that Cocteau's sometimes complex stance towards canononical compositions, notably those of Wagner and Debussy, shaped his

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[1] Jean Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film: A Conversation with André Fraigneau*, trans. Vera Traill (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1954), 109.

approach to his film soundscapes, while the care and creativity he devoted to the

deployment of both music and sound effects in his films render his soundscapes

an important element of his 'poésie cinématographique'. Ultimately, I shall

argue that Cocteau's work on the soundscapes for his films was that of a proto-

sound designer. The concept of 'sound design' is of course bound up with

technological advances in more recent years, and its coining is closely associated

with the work of a handful of prominent practitioners; Francis Ford Coppola's

Apocalypse Now (1979) was the first film to credit Walter Murch as a sound

designer, for instance. However, sound design practices provide a valuable

point of comparison with Cocteau's working methods on music and sound on

screen and contribute to a richer understanding of his approach. Marc Mancini

describes the sound designer as an aural artist, one who guides:

> the sound of the motion picture from beginning to end, interpreting the
> director's expectations, coordinating with the composer and sound
> editor, contributing to the mixing process, even ensuring that what is
> heard in the theatre is of optimum quality.[2]

Whether due to his collaborations with musicians or his unstinting interest in

music and sound, Cocteau certainly meets Mancini's criteria in his working

methods and resulting films. His film soundscapes span a thirty-year period,

from the early years of sound in cinema to 1960. My focus is on films with

which Cocteau was closely involved, primarily those that he directed or had a

strong collaborative role in producing. These are the films in which he had the

most artistic input and are therefore those most likely to reveal clues to his

attitude towards music and sound in film.[3]

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[2] Marc Mancini, 'The Sound Designer', in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, eds. Elisabeth
Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 361.
[3] I omit Pierre Billon's *Ruy Blas* (1948) from my study, for which Cocteau provided the
screenplay, as by his own admission, 'My substance was not involved in that film, for it
corresponded rather to a game than to an inner necessity. That's why I entrusted the making of it

Cocteau's embrace of emerging technologies also creates strong links between his film soundscapes and contemporary developments in art music and cinema. I argue that Cocteau's film soundscapes occupy a pivotal historical position and that the foundations of contemporary French sound design can be traced to his work via both *musique concrète* and New Wave cinema. The first chapter engages with developments in art music and cinema that contributed to the development of sound design in French cinema and establishes Cocteau's unique historical position in the history of French film sound. The second chapter is devoted to his early filmic experiences and musical collaborations in order to assess his approach to music and sound in drama before he became involved in directing film. Cocteau's film soundscapes can be effectively examined in three groups of case studies and this is reflected in the structure of the thesis.

The second part demonstrates how Cocteau drew on Symbolist and Wagnerian rhetoric in his writings and approach to music in film. Symbolism is closely bound up with Wagnerian ideas concerning art and forms a unifying strand through Cocteau's first three film soundscapes. I examine Cocteau's interest and involvement in the conceptualisation, creation, and management of all aspects of the soundscape of his first film, *Le Sang d'un poète* (1930). This film raises questions of synchronisation of image and sound in cinema, which

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to a director whom I only assisted as it were, and whose rhythm I couldn't alter.' Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 77. Six other films deserve to be mentioned to illustrate Cocteau's varying roles in the art of filmmaking but are not dealt with in any detail in my thesis: *La Comédie du bonheur* (1940), which was directed by Marcel L'Herbier and for which Cocteau provided additional dialogues; *Le Baron fantôme* (1943), directed by Serge de Poligny and involving Cocteau in its adaptation and dialogues as well as in acting the part of the Baron Carol; *Les Dames de Bois de Boulogne* (1945), which Cocteau co-adapted and prepared the dialogues for with André Bresson from a story by Diderot; *Noces de sable* (1948), a Moroccan Tristan story directed by André Zwoboda, for which Cocteau provided a commentary; and Jean Delannoy's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1960), which Cocteau helped to adapt from the novel by Mme de La Fayette.

can be traced back to the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* and as such brings into play Cocteau's troublesome relationship with Wagner's aesthetic. The way that Cocteau's complex relationship with French Symbolism's key aesthetic point of reference shaped his film soundscapes has not been examined before, although the Wagnerian element of the modern day Tristan story in *L'Éternel Retour* (1943) is hard to miss. I draw out the complexity of Cocteau's treatment of this Wagnerian subject, his ambitions for its score, and his interest and constant presence during postproduction processes concerning music and sound. Perhaps his most well known film, *La Belle et la bête* (1946), is the one that contains the strongest resonance of Symbolist opera, especially Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902), and notable parallels can be drawn on a sonic level, particularly concerning the role of silence.

The third part centres on literary adaptations for the cinema: here, music was not a significant part of the sources for these films, and I argue that this forced Cocteau to reflect deeply about the role of music in film to ensure that it did not become an accessory to an already fully formed artwork. Using an intertextual approach, I explore Cocteau's adaptations for cinema in relation to the context of sound in the *tradition de qualité* films to reveal that he was increasingly asserting creative influence on his film soundscapes. I argue that his soundscape for *L'Aigle à deux têtes* (1948) drew on melodramatic techniques in the adaptation of the sensational narrative for the screen. *Les Parents terribles* (1948) was produced almost immediately after *L'Aigle*, but Cocteau undertook a diametrically opposed approach to its adaptation and had a very 'hands on' role in the organisation of a monothematic score. Cocteau was also heavily involved in the cinematic reworking of his own 1929 novel, *Les Enfants*

terribles, collaborating with Jean-Pierre Melville. The production process and resulting film soundscape, entirely composed of pre-existing music, appears to have been an edifying experience for Cocteau and one that may partially explain his heavy use of pre-existing music in his last autobiographical films.

The final section invokes issues of musical self-reflection and the choice of Orpheus as thematic material establishes Cocteau's work as part of a wider network of associations and places it at the nexus of film and music. The soundscapes of these two films can be interpreted in a multilayered fashion. At the level of the individual film, one must bear in mind the significance of the myth for Cocteau, why it was chosen for each of these films, and indeed how this might have impacted on their cinematic conception. On a broader level, his use of the Orpheus myth and the resulting arrangement of the soundscapes could be seen as a comment on the nature of sound in cinema itself, given that the myth centres on the gap between sight and sound intrinsic to cinema. As part of the exploration of the soundscapes of *Orphée* (1950) and *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960), issues of borrowing and self-borrowing of musical material are raised. Cocteau employed musical extracts by Auric in a way that linked all the films that he based on the Orpheus narrative; he then integrated this specially composed music with borrowings from other well-known works, notably Gluck's opera *Orphée et Eurydice* (1774).

If one understands sound design to be the creative and technical process that results in the complete sonic environment of an artwork, then the artistic decisions that Cocteau made to inform the basis of the sonic atmosphere throughout these films supports the argument that he engaged in a form of early

sound design.[4] The project draws on musicology, historical studies, literary studies, and film studies to add another perspective to the understanding of how Cocteau's musical collaborations, as well as his personal aesthetics of poetry, moulded his film soundscapes. More broadly, it offers new insights into the shaping of music and sound in the French film industry of the mid-twentieth century and the roots of French sound design.

Primary Sources

A number of autobiographies and memoirs provide first-hand accounts of Cocteau's relationship to music making and his opinion on the role of music in the performing arts.[5] During his lifetime, Cocteau published five autobiographical works: *Opium* (1930), *Portraits-Souvenir* (1934), *La Difficulté d'être* (1947), *Journal d'un inconnu* (1952) and *Le Cordon ombilical* (1962). Gallimard has published the diary he kept during the Occupation as the *Journal 1942–45*. Cocteau also began a diary in 1950, the first section of which, covering 1951 to 1953, was published in 1983, and in Richard Howard's English translation in 1987 as the first volume of *Past Tense: The Cocteau Diaries*. Four more volumes were subsequently published, containing his diaries from 1953 through to 1957. Howard also translated Robert Phelps's compilation autobiography of Cocteau from his lifetime writings, entitled *Professional Secrets*. Finally, among Cocteau's own published writings on film, *La Belle et la bête: Journal d'un film* is very important. It is a diary that Cocteau kept of the filming and offers an almost daily account of the way in which *Belle* was conceptualised and produced, and includes detailed discussion of how the music

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[4] Deena Kaye and James LeBrecht, *Sound and Music for the Theatre: The Art and Technique of Design*¸ 3rd ed. (Burlington: Focal Press, 2009), 1–2.
[5] I will not include an individual reference for each item listed in the primary and secondary sources, as they are all included in the bibliography.

and images were arranged. Cocteau also published extensively in numerous

genres, and aside from his novels, poetry and plays he wrote critical pieces and

journalistic articles, which I have included as part of my study as relevant to the

theme of film sound.

A brief overview of Cocteau's writings on music and on film provides a

useful starting point. *Le Coq et l'arlequin: Notes autour de la musique* (1918) is

a key early text directed at young French musicians which offers Cocteau's

public stance regarding music at this time of his career and is most valuable as a

yardstick against which his later attitude to music in film can be compared.

Cocteau was open about his approach to filmmaking and André Fraigneau

interviewed him in 1951 for Radio Française. The fourteen interviews cover a

wide variety of themes such as personalities with whom Cocteau was acquainted

as well as the aesthetics behind his works and they provide useful insights into

his ideas on film sound.[6] Fraigneau interviewed Auric at a later date and these

1976–1977 interviews include some of the composer's insights into

collaborating with Cocteau on films. The interviews were published as 'Avec

les musiciens' a volume of the *Cahiers Jean Cocteau* series devoted to his

collaborations with musicians.[7] *The Art of Cinema* (1992) is a translation by

Robin Buss of *Du Cinématographe: Textes réunis et présentés par André*

Bernard et Claude Gauteur (1988). This collection of notes, essays and

journalism by Cocteau relating to film includes sections on some of his

intentions for individual films. Cocteau's correspondence can be very revealing

and his letters to Auric were published in 1999 in *Georges Auric:*

Correspondance: Jean Cocteau. This symposium brings together all of the

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[6] The later English publication *Cocteau on the Film* is an extract from this series.
[7] The seventh volume of the original series and the fourth volume of the revised series of
Cahiers Jean Cocteau focus on the theme of Cocteau and music.

known correspondence between the composer and poet. It demonstrates the closeness of their personal friendship and offers insights into the way that their professional relationship functioned. While there is little focus on the films, both *Le Sang d'un poète* and *Le Testament d'Orphée* are referred to. Further correspondence regarding the working process behind his films is largely extant as unpublished archival material.

The principal archives relating to Cocteau are the 'Fonds Jean Cocteau' at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris (BHVP); the Bibliothèque du Film in Paris (BiFi); the Houghton Library, Harvard; the Musée Jean Cocteau at Milly-la-forêt; the 'Fonds Cocteau' at the Bibliothèque de l'Université Paul Valéry, Centre d'Études du XXè siècle, Montpellier; the Carlton Lake collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, Austin, Texas; and the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques-Doucet, Paris. The first four of these contain documents such as production manuscripts, annotated screenplays, programmes, and draft essays that directly contributed to my thesis on Cocteau and music and sound in film. The British Library Newspaper archive in conjunction with the Bibliothèque Nationale were also crucial in piecing together the reception history of the films, and the latter holds published scores of the music used in *L'Éternel Retour* and *L'Aigle à deux têtes*.

Secondary Literature

There have been countless investigations into Cocteau's films from both Film Studies and French Studies perspectives and a considerable focus on his early musical collaborations within musicology. The most comprehensive biography of Cocteau in English to date remains Francis Steegmuller's *Cocteau*, published in 1970. The work draws on an extensive list of secondary material and on

testimony from numerous friends and acquaintances of the poet, including

Edouard Dermit, Gabrielle Chanel, Barbette, Stravinsky, Jean Hugo and Comte

Henri de Beaumont. More recently, Gallimard published Claude Arnaud's

major biography of Cocteau. This French text was partly a response to the fact

that the major biography of this famous Frenchman was thirty years old, in

English, and written by an American. As general starting points, both texts are

invaluable as accounts of the poet's social milieu and aesthetic ideals. Focusing

on Cocteau's projects for the cinema, James S. Williams's *French Film

Directors: Jean Cocteau* examines Cocteau's films within the context of his life

and broader output, and the text includes several case studies that I refer to as

relevant in my thesis.

There was a spate of literature relating to Cocteau on the anniversaries of

his birth and death and Pierre Caizergues initiated two of the principal

symposiums: *Jean Cocteau, quarante ans après 1963–2003* and *Jean Cocteau

aujourd'hui: Actes du colloque de Montpellier, 1989*. The former text, based on

the 2003 exhibition devoted to Cocteau at the Centre Pompidou highlights areas

for further research based on Cocteau's work. Adagp published a catalogue of

the original exhibition in 2003, *Catalogue de l'exposition: Jean Cocteau, sur le

fil du siècle*, which highlights Cocteau's role in the musical world in relation to

his encouragement of popular French musical styles into the concert hall. *Jean

Cocteau Aujourd'hui: Actes du colloque de Montpellier*, *1989* brings together a

collection of texts that were presented at a Colloquium on 22-24 May 1989 at

the Université Paul Valéry in Montpellier. The overarching theme of the papers

is that of contemporary research into Cocteau and, indeed, Josiane Mas's 'Jean

Cocteau et la musique contemporaine' outlines links between Cocteau and

contemporary music. She argues for a connection between the aesthetics and output of Cocteau with that of John Cage, through the lens of Satie. Mas points out that Cage's use of silence, which seemed so innovative, was actually foreshadowed by Cocteau's recognition of its importance in music. I develop this idea further in relation to silence and Symbolist opera in the fifth chapter. Both Cocteau and Cage shared an interest in the effects of phenomena acting on themselves, for example the use of imperfect synchronisation in films, to which I return in chapter three.

David Gullentops and Malou Haine's *Jean Cocteau: Textes et musique* suggests a wider re-evaluation of Cocteau's contribution to the world of music. They argue that while Cocteau's lack of understanding of technical musical skills or instrumental brilliance may have prevented him from expressing himself to the same extent as he did in the other arts, he was a formidable force within the world of music, thanks to his poetic texts that have been set to music by over two hundred and ten composers. Angie van Steerthem's chapter is of particular interest as she examines some of his films from a semiotic perspective to argue that Cocteau had an artisanal attitude towards music in cinema but that his interest in it was variable throughout his career, and that he had an experimental approach to semiotics in his films, to which music made an important contribution.

Scholarship that examines Cocteau's early engagements with musicians offers a valuable foundation to undertaking detailed study of his approach to his film soundscapes, and he is always mentioned in studies of the composers of *Les Six*, Satie, and the *Ballets Russes.* Catherine Miller published a book in 2003 based on her PhD thesis devoted to the songs of *Les Six*, in which her focus was

on musico-literary approaches to melody. In *Cocteau, Apollinaire, Claudel et le groupe des Six: Rencontres poético-musicales autour des mélodies et des chansons*, she argues that due to their contact with writers and poets, *Les Six* had a greater interest in vocal music in all its forms than in instrumental music, and they wrote roughly nine hundred vocal pieces between them. They were all acquainted with Apollinaire, Claudel, and Cocteau, and it was the latter who was the collaborator of choice for most members of the group. Miller provides a good basis for approaching the nature of the relationships between the members of *Les Six* and their literary collaborators, as well as the impact of such poets on their emerging compositional techniques.

Ned Rorem, who was personally acquainted with Cocteau, undertook a general description of his involvement with music in his chapter 'Cocteau and Music' in *Jean Cocteau and the French Scene*, edited by Daniel Abadie. He argues that although Cocteau did not possess technical music skills, he wrote effectively about music without infringing on the composer's intentions. My thesis picks up on this line of argument to demonstrate that, despite his shortcomings as a practising musician, Cocteau did sometimes influence the composer's intentions in his development of sound and music in his film soundscapes. Jann Pasler's 1991 article 'New Music as Confrontation: The Musical Sources of Jean Cocteau's Identity' reappears in her 2008 book *Writing Through Music: Essays on Music, Culture and Politics*. In this essay, she carries out a social and cultural overview of Cocteau's musical experiences and argues that he learned to distinguish himself from his bourgeois milieu partly due to the influence of his changing musical tastes. She draws parallels with Charles Baudelaire and the Symbolists deriving inspiration from music in their

formation of a new aesthetic in poetry. Pasler highlights the bourgeois nature of

Cocteau's family and the principal personalities that surrounded the young poet,

and documents his gradual willingness to accept new music, beginning with

Stravinsky. She does not explore the music in his films in detail but does state

the following:

> In Auric, Cocteau found a composer willing to accommodate his desires,
> but there was still very little interaction between the two. As Auric
> recalls (with regard to scoring Cocteau's films), "He told me simply,
> evidently: in such-and-such a passage, I imagine a music with this kind
> of character. It ended there. When I played my music, when he heard
> my music, there was no discussion of any sort between us. He was
> happy with what I had done." For *La Belle et la bête* (1946), Cocteau
> did not even want to hear what music Auric wrote until it was being
> recorded after the film had been made. The only mark Cocteau seems to
> have made on the music used in his films is his occasional determination
> of the order in which its parts would be played, as was the case for *Les
> Parents terribles* (1948).[8]

I argue that the reason for the apparent 'little interaction' was not due to any

disinterest on Cocteau's part, but was a result of his confidence in Auric's ability

to produce a suitable score, once he had been briefed on the type of music that

Cocteau envisaged. I also demonstrate that as his knowledge of film as an art

developed, so too did his tendency to take increasingly detailed interest and get

personally and practically involved in the way in which music and sound could

be most effectively used in film.

Although some scholarship concerning Auric has emerged in recent

years, much remains to be discussed in relation to his compositions in the

second half of the twentieth century. Auric composed his own memoirs, which

were published in 1979. However, the volume is made up of tributes to friends

and does not give a detailed sense of his relationship with Cocteau or their

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[8] Jann Pasler, 'New Music as Confrontation: The Musical Sources of Jean Cocteau's Identity',
Musical Quarterly 75, no. 3 (1991): 273.

approach to music in film. Nevertheless, the closeness of their relationship is clear:

> Jean Cocteau had been very closely mixed up with my life and I would not like to say anything, write anything about him that could be interpreted as ingratitude or a denial. I loved him, I admired him and I hope that as they increase in number, his readers will become in turn his friends.[9]

Auric described his musical taste as a youth and stated that he revered Debussy and Ravel. Following publication of one of his articles about Satie, the composer invited him to a meeting, and Auric remained an ardent admirer throughout the years of *Les Six*. He also outlined the desire for something entirely new in the early twentieth century, which was satisfied by *Le Sacre du printemps* (1913), a satisfaction shared by Cocteau.

The Edwin Mellen Press published four volumes of Auric's journalism and criticism in 2009, edited by Carl Schmidt. This very useful source book contributes to a broader understanding of the composer's own attitudes and projects. The foreword to the book is written by Colin Thomas Roust, whose 2007 PhD thesis 'Sounding French: The Film Music and Criticism of Georges Auric, 1919–45' is the first study to devote serious attention to the middle years or Auric's career and his place in French musical life during the German Occupation. In his thesis, Roust re-evaluates the commonly accepted divided image of Auric into his role as part of *Les Six* and a later period in which he was a powerful music administrator and composer of film music. Roust investigates the middle portion of Auric's career (c. 1926–45) and proposes a new image of a politically engaged composer whose political involvement had an influence on

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[9] 'Jean Cocteau a été mêlé très étroitement à ma vie et je ne voudrais rien dire, rien écrire à son sujet qui peut être interprété comme une ingratitude ou un reniement. Je l'aimais, je l'admirais et je souhaite que devenus de plus en plus nombreux, ses lecteurs deviennent à leur tour ses amis.' Georges Auric, *Quand j'étais là* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1979), 47.

his compositional style and the type of compositions that he produced. He explores Auric's increasing interest in film music, cultural politics and art music.

As part of his close study of Auric, Roust naturally examines some of his collaborations with Cocteau. He focuses on the soundscape of *Le Sang d'un poète* and notes the influence of Apollinaire's *esprit nouveau* on this project. He also situates the score for *L'Éternel Retour* within the Resistance movement and describes it as a Resistance composition. Roust presented a paper on this topic at the 2008 *Music and the Moving Image* conference, delineating how Auric's music represented a nationalist style that sought to overcome German influences on French music.[10] Roust's choice of 1945 as the concluding year for his PhD thesis is related to his argument that prior to this point, Auric's films can be understood in line with approaches to French musical nationalism, but in the years following 1945 his output became more varied. Although the thesis encompasses the years prior to 1945, Roust maps out areas for further research including focus on the highly polished films that fall into the bracket of the *tradition de qualité* – those that were produced between the end of World War Two and the revolution of the New Wave in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He classes *La Belle et la bête* as part of this group although he does not discuss the nature of the music in this film in detail. He groups Cocteau's later film *Orphée* into this time frame too, noting its experimental aspects.

Further insight into collaboration with Auric can be found in Antoine Goléa's 1958 book *Georges Auric*. Goléa collaborated with Auric on *Le Chemin de lumière* (1957). The book contains details of this joint project as well as Goléa's impressions on meeting the composer and his score for

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[10] Colin Roust, '*Tristan* and *Pelléas* in the Composition of *L'Éternel Retour* ' (conference paper, *Music and the Moving Image* conference, New York University, New York, 31 May 2008). I am grateful to Colin Roust for making this paper available to me.

L'Éternel Retour. It includes Auric's 1940 review of *Pelléas et Mélisande* which was of use in preparing my focus on Symbolism in part two. The text also offers insight into Auric's approach to composition for films; for example, in relation to *Le Sang d'un poète* he stated that 'I had conceived the score of *Le Sang d'un poète* as a symphony'. The frequency with which film-makers and composers in early French cinema drew analogies with musical composition is developed in chapter two and Auric's music for *Sang* is explored in detail in chapter three.

A few dissertations have been written about Cocteau and his links with music and dance. Irma M. Smith's 1975 dissertation 'Jean Cocteau's Collaborations with Musicians' presents an overview of his musician contacts, although her focus is largely on the early part of his career, and she does not discuss the nature of the music in his films. Two other dissertations describing the links between Cocteau and dance are Frank W.D. Ries's 'Jean Cocteau and the Ballet', which focuses heavily on his relationship with the *Ballet Russes*, and Erik Aschengreen's 1986 *Jean Cocteau and the Dance*.

A close study of relevant journalism has been crucial to my project and although articles about Cocteau's views on cinema and his films abound, there tends to be few references to his film soundscapes in newspapers and trade journals. Most of the articles are reviews that summarise the plot and offer the critic's personal opinion on the film's success. The number of articles written about the films increased as the years progressed; for example, while I located only three major articles written about *Le Sang d'un poète*, I located at least twenty-seven about *Le Testament d'Orphée*. The increase is partially due to Cocteau's progressive involvement in rather aggressive promotion of his films

as his career developed. Also, some of the films attracted more press outside

France than others, notably *L'Éternel Retour* due to its problematic position

during World War Two.

My exploration of literature relating to sound design can be divided into

two strands reflecting the state of scholarship in this area: texts that give

technical tips for practising sound designers and texts that trace the emergence

of sound design as an historical phenomenon. The three principal practical

volumes that I found most useful were David Sonnenschein's *Sound Design:*

The Expressive Power of Music, Voice and Sound Effects in Cinema; Deena

Kaye and James LeBrecht's *Sound and Music for the Theatre: The Art and*

Technique of Design; and Andy Farnell's *Designing Sound*. These volumes

offer a window onto understanding the nature of the creativity required by a

sound designer as well as the types of decisions that he or she might have to

make as part of a wider team working on a film project and they have shaped my

assessment of Cocteau's work on his film soundscapes. There is an increasing

corpus of literature devoted to specific sound designers' approaches; Walter

Murch's working methods have been the best documented and his interviews

with Michael Ondaatje and Gustavo Constantini reveal origins of sound design

in *musique concrète* – my point of departure in chapter one.

Regarding scholarship specific to the history of sound design, Elisabeth

Weis and John Belton's 1985 collection *Film Sound: Theory and Practice* is

invaluable, as it contains many essays concerning the history and practices of

film sound both in Hollywood and beyond. It includes an interview by Frank

Paine with Murch, and an essay by Marc Mancini specifically devoted to

defining the role of the sound designer. Weis also published 'The Art and

Technique of Postproduction Sound' in a 1995 issue of *Cinéaste*, which outlines the varying roles the sound designer can undertake. In the same issue Rick Altman deals with the intertwining of technology and audience expectation throughout the history of film sound in his article 'The Sound of Sound: A Brief History of the Reproduction of Sound in Movie Theatres'. He argues that changing notions of how sound should sound are readable through the history of various cinema sound practices and he focuses particularly on configurations of the speakers in movie theatres. Changing practices in technology are a fundamental strand of the history of sound design and this is most obvious in Altman's focus on the challenges faced by sound designers utilising Dolby in the late 1970s.

Michel Chion's research into film sound has been invaluable and I have been particularly drawn to *Audio Vision* and *Film: A Sound Art* in my work. In the former book, Chion famously states that 'there is no soundtrack' to sum up his argument that sounds in film cannot be understood divorced from their relationship to the images onscreen. This provocative statement prompted a response from Altman, McGraw Jones and Sonia Tatroe in 'Inventing the Cinema Soundtrack: Hollywood's Multiplane Sound System'. This essay proposes a theoretical framework for analysis of the interactions among music, dialogue, and sound effects rather than analysing the components of a soundtrack individually. This type of analysis seems eminently suitable to tackling sound design in a broad fashion as a complex unit, examining not just the sounds' relationships to the images but also to each other and to their development and presentation in a film.

Jay Beck and Tony Grajeda's 2008 collection *Lowering the Boom: Critical Studies in Film Sound* contains two key essays on the history of sound design by James Lastra and Jay Beck respectively. The former situates sound design in relation to practices of designing sound in art music, while the latter investigates the appropriateness of retrospectivally using the term 'sound design'. Exploring changing listening habits and connections between art music and film sound, Mark Underwood discusses the place of musical sounds through the history of film sound and art music composition in the 2008 article "'I wanted an electronic silence…" Musicality in Sound Design and the Influences of New Music on the Process of Sound Design for Film'. Underwood describes how some directors and composers drew on the same advances in magnetic recording as *musique concrète* and electronic music composers during the 1950s and 1960s, and goes on to observe that the deconstruction of sounds is an equally fundamental characteristic of both *musique concrète* and sound design. While he recognises the importance of *musique concrète* in the history of sound design, given the breadth of Underwood's article, it is unsurprising that he does not trace in any detail the way in which *musique concrète* practices informed film sound design in France, beyond mentioning some of Jacques Tati's manipulations of sound in the 1960s.

In summary, while there is a wealth of interest in links between Cocteau and music, at present no study of his approach to his film soundscapes as a whole or the relationship between music and sound in his films and the broader history of French film sound exists. My principal research questions here centre on Cocteau's approach to music and sound in film and his position in French film music history. What was Cocteau's attitude to the use of music and sound

in his films? How did his cinematic work relate to his constructions of soundscapes in other art forms and his aesthetics of music as documented in his writings? How do his soundscapes relate to developments in contemporary French music and film, particularly the advent of sound design? Can continuities in approach to music and sound be found across his films? How extensive was his involvement in managing his soundscapes across his film-making career? In order to address these questions, key considerations throughout the thesis are the extent and nature of Cocteau's interactions with Auric and his various sound crews. Addressing these questions leads to a clearer picture of his engagement with film sound and clarifies the extent to which we might consider him a key early, that is, proto-sound designer.

PART ONE

Cocteau's Unique Historical Position

CHAPTER ONE

Cocteau as Proto-Sound Designer: French Sound Design's Foundations in

***Musique Concrète* and New Wave Cinema**

From the early years of sound cinema until the start of New Wave cinema, the

French film industry and its sound practices underwent many transformations,

which were linked in various ways to contemporary developments in art music.

For Mervyn Cooke, Cocteau's films 'logically bridge the gap between the

French cinema of the 1930s and the New Wave of the 1960s', and anticipated

techniques later exploited by New Wave film-makers; in *Orphée* (1950), for

instance, Cocteau recorded music apart from the images and deliberately

assigned them to the 'wrong' scenes in post production.[1] This chapter proposes

connections between the creative practices of the *musique concrète* musicians,

who recorded and manipulated real world sounds as part of their compositions,

and the manipulations of sound as creative cinematic material characteristic of

New Wave cinema. Such connections were made possible by shared access to

emerging technologies, and I shall argue that Cocteau's film soundscapes

occupy a unique historical position in French film history, providing a key link

between *musique concrète* and New Wave film sound.

Sound Design: A Problematic Concept?

Film musicology has repeatedly linked film music and the history of sound

design to the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. For instance, James Lastra has

identified a connection between Wagner's opera and sound design, which is

enabled by their shared aspirations to create a total artwork of full sensory

immersion; he suggests that one could read the history of Hollywood sound

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[1] Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 316–317.

design as a history of the senses.[2] While Lastra's discussion of the history of

sound design in Hollywood is convincing, scholars such as Peter Franklin and

Scott Paulin have argued that there are limitations to viewing Wagnerian opera

as a model for film music.[3] Using it as a model for French film music is even

more contentious than it is for Hollywood, given the numerous attempts to

clearly distance French art from German influence throughout the twentieth

century. For example, efforts in the 1940s to create French sounds in art music

in the face of competing German experiments suggest corresponding aspirations

for French film sound. Furthermore, New Wave cinema's emphasis on drawing

attention to the constructed nature of film soundscapes undermines the

Gesamtkunstwerk and the maxim that good editing is 'inaudible', and suggests

that a history of French film sound design could fruitfully take these

distinctively French elements into account.

Walter Murch and Ben Burtt (who is acclaimed for his work on *Star

Wars*) are perhaps the most famous contemporary sound designers. In studies of

their work, the focus is often on the technical aspect of their roles: as sound

editors creating and manipulating sound effects. However, sound design can

encapsulate far more than increased attention on effects during the

postproduction process. Murch has said:

> The challenges of putting together a soundtrack are not totally on the
> technical level. That's a very important part, but eighty percent is in

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[2] James Lastra, 'Film and the Wagnerian Aspiration: Thoughts on Sound Design and the History of the Senses', in *Lowering the Boom: Critical Studies in Film Sound*, eds. Jay Beck and Tony Grajeda (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 124.

[3] Peter Franklin, 'Underscoring Drama – Picturing Music', in *Wagner and Cinema*, eds. Jeongwan Joe and Sander Gilman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 46–64. Scott Paulin, 'Richard Wagner and the Fantasy of Cinematic Unity: The Idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the History and Theory of Film Music', in *Music and Cinema*, eds. James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 58–84.

finding the right and appropriate combination of sounds – and putting them in the right place.[4]

This approach to 'designing sound' has a long history in opera and theatre. Lastra suggests that a history of sound design could consider the expressive and technical context of any given film and how it might relate to a larger history that sees sound design as encompassing variables that 'shape' a sound experience, such as acoustics and performance norms.[5] My understanding of a sound designer is equally inclusive and is shaped by Elisabeth Weis's description. Sound designers are:

> artists who are brought on staff during the planning stages of a film, along with the set and costume designers, and who do their own mixing. In these instances, the sound designer works with the director to shape an overall consistent soundtrack that exploits the expressive possibilities of the sound medium, is organically related to the narrative and thematic needs of the film, and has an integrity not possible if sound is divided among an entire bureaucracy.[6]

Thus, a 'sound designer' is someone who is concerned with every aspect of the sonic environment, including mapping, arranging, and manipulating sound. His/her role can extend from the genesis of a project through to the exhibition stage. Sound design can encapsulate all components of film sound, including music, dialogue, sound effects, and voice-overs. It can involve conceptualisation and practical efforts as well as cooperation with the director, producer, composer, editors, and other creative personnel on a film. The inclusive nature of this definition makes it useful when approaching a range of films, as while a film might not have a dedicated 'sound designer', it is

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[4] Quoted in Charles Schreger, 'Altman, Dolby, and the Second Sound Revolution', in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, eds. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 353.
[5] Lastra, 'Film and the Wagnerian Aspiration', 125.
[6] Elisabeth Weis, 'The Art and Technique of Postproduction Sound', *Cinéaste* 21, no. 1–2 (1995): 9–10.

inevitable that one or several personnel will engage in some or all of the activities required to shape the soundscape.

The idea that a soundscape can be 'designed' in a creative undertaking is an integral aspect of the role. This contrasts with the alternative sonic strategy of capturing a faithful representation of a real world sound event. Lastra argues that the founding gesture of sound design was the move from an attempt to achieve absolute sensory duplication of an original sound in an approximation of human perception, to sound design as a creative concept and practice.[7] There is also a creative aspect to analysing 'sound design', I would argue. Analysing a film soundscape within the broad definition of 'sound design' encourages a holistic approach to the various components of the soundscape, their interrelationships, their relationship to accompanying images, and the various stages of preparation and exhibition that the soundscape goes through. Nevertheless, Rick Altman, McGraw Jones and Sonia Tatroe have observed that there is a tendency in film music scholarship to analyse the components of a soundtrack separately.[8] Presenting a theoretical framework for analysis of the interactions between music, dialogue, and sound effects, the authors set their argument against Michel Chion's famous statement that 'there is no soundtrack', which is based on the argument that sonic boundaries are structured by the visual frame and so sounds are best understood through their relationship to the images on screen, rather than through relationships with other sounds.[9] Altman et al. argue that film sound could not be understood without analysing the

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[7] Lastra, 'Film and the Wagnerian Aspiration', 134.
[8] Rick Altman with McGraw Jones and Sonia Tatroe, 'Inventing the Cinema Soundtrack: Hollywood's Multiplane Sound System', in *Music and Cinema*, 339–359.
[9] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (1990; Reprint New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 68.

relationships among its constituent components, i.e. 'mise-en-bande' analysis.[10]

They argue that the soundtrack was established as an independent concept and

space through the clash among separate sound elements existing in a single

sound space during the 1920s and early 1930s, leading to the mid-1930s

construction of a fully coordinated 'multiplane' soundtrack capable of carrying

and communicating several different messages simultaneously.[11] This

description of film sound as a complex unit can be extended into the concept of

design of a soundscape, made up of various layers that both stand alone and

relate to the images. Murch sums this up in describing how he structures a

soundscape:

> Think of the sound in layers, break it down in your mind into different planes. […] Once you've done that, once you can separate out the backgrounds from the foregrounds, and the foregrounds from the mid-grounds, then you go out and record those specific things on your list separate from everything else. […] And then you build it up, one soundtrack superimposed on another […]. And hopefully it will all go together, and it will look like a coherent whole that not only seems to exist on its own, but which connects with certain things in the story, certain things in the character. Since each of those layers is separate, you can still control them, and you can emphasise certain elements, and de-emphasise others the way an orchestrator might emphasise the strings versus the trombones, or the tympani versus the woodwinds.[12]

Understanding sound design as a natural extension of this idea of the film

soundscape as a complex unit underpins my approach to Cocteau's film

soundscapes; his films manifest creative relationships both between individual

sonic components and between the soundscape as a whole and the moving

images.

The application of the label 'sound designer' to Cocteau is nevertheless

problematic due to its anachronism and associations with certain technological

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[10] Altman with McGraw Jones and Sonia Tatroe, 'Inventing the Cinema Soundtrack', 341.

[11] *Ibid*., 341 and 356.

[12] Frank Paine, 'Sound Mixing and *Apocalypse Now*: An Interview with Walter Murch', in Weis and Belton, *Film Sound*, 357.

developments. Jay Beck has questioned the retrospective labelling of all those involved in film sound. Beck warns against reading the function of sound design across history without proper regard for industrial and technological changes that interweave that history.[13] He cautions against the application of a definition of a sound designer as someone who 'designs sounds', saying that it does a disservice to the changing roles of film sound practitioners and creates a fake tautology.[14] He suggests that it was only with the experiments of figures such as Murch and Burtt in the 1970s that it became possible to see a loosening of the film's labour structure which left room for 'sound authorship'.[15] Beck's understanding of a sound designer is narrower than the one I use in this thesis but his advocacy of a history of sound design inflected by technological developments is one that I take into account when approaching Cocteau's working environment, which was very different from that of the Hollywood that gave birth to the term 'sound design'.

One way around this is to describe Cocteau as a 'proto-sound designer', given that the prefix 'proto' indicates 'earliest; original; at an early stage of development, primitive; incipient, potential'.[16] Neither the terms *auteur* nor *mélomane*, nor a compound term such as 'sound *auteur'* seems suitable for describing Cocteau. As Claudia Gorbman argues, the sound *auteur* label is controversial as it is embedded in discourse concerning New Wave cinema. She links the rise of the French New Wave and the American Film School with increased interest on the part of directors in asserting control over the texture, rhythm, and musical tonality in their work and the social identifications that can

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[13] Jay Beck, 'The Sounds of "Silence": Dolby Stereo, Sound Design, and *The Silence of the Lambs*', in *Lowering the Boom*, 74.
[14] *Ibid.*, 74.
[15] *Ibid.*, 76.
[16] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 'Proto', accessed 9 December 2011, http://www.oed.com.

be made through the choice of music.[17] She argues for the term *mélomane* to describe the work of contemporary film-makers such as Stanley Kubrick and Martin Scorsese on music in their films. Her definition of a *mélomane* is a director who employs music in such a way that it becomes a key thematic element of his/her work and a sort of authorial signature of style, typically resulting from teamwork with a particular composer.[18] The sort of director-composer teams that Gorbman cites as giving consistency to groups of works include Alfred Hitchcock and Bernard Herrmann; Steven Spielberg and John Williams. Sound *auteur* and *mélomane* are equally problematic terms to apply to Cocteau's work. If these definitions refer to directors whose work reflects personal creative visions through consistent aesthetics applied to choices concerning sound, then the experimental and highly varied nature of Cocteau's use of sound in film belies the application of either label. Furthermore, despite his repeated collaborations with Auric, each of Cocteau's films has a very distinctive soundscape, resulting more from an experimental than a consistent approach. Despite being labeled an *auteur* by Truffaut, evidence suggests that Cocteau would not have been entirely at ease with being labelled as a sound *auteur*, as he always admitted the importance of his collaborators on both the visual and sonic design of a film.[19] He acknowledged his technical assistants in glowing terms, and his relationship with Auric was particularly close. However, the changing nature of his relationship with Auric and his sound crews also demonstrates that his level of reliance on them was too fluid to render the label

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[17] Claudia Gorbman, 'Auteur Music', in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, eds Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard D. Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 151.

[18] *Ibid.*, 149.

[19] François Truffaut, 'A Certain Tendency in French Cinema (1954)', in *The French New Wave: Critical Landmarks*, eds. Peter Graham with Ginette Vincendeau (London: BFI Book, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 56–57.

of sound *auteur* useful. Cocteau's working arrangements were far more flexible than this designation would imply.

In the French studios where Cocteau shaped his own narratives, he naturally adapted to leading where sound was concerned too. He was as much a poet in his work on his film soundscapes as he was on other aspects of his art. In contrast to the highly systematised Hollywood studio of the mid-twentieth century, he carefully controlled almost every parameter of his films. He ensured that Auric was the composer of the music for all eight films, and from his first feature he gave direction or personally developed and edited the individual sound components of his soundscapes. He did not shy away from getting personally involved with any aspect of a film, declaring that:

> I am an artisan, a worker. It is for this reason that I get on so well with my workers on the cinematograph. I must work with my hands.[20]

He even concerned himself with the sonic dimension of the exhibition of his films in actual cinemas, and was also usually keen to discuss his more unusual sonic experiments in interviews and film publicity. The concept of the proto-sound designer is rich enough to explore Cocteau's experimental approach to the film soundscape, while remaining fluid enough to be used comparatively across his output.

Musique Concrète: The Neglected Relative of French Sound Design

In conversation with Michael Ondaatje, Murch described a fascination with *musique concrète* that started during his teenage years:

> I came home from school one day and turned on the classical radio station, WQXR, in the middle of a programme. Sounds were coming out of the speakers that raised the hair on the back of my neck. I turned the tape recorder on and listened for the next twenty minutes or so, riveted

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[20] 'Je suis un artisan, un ouvrier. C'est pour ça que je m'entends si bien avec mes ouvriers du cinématographe. Il faut que je travaille avec mes mains.' Jean Cocteau, *Entretiens/ Jean Cocteau André Fraigneau* (Monaco: Éditions de Rocher, 1988), 20.

> by what I was hearing. It turned out to be a record by Pierre Schaeffer
> and Pierre Henry – two of the early practitioners of *musique concrète*. I
> could hear a real similarity with what I had been doing – taking ordinary
> sounds and arranging them rhythmically, creating a kind of music on
> tape.[21]

In a more recent interview, Murch outlined the link he perceived between a film

soundtrack and *musique concrète*:

> They [*musique concrète* composers] were making music not out of pure
> notes but out of natural sounds with all the accompanying texture and
> specific detail. And I thought: what is the soundtrack of a film but
> *musique concrète* that has some kind of relationship, a dynamic
> relationship, not always subservient, to the image?[22]

While numerous contemporary sound designers cite *musique concrète* as

influential in their own developments as film professionals, a detailed

consideration of links with this genre is notably omitted from the technical and

historical literature about sound design, and there has been little in-depth

investigation into how such art music movements found a place in the broader

history of film sound.

Musique concrète developed during the late 1940s and 1950s,

contemporaneous with Cocteau's direction of *Orphée* and *Le Testament

d'Orphée*. The impetus for such innovations in art music composition can be

traced to World War Two, the aftermath of which was a watershed period, with

young composers struggling to reassert their identities and many attempting to

continue pre-war modernist trends in composition.[23] Pierre Schaeffer, Jacques

Copeau, and his pupils founded the Studio d'Essai de la Radiodiffusion

Nationale in 1941 which became a centre of French Resistance and was

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[21] Michael Ondaatje, *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), 7.

[22] Gustavo Constantini, 'Walter Murch Interviewed by Gustavo Constantini', *The Soundtrack* 3, no. 1 (2010): 34.

[23] David Osmond-Smith, 'New beginnings: The International Avant-Garde, 1945–62', in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, eds. Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 336.

responsible for the first broadcasts in liberated Paris in August 1944.[24] The

studio went on to form the base for *musique concrète* experimentation and the

group that founded it collaborated under the name Groupe de Recherche de

Musique Concrète. The development of recording onto electronic tape, made

possible by advances in technology during the war, allowed a direct or

'concrete' engagement with sounds themselves and a production and

manipulation of sound using electronic equipment and tape recorders that was

hitherto impossible.[25] Live and recorded music could be juxtaposed for the first

time in performance.

Schaeffer began his experimentation by recording pure sounds and using

them to create compositions, freed from their original context. For him, the key

moment in the birth of *musique concrète* was the moment when he first

separated a sound from its attack to create an entirely new sound.[26] He insisted

that the sounds be appreciated for their individual qualities rather than through

associations with their causes. Schaeffer's principal transformations of sound

included: reversing a sound by playing a recording backwards; changing the

velocity of the playback to alter the pitch; altering speed and timbre; isolating

elements of sounds; and superimposing sounds on top of one another.[27] He

produced a collection of *Études* in 1948 (*Étude aux chemins de fer*, *Étude pour*

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[24] Carlos Palombini, 'Machine Songs V: Pierre Schaeffer: From Research into Noises to Experimental Music', *Computer Music Journal* 17, no. 3 (1993): 14. On Schaeffer's complex relationship with the Vichy administration see also Jane F. Fulcher, 'From "The Voice of the Maréchal" to Musique Concrète: Pierre Schaeffer and the Case for Cultural History', in *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music*, ed. Jane F. Fulcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 381–402.

[25] Bryan R. Simms, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1996), 365.

[26] 'Où réside l'invention? Quand s'est-elle produite? Je réponds sans hésiter: quand j'ai *touché* au son des cloches. Séparer le son de l'attaque constituait l'acte générateur. Toute la musique concrète est contenue en germe dans cette action proprement créatrice sur la matière sonore.' Pierre Schaeffer, 23 April 1948, *À la recherché d'une musique concrète* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), 16.

[27] Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 17.

orchestre, *Étude aux tourniquets*, *Études pour piano*, and the *Étude aux casseroles*); each one experimented with different raw materials and treatment of sounds. For example, the *Étude aux chemins de fer* involved the musical organisation of sounds produced by six locomotives at the Batignolles railway station. Carlos Palombini describes how Schaeffer recorded the stoker's improvisation and isolated rhythmic motives: he mixed the sounds and then obliterated any referents caused by dramatic sequences that allowed the listener to orient him or herself in relation to events such as starting or stopping. The obliteration was managed through placement of a fragment with a particular envelope shape just before another with the same shape that had undergone a spectral transposition. Although dramatic sequences were not themselves eliminated, it was hoped that the listener would prefer musical ones.[28]

Schaeffer did not limit his choices to non-musical sound when selecting raw material. *Études pour piano* used chords played by Boulez on a piano: here, chords that were made unidentifiable by electronic manipulation were mixed with ones that were similar to the original sounds. The latter provided a framework around which the sounds with unidentifiable sources could evolve.[29] The première of the *Étude aux chemins de fer*, as part of a 'concert of noises' on French radio on 5 October 1948, generated interest in the possibilities offered by the studio among young composers and the wider public. Schaeffer received letters from the public suggesting future uses for the new music; among these were proposals that they might be used in the cinema.[30] He went on to collaborate with Pierre Henry on the *Symphonie pour un homme seul* in 1950, for which Schaeffer manipulated the bodily sounds of a man, including his cries,

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[28] Palombini, 'Machine Songs V', 15.
[29] *Ibid.*, 15–16.
[30] Schaeffer, *À la recherché d'une musique concrète*, 30.

tapping feet, his breathing, and the sounds of back slapping.[31] The *Symphonie* was premiered at the first big public concert of electronic music, given at the École Normale de Musique on 18 March 1950.[32] The potential importance of these early concert performances was recognised in the contemporary press and Schaeffer recalled Clarendon's review of 4 April 1950 in *Le Figaro* in particular. The journalist described:

> We are, if not at the conception of a true art, at least at the birth of a process of which it remains impossible to predict the future and its applications.[33]

There was a hiatus in the collaboration of the Groupe from 1953 to 1958, when Schaeffer branched out by himself, heavily occupied with the issue of *musique concrète*'s raison d'être, although he returned and the group was reformed with François Bernard Mâche and Luc Ferrari as the Groupe de Recherches Musicales.[34] Schaeffer produced his manifesto of experimental music, 'Vers la musique experimentale' in 1957. Under the new group, the investigation of sounds and techniques progressed to more general research on musical perception.[35] *Musique concrète* took on a more comprehensive meaning and came to refer less restrictedly to a specific technical procedure.[36]

Film soundscapes and radio were important inspirations for *musique concrète*. In a 1954 article, Schaeffer recalled that *musique concrète*, electronic music, and *musique dessinée* (music created by lines drawn on film) were 'the sort of music that the cinema has been dreaming about for years'. He pointed

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[31] *Ibid.*, 57.

[32] Griffiths, *Modern Music and After*, 18.

[33] 'Nous sommes, sinon à l'origine d'art veritable, du moins à la naissance d'un procédé dont il est encore impossible de prévoir l'avenir et les applications.' Quoted in Schaeffer, *À la recherché d'une musique concrète*, 73.

[34] Osmond-Smith, 'New beginnings', 343.

[35] *Grove Music Online*, 'Pierre Schaeffer', by Francis Dhomont, accessed 31 March 2011, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

[36] Palombini, 'Pierre Schaeffer, 1953: Towards an Experimental Music', *Music and Letters* 74, no. 4 (1993): 557.

out that film-makers were already producing noises taken from reality in their soundtracks, for example street noises.[37]

> Orson Welles, [Luis] Buñuel and many others have for years successfully sketched out their own natural concrete music. Max de Haas, in Holland, Fulchignoni for *Leonardo da Vinci*, Allégret for special effects, Grémillon for a poetic montage on a theme of Astrology, Jean Rouch in order to reconstruct hundreds of feet of sound with the help of a few African fragments – these were the first film-makers to join our team in its early stages.[38]

Schaeffer also quoted a comment by Professor Günther Bialas in the article that compared the birth of film with the early research of the *musique concrète* artists, highlighting the closeness with which he linked the two art forms on a technical and aesthetic level during these early years.[39] For Schaeffer and Henry, close connections between cinema and *musique concrète* were encouraged by common aesthetic aspirations. From the early 1940s Schaeffer wrote about cinema sound in a way that argued for connections between it and his aesthetics for *musique concrète*. He presented some observations on radio and cinema in 'The Aesthetic and Technique of Transmitted Arts' (1942–43), outlining the evolution of these art forms as he perceived it. He discussed how in an evolved *art-relai* ('transmitted art', such as the radio), art and instrument (technology) have interactive relationships, where each one shapes the other.[40] For Jane Fulcher, this article is important in understanding the development of Schaeffer's personal aesthetics, which led him to view the radio and the cinema as possessing unique power over the concrete or the real. Fulcher argues that he saw the potential for humans to move beyond the subjugation of verbal language

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[37] Schaeffer, 'Concrete Music', unknown trans. *UNESCO Courier* 3, (1954), 18–20. A longer version appeared in *Cahiers du cinéma* 37 (July 1954), 54–56. The *Courier* article is reproduced in *The Routledge Film Music Sourcebook*, eds. James Wierzbicki, Nathan Platte, and Colin Roust (New York: Routledge, 2012), 153.
[38] *Ibid*., 153.
[39] *Ibid*., 152.
[40] Palombini, 'Machine Songs V', 14.

by employing these *arts-relais* on their own terms to express things beyond language. Some of Schaeffer's neologisms for discussing this new art form reflect this sense that he was creating a new language. For him, radio was *écriture sonore* ('sonic writing') that employs *bruitage*, or the language of objects.[41]

Later that decade Schaeffer published another article entitled 'The Non-Visual Element at the Cinema' for the *Revue du cinéma*, which appeared in three parts in October, November, and December 1946 and concentrated wholly on sound and music for cinema.[42] The three parts dealt variously with the analysis of the soundtrack, the conception of the music, and the psychology of the audiovisual relationship. Most of the first part was concerned with summarising his perception of the current state of film sound and the subordination of the acoustic to the visual. He posed the following question:

> Is film music going to remain that which it has become, a kind of modern comfort which has no more value for the public than air conditioning and the softness of the club armchair?[43]

He argued that in most cases music in film does not seem important and is quickly forgotten due to its treatment. Schaeffer urged the film director to be creative in developing solutions for the combination of image and sound:

> In general, the creator of films does not have the practical experience of musical composition; he has done neither harmony, nor fugue, nor counterpoint, but that should not prevent him from being a musician and hearing in advance his film with an ear as inventive as the eye with which he anticipates it. It goes without saying that his fellow team member musician would work with this author as closely as possible.[44]

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[41] Fulcher, 'From "The Voice of the Maréchal" to Musique Concrète', 392.

[42] Cocteau himself wrote for the *Revue* at various junctures and, given the publication's prominence, may have encountered Schaeffer's article.

[43] 'La musique de film va-t-elle demeurer ce qu'elle est devenue, une sorte de confort moderne qui n'a pas plus de valeur pour le public que la climatisation et le moelleux du fauteuil club?' Schaeffer, 'L'Élément non visuel au cinéma: Analyse de la "bande son"', *Revue du cinéma* (October 1946): 48.

[44] 'En général, le créateur de films n'a pas la pratique de la composition musicale; il n'a fait ni harmonie, ni fugue, ni contre-point, mais cela ne doit pas l'empêcher d'être musicien et

Schaeffer divided the *piste sonore* ('sound channel') into three components and argued that noise is the only sound perfectly adequate for images, as images can only show things whereas noise is the 'language of things'.[45] Schaeffer was clearly moving towards the application of *musique concrète* to film. He also praised what he described as use of 'music as material' in Grémillon's *Le Ciel est à vous* (1944), where one melody played a structural role in the whole film. Schaeffer felt that the relative autonomy of visual and sonic materials led to a rich complex of impressions and conjured up emotions and associations in the audience.[46]

Schaeffer was also influenced by cinema in his own composition and in 1951 composed a *musique concrète* opera on the Orpheus theme. As part of the compositional process, he engaged closely with Cocteau's *Orphée* and invoked it in his development of the opera, as I explore here in chapter nine. Schaeffer drew connections between *musique concrète* and cinema throughout *À la recherche d'une musique concrète*; for example, he stated that the only precise way of handling *objets sonores* ('sonic objects') is through montage, that is, by editing sound in the way that both sound and moving images are handled in cinema.[47] Cinema also crept into his classification of terms to describe *musique concrète*; he used the term 'cinematic spatialisation' to describe a performance

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d'entendre d'avance son film avec une oreille aussi inventive que l'oeil dont il le prévoit. Que cet auteur se fasse aider aussi étroitement que possible par son co-équipier musicien, cela va de soi.' Schaeffer, 'L'Élément non visuel au cinéma: Conception de la musique', *Revue du cinéma* (November 1946): 65.

[45] Schaeffer, 'L'Élément non visuel au cinéma: Analyse de la "bande son"', 45. Chion advocates use of 'piste sonore' in *Film: A Sound Art*, which Gorbman translates as 'sound channel' in contrast to 'bande-son' for 'soundtrack'. Chion favours 'piste sonore' for the sum of recorded sounds for a film, not delimited in any way as is suggested by 'bande-son'. Chion, *Film: A Sound Art*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 234.

[46] Schaeffer, 'L'Élément non visuel au cinéma: Conception de la musique', 64-65.

[47] Schaeffer, *À la recherche d'une musique concrète*, 186.

that outlines the trajectories of sonorous objects by their temporal unfolding.[48]
Also in *À la recherche*, Schaeffer recorded how, in grappling with the notational
challenges of *musique concrète*, Henry's *Musique sans titre* of the same year
was likewise influenced by cinema and was scored 'after a cinematic-type
découpage'.[49] Such art music compositions are tangible evidence of the
intertwined nature of art music and cinema during this period.

Regarding the attraction of *musique concrète* for film and television
directors, Schaeffer stated that: 'Neither sound effects nor symphony, *musique
concrète* easily demonstrated its dramatic effectiveness, its broadcasting
potential'.[50] In a practical endeavour, Schaeffer and Henry's interest in sound
for film led them to open up their studio to film directors and even to develop a
library of sounds to keep up with demand.[51] Schaeffer described how during the
1952–53 period *musique concrète* appeared destined to renew the field of
dramatic music and *les musiques à signification* composed for precise purposes.
The *musique concrète* artists soon came to compose for film themselves. Henry
composed numerous *musique concrète* pieces for ballet, theatre, and cinema.
Schaeffer recorded:

> *Musique concrète* became known in the ballets of Béjart: alongside
> *Orphée* and the *Symphonie*, the *Concerto des ambiguïties* in its turn was
> danced, under the name of *Voyage au coeur d'un enfant*; the theatre
> (*L'Amour des quatres colonels*) and especially the cinema (*Aube,
> Astrologie*, then Fulchignoni's remarkable documentaries on Mexican art
> and Vinci) called on Pierre Henry's *musique concrète*.[52]

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[48] *Ibid.*, 206.

[49] 'D'après un découpage de type cinématographique'. *Ibid*., 80.

[50] 'Ni bruitage ni symphonie, la musique concrète démontrait facilement son efficacité
dramatique, son intérêt radiophonique'. *Ibid*., 80.

[51] *Ibid*, 80.

[52] 'La musique concrète se faisait connaître dans les ballets de Béjart: à côté d'*Orphée* et de la
Symphonie, le *Concerto des ambiguïties* à son tour était dansé, sous le nom de *Voyage au coeur
d'un enfant*; le théâtre (*L'Amour des quatres colonels*) et surtout le cinéma (*Aube, Astrologie*,
puis les documentaries remarqués de Fulchignoni sur l'art mexicain et sur Vinci) faisaient appel
à la musique concrète de Pierre Henry'. Schaeffer, *La Musique concrète* (Paris: Presses
Universitaires de France, 1967), 74–75.

Schaeffer composed less film music than Henry but was commissioned by the

Dutch producer Max de Haas to compose *musique concrète* for the film

Masquerage (1952) during the same period. The potential of explorations into

the applications of real world sound for cinema was acknowledged in the wider

film industry. Schaeffer published an article in early 1954 in the magazine

Courier, which looked ahead to a UNESCO-sponsored 'Music and Film'

exhibition at the Cannes International Film Festival in April that would include a

section devoted to *musique concrète*. Schaeffer's article, which displays the

extent to which technological experimentation in art music was related to the

development of film sound, was later published in a longer version in *Cahiers*

du cinéma.[53] Schaeffer notes the connection between *musique concrète*,

electronic music, and *musique dessinée* via their reliance on film tape (*bande*),

which in turn places them on common ground with the cinema. As he puts it:

> concrete music […] uses magnetic tape, which is similar to the
> soundtrack of a film, for recording and recomposing its sounds. Its bars
> are traced by the scissors of the cutter who splices the different sections
> of tape. The sound itself is modified by a phonogenic apparatus which
> by running the tape at greater or lesser speed can raise or lower the pitch
> of the original sound and greatly alter its tone quality.[54]

Schaeffer recognised the parallel between these new art music genres and

cinema which all handle sound directly as material: 'sound ceases to be a

fleeting thing; it is printed permanently on magnetic tape, and like movement

itself, miraculously fixed on film'.[55]

One of the things that aligned *musique concrète* composers more

strongly with their film sound colleagues than their concert music colleagues

was the nature of their professional training. The composer of *musique concrète*

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[53] Schaeffer, 'Concrete Music', 150–153.
[54] *Ibid*., 151.
[55] *Ibid*.

does not have to be able to read and write traditional musical notation or to have performers play traditional instruments. Notation and performance can be bypassed and the traditional skills of composition such as abstract imagination, acuteness of internal hearing, and precision of notation are no longer required.[56] In *À la recherche*, Schaeffer contrasted the working methods of the traditional composer with those of the concrete one. While the traditional composer works from the abstract to the concrete, conceiving a piece, notating it and then arranging a performance, the concrete composer manufactures the material (usually from real world sound), experiments with it, and then puts it together. His/her material is not usually notatable and the performer is often rendered superfluous.[57] Schaeffer described such working methods in his 1953 article 'Vers une musique expérimentale':

> The classical relationships between composition and performance, between authors and instrumentalists are also fundamentally changed. In the new musics, the composer is often his own performer, and the score is simply a shooting script. The creation is achieved once for all, by means of a different division of responsibilities, which resembles that of the production crews in cinema.[58]

Musique concrète's facilitation of composition by nonspecialists is the key link with Cocteau's work. Empowered and inspired by emerging technologies and developments in art music, Cocteau experimented with some of the techniques of *musique concrète* in designing the soundscapes for his films. The link between the techniques of *musique concrète* artists and sound editors is similar to that between sound design and experimental artistic expression in Cocteau's films, most obviously in the manipulation of real world sound in *Orphée* (1950) and *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960). Furthermore,

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[56] Griffiths, *Modern Music and After*, 17–18.
[57] Palombini, 'Machine Songs V', 16.
[58] Quoted in Palombini, 'Pierre Schaeffer, 1953: Towards an Experimental Music', 556.

Cocteau's engagement with contemporary culture and emerging technologies is highlighted by the frequent focus on the radio in *Orphée*, both the car radio that communicates poetry to Orphée and the radio in the Princess's bedroom, which she tunes in and out to pick up musical excerpts from Gluck. Cocteau also drew attention to his inclusion of real world sounds from the Saint Cyr railway in the Zone in *Orphée*.

> There were about one hundred and fifty trains passing there every night. The *sous-préfet*, Amade, stood watch in hand announcing the times of the trains and the intervals in the din. But it was very rare, alas, that a shot could be made to coincide with the railway timetable. This is why in *Orphée* you occasionally hear distant whistles and a kind of hollow factory noise. We tried to dub these passages. But in the projection room I realised that the whistles and factory noises gave a background of mystery to the dialogue, and that they should on no account be cut.[59]

This is reminiscent of Schaeffer's first *Études*, dating from less than two years before, which included manipulations of recorded sounds from railways. The creation of ambient noise is also one of the commonest tasks of the sound designer. Walter Murch recalled that prior to the 1970s there was little development of spatial selectivity aside from in the work of Orson Welles on films such as *Citizen Kane* (1941). Murch would go on to combine both the original recording of a scene and the same recording played through a speaker into a space to achieve a greater sense of the space onscreen. Today, one can simply choose the kind of space required in a digital reverberation unit but the aim is the same as that of the earlier sound designers.[60] Cocteau also experimented with the removal of the opening 'attack' of a sound to create an entirely different sound, unrecognisable from its source; he employed this approach to the sound of a tuning fork in *Orphée*.

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[59] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film: A Conversation Recorded by André Fraigneau*, trans. Vera Traill (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1954), 108–109.

[60] Constantini, 'Walter Murch interviewed by Gustavo Constantini', 37–38.

> In *Orphée*, for the coming and going through the mirror we used the
> entire range of the actual sound, but without the initial shock. I kept only
> the prolongation of the waves (to be in fashion, I should say the
> undulatory prolongation).[61]

The phrase 'to be in fashion' immediately acknowledges that he is about to

appropriate a new term then being applied in art music composition. His

experiments with real world sound continued in *Testament*, where he retained

the sound of an aeroplane at the point where Minerva kills the poet with her

spear. In an interview with Jean de Baroncelli for *Le Monde*, he described the

fortuitous development of this segment as follows:

> I was filming my death scene. On the screenplay I had written:
> "Aeroplane noises". I counted on adding these noises in the mixing. But
> while we were filming, at the same instant that Minerva pierced me with
> her spear, an aeroplane appeared in the sky allowing the sound
> technicians to record the drone of its motors.[62]

The sorts of manipulations of sound that Schaeffer tried, such as altering timbre

and pitch by changing speed of playback and playing in reverse, are similar to

Cocteau's frequent recourse to playing sequences backwards to achieve special

effects. In *Testament* he even extended this approach to dialogue, playing

Cégeste's speech backwards; I return to this practice as part of my exploration of

Cocteau's handling of the soundscape in this film in chapter nine.

Cocteau and the Sound of the New Wave

The developments in technology that made *musique concrète* possible also

suggested new sonic possibilities to emerging film directors, especially those

who would become known as the New Wave film-makers. Françoise Giroud

coined the term 'nouvelle vague' in a 1957 article for *L'Express*. It came to

[61] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 110.
[62] 'Je tournais la scène de ma mort. Sur ce scénario j'avais écrit: "Bruits d'avion". Je comptais ajouter ces bruits aux mixages. Mais tandis qu'on tournait, à l'instant même où Minerve me transperçait de sa lance, un avion apparut dans le ciel et permit aux techniciens du son d'enregistrer le ronflement de ses moteurs'. Jean de Baroncelli, '*Le Testament d'Orphée*', *Le Monde*, 7 October 1959.

refer to a group of directors (François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer and Jacques Rivette) who had met at the Paris Cinémathèque in the 1950s and were critics for *Cahiers du cinéma* before they began directing their own films. While these young revolutionaries formed a core group, a wider understanding of New Wave artists could include the Left Bank and politically engaged film-makers (Agnès Varda, Alain Resnais, Chris Marker); documentary makers (Jean Rouch, Pierre Schendoerffer); and more commercial film-makers (Roger Vadim, Louis Malle, Claude Sautet).[63] These film-makers reacted against their immediate predecessors in mainstream cinema and attacked the 1940s and 1950s *qualité* films, which were formulaic historical or literary dramas filmed in a classic style. Instead, New Wave directors looked up to the work of film-makers such as Welles and Hitchcock, as well as Howard Hawks and Samuel Fuller who directed 'gangster' films. Royal S. Brown states that, to varying degrees, New Wave film-makers 'redefined the relationship of the cinema's component parts, including music, both to each other and to the narrative'. They undertook innovations in the editing of sound and image that undermined the subordination of editing to narrative in classical cinema.[64] 1959 is usually cited as a crucial year in the launch of the New Wave: Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour*, Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cent Coups*, and Marcel Camus's *Orfeu Negro* were all premiered at Cannes. Naomi Greene identifies 1962 or 1963 as the concluding period of the New Wave, with Godard alone continuing to prolong its spirit in films such as *Pierrot le fou* (1965) and *Week-end* (1967).[65]

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[63] Naomi Greene, *The French New Wave: A New Look* (London: Wallflower, 2007), 3–4.

[64] Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 186.

[65] Greene, *The French New Wave*, 90.

By the 1950s Cocteau was in his sixties, but from the very first rumblings of this new group of film-makers in *Cahiers du cinéma*, he was very supportive of their endeavours.[66] In turn, they frequently mentioned him in *Cahiers* during the 1950s and 1960s as a respected influence, a film-maker set apart from mainstream commercial cinema. In *Cahiers*'s 1965 retrospective 'Twenty Years of French Cinema: The Best French Films Since the Liberation', Cocteau's *Testament* was placed fourth while *Orphée* was twenty-first in their compiled list.[67] Cocteau socialised with many of the emerging film-makers and he was elected as Honorary President of the ciné-club *Objectif49*, which championed cinema outside the mainstream, organising 'La Festival du Film Maudit' at Biarritz.[68] This club, also led by Robert Bresson, Roger Leenhardt, René Clément, Alexandre Astruc, Pierre Kast, and Raymond Queneau, among others, brought together critics, film-makers and aspiring film-makers who conceived of a *cinéma d'auteurs*.[69] The first major salvo against classic-style cinema was Truffaut's 1954 essay on 'the negative tendencies' of French cinema, which advocated films that would exploit the resources specific to cinema and present '*la politique des auteurs*'. Auteurism privileged the role of the director regarding *mise-en-scène* and emphasised the idea that directors work with a set of themes that make their work distinctive. Truffaut praised Cocteau as an *auteur*, arguing that he and Jacques Tati, Jacques Becker, and Bresson were capable of writing and directing characters quite different from those in the

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[66] At the 1959 Cannes Film Festival, Cocteau was President of the Jury, and there were numerous photos of him with the young actor Jean-Pierre Léaud of Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cents Coups*.

[67] Jim Hillier, ed., *Cahiers du cinéma: 1960s* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 82–83.

[68] Greene, *The French New Wave*, 17.

[69] Hillier, ed., 'Introduction', *Cahiers du cinéma: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 3.

psychological realist films.[70] This article shaped *Cahiers* immeasurably and

Jacques Doniol-Valcroze recalled its impact:

> A leap has been made, a trial begun with which we were all in solidarity, something bound us together. From then on, it was known that we were for Renoir, Rossellini, Hitchcock, Cocteau, Bresson…. and against X, Y, and Z. From then on there was a doctrine, the *politique des auteurs*, even if it lacked flexibility. […] an 'idea' had got under way which was going to make its obstinate way to its most logical conclusion: the passage of almost all those involved in it to directing films themselves.[71]

Godard too stated that he, Truffaut, Rivette, and Rohmer looked to the other

'gang of four', Marcel Pagnol, Marguerite Duras, Sacha Guitry, and Cocteau as

models since they were literary-minded men and women who also made cinema,

often better than the film-makers themselves, as they were willing to take risks

and be daring. Godard compared Cocteau to a skater dancing freestyle in the

section of a competition that requires one to follow a routine, saying that it

confused the judges. He felt that Cocteau faced the same obstacles as the New

Wave directors in trying to make a film outside of the closed shop that was the

film industry, and frequently paid homage to him on screen. For example, in *Le

Petit Soldat* characters read aloud from Cocteau's novel *Thomas l'imposteur*,

and in *À bout de souffle* the novelist Parvulesco (played by Melville) refers to *Le

Testament d'Orphée* in response to a question about poetry.[72]

    Cocteau anticipated several New Wave aesthetics, most prominently the

concept of the cinematograph as a means of writing. Alexandre Astruc

developed this notion in 'The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: *La Caméra-Stylo*'

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[70] François Truffaut, 'A Certain Tendency in French Cinema (1954)', in *The French New Wave: Critical Landmarks*, eds. Peter Graham with Ginette Vincendeau (London: BFI Book, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 56–57.

[71] Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, 'L'Histoire des *Cahiers*', *Cahiers* 100 (October 1959): 68.

[72] Noël Simsolo, 'Les Mensonges et les vérités', *Le Sept Art*, 1996, *Orphée*, directed by Cocteau (London: BFI Releasing, 2004), DVD.

(1948).[73] Cocteau's artisan working style set him apart from the methods of the wider industry and anticipated the approach of many New Wave film-makers. Cocteau himself said:

> The severity of trade-union regulations in Hollywood and London makes it impossible to work without the intermediary of an army of specialists. But in France, filmmaking is a family affair, and no one rebels if his prerogatives are encroached upon – lighting, sets, costumes, make-up, music and so forth. All this rests in my hands and I work in close collaboration with my assistants. Consequently, as my unit itself admits, the film becomes a thing of my very own to which they have contributed by their advice and skill.[74]

Also, as early as *L'Éternel Retour* (1943), Cocteau advocated the use of 16mm film: 'a perfect weapon with which the poet can hunt for beauty, alone, free and with his "shot-gun" camera on his shoulder'.[75] This style of filmmaking became the hallmark of the New Wave. Filming on location, using natural light and sounds, hiring unknown actors, and using loose or improvised dialogue and real time narratives all reflected this desire. Their low-budget approaches had a dramatic impact on the way in which sound was treated in their cheaply and quickly produced films.

Major sonic changes brought about by New Wave cinema included the use of direct recorded sound on location, and the decline in traditional symphonic scoring and of the popular monothematicism that had come to dominate mainstream French cinema.[76] There was something unpredictable about New Wave sound, which frequently engaged in heavy editing and undertook experimentation such as the manipulation of everyday speech.[77]

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[73] Alexandre Astruc, 'The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: *La Caméra-Stylo* (1948)', in *The French New Wave: Critical Landmarks*, 35.
[74] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 22.
[75] Cocteau, 'Éternel Retour', in *The Art of Cinema*, eds. André Bernard and Claude Gauteur, trans. Robin Buss (London: Marion Books, 2001), 192.
[76] Cooke, *A History of Film Music*, 320.
[77] Chion, *Film*, 95.

Points of contact with *musique concrète* were particularly clear in the films of

Alain Robbe-Grillet who worked with Michael Fano to produce *musique*

concrète style soundscapes.[78] More generally, connections can be located in the

use of real world sound in New Wave cinema and techniques such as recording

sounds backwards or playing with volume. (It is worth acknowledging,

however, that the use of source sound in New Wave films sometimes impeded

the audience's comprehension; in *À bout de souffle* the dialogue of Michel

(Jean-Paul Belmondo) and Patricia (Jean Seberg) can become obscured by street

noise, for instance.) Another connection between New Wave cinema and

contemporary art music was the frequent adoption of avant-garde music in their

films. Alain Resnais frequently employed non-film composers such as

Krzysztof Penderecki and Hans Werner Henze in an attempt to move away from

existing film sounds; he secured Henze for *Muriel* (1963) and Penderecki for *Je*

t'aime, je t'aime (1968).[79] Resnais even drew comparisons between his filmic

structures and the patterns of concert music. He compared *Hiroshima mon*

amour to a musical quartet, which comprised a theme and variations with

recapitulations and a *decrescendo* in the finale.[80]

Among the film-makers of the period, Godard stands out for his

manipulation of music and sound as materials in film. Gorbman argues that:

> he is perhaps the only director to invoke music in what he considers the
> most powerful attribute of cinema, montage. If we routinely accept the
> brutality of visual editing, that is, one visual field cutting instantaneously
> to another, Godard has music participate in that fragmenting and
> discontinuity also, with the project to problematise and frustrate the
> viewer's desire for a seamless pseudo-reality onscreen.[81]

[78] Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, 187.
[79] *Ibid,*, 186.
[80] Cooke, *A History of Film Music*, 329.
[81] Gorbman, 'Auteur Music', 153.

Godard drew on a wide range of editing strategies in his films and his resulting

soundscapes were texturally dense; Alan Williams compares their effect to that

of the composition-in-depth and long shot that André Bazin advocated, which

leaves it up to the spectator to focus on any element in the *mise-en-scène* that

interests him/her rather than having it foregrounded in a close-up. In contrast to

Hollywood's tendency to highlight the important narrative sounds, Godard's use

of omnidirectional microphones and refusal to mix and edit ambient sound

within a track when it has been recorded achieves a distinctive 'continuously

audible' effect.[82] He drew on a wide range of sources, mixing music composed

for his films with popular songs and classical repertoire. In reference to the

latter, he repeatedly drew on Beethoven string quartets in several 1960s films

including *Le Nouveau Monde* (1962), *Une Femme mariée* (1964), and *Deux ou

trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1967). In contrast to prior practice, rather than

employing nondiegetic music in a way that encourages immersion in the

narrative and leads to a greater sense of realism, Godard tended to manipulate

music to draw attention to the artifice of film. He stated in 1968 that:

> I try to use music like another picture which isn't a picture, like another
> element. Like another sound but in a different form.[83]

While I would argue for a connection between Godard's films and

Cocteau's high level of innovation in handling sonic materials and the

eclecticism in choice of music in his later films, Godard's films can be visually

and sonically overwhelming. In contrast to a Hollywood film or a *qualité* film,

the audience is bombarded with visual and sonic information. From his earliest

feature, Godard has repeatedly treated music and sound as materials and there

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[82] Alan Williams, 'Godard's Use of Sound', in Weis and Belton, *Film Sound*, 337–338.
[83] Quoted in Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, 188.

are numerous instances of techniques such as reduction in volume of nondiegetic music or of music from one scene being carried into the next for no apparent narrative reason. In *À bout de souffle*, Patricia turns on the radio and it plays continuously over her conversation with Michel. However, the spectator soon becomes aware that it is 'broadcasting' the melodies that have already been identified as nondiegetic underscore music earlier in the film. In addition, there is no break between this music and the radio presenter's voice as it announces the music to follow, which has a disorientating effect. As Godard became more influenced by Brechtian politics of distanciation in the early 1960s, he adopted a formalist editing approach.[84] *Pierrot le fou* (1965) includes more extreme examples of sonic editing that constantly draw attention to film's constructed nature. The leading character Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo) could be describing the impact of the film when he speaks to a friend:

> I have a 'seeing system' called eyes. I use my ears to hear and my mouth to speak but I feel as if these systems are separate. There is no unity.

This lack of unity is characteristic of the image and sound combinations in *Pierrot*.[85] The film includes a huge variety of sonic material including nondiegetic music, diegetic music and musical performances by Marianne (Anna Karina) that combine her diegetic singing with nondiegetic underscore. Godard commissioned Antoine Duhamel to compose the underscore music and the composer duly produced four separate compositions for him. Godard then edited the nondiegetic music in a way that creates disjunction with the narrative, increasing and decreasing the volume for no logical reason, and repeating the same snippets of music obsessively. There are also occasions where sound is

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[84] Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, 210.
[85] See *Ibid*, 188–211 for a detailed analysis of Godard's *Vivre sa vie* and *Pierrot le fou*.

treated in a sort of mixed up montage with images. In Marianne's apartment, short sequences of images are shown out of their correct narrative order while the dialogue that accompanies them is similarly disjunct and repeated without narrative logic. While Godard's continuous play with the visual and sonic components of *Pierrot* seem to invoke formalism, the broader idea of sound montage – a concept used by Royal S. Brown and Alan Williams – is perhaps the best descriptor of Godard's work across his film soundscapes, and is also the clearest point of contact with some of Cocteau's work.

The New Wave directors' manipulations of sound are more extreme than anything to be found in Cocteau's oeuvre but the latter did anticipate some of their creative practices in designing his soundscapes. For instance, Cocteau's development of accidental synchronisation in *Sang* and heavy editing of Auric's music in *Orphée* prefigure techniques found in many New Wave films, such as scenes with the 'wrong' music. Likewise, Cocteau's manipulation of sound through heavy editing in *Le Testament d'Orphée* is related to *musique concrète* experimentation and the work of New Wave directors, particularly Godard. Furthermore, his organisation of a sound montage of musical material in *Les Parents terribles* could be viewed as a less extreme version of Godard's manipulation of sound as material in films such as *Vivre sa vie* (1962) and *Pierrot le fou*.

Cocteau's work in film spanned three decades in the mid-twentieth century and during this period there were significant chronological overlaps both with the experimental compositions of the *musique concrète* composers and with the innovative film making of New Wave directors. *Musique concrète* was developed during the 1940s and has continued to be developed through to more

recent decades, although it was at its peak of influence during the 1950s and 1960s, at the time of Cocteau's later films, *Orphée* (1950) and *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960). This movement utilised new technologies and enabled new creative possibilities for handling sonic materials in both art music and film sound. On close examination of Cocteau's approach to film sound, it becomes clear that he was always eager to engage creatively with the technology and resources available to him and he appears to have been aware of new ways of employing sound in film, and even utilised *musique concrète* techniques in the development of some of his soundscapes. New Wave film directors also embraced developments in technology for creative purposes, and directors such as Resnais and Godard engaged in highly experimental practices with film sound. Although the New Wave only truly started as Cocteau's career was drawing to a close in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he was repeatedly referred to as an important precursor to their aesthetics of filmmaking, and his work on film sound can be viewed as an influence on some of their sonic practices. It is Cocteau's creative conceptualisation and handling of sonic materials in film that secures his place as a significant link between *musique concrète* and New Wave film sound and as an important figure in the early history of French film sound design.

CHAPTER TWO

The Early Years: Sound and Music in Cocteau's Dramatic World

Cocteau was a fan and critic of film before he ever tried his hand at directing, having reviewed and written extensively for journals such as *Paris-Midi* and *Cinéa* during the silent film era. He was well aware of contemporary trends in filmmaking, including the tendency among numerous French film-makers and critics to draw analogies with music in the development of the new medium. He was equally engaged in the musical world: he listened to, wrote about, and collaborated on a number of musical spectacles from his early years. Understanding the context in which Cocteau first developed an interest in cinema and engaging with his early musical opinions and collaborations, as well as his perspective on music in drama, considerably enriches any effort to approach his film soundscapes. French cinematic discourse concerning music and sound dating from the latter part of the silent era reveals that Symbolist aesthetics had a tangible influence on avant-garde cinema; it also goes some way towards explaining how Symbolism might also have shaped Cocteau's thoughts on film sound. Furthermore, Cocteau's efforts to be actively involved with the music and sound for his early dramatic works can be interpreted as the earliest manifestations of his interest in soundscape design. Focussing on Cocteau's early filmic and musical experiences and engagements, in this chapter I shall reveal the ways in which Paris's musical and film worlds intertwined during the poet's early years and outline the foundations for my ensuing reading of Cocteau as a proto-sound designer.

Early French Cinema

Prior to his own forays into filmmaking, Cocteau took a keen interest in the developing medium of cinema. He was in the audience for the screening of the first Lumière brothers' films in their cellars near the Old England department store on the Boulevard des Capucines. Cinema formed a key aspect of his social life and he enjoyed regular cinema evenings with friends in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Nancy Perloff describes how Cocteau, Milhaud, Poulenc and Auric, along with some poet and painter friends, would roam Paris at least one night of the week in search of circus, music hall and film spectacles.[1] The group particularly admired American films such as *Pour sauver sa race* (1916) and *La Petite Tennessee* (1916).[2] Cocteau became a devoted fan of the Hollywood serials of both Chaplin and Mary Pickford and his opinions on cinema at this stage can be detected through his autobiographical writings such as *Opium*, as well as his critical pieces for the press, particularly his column for *Paris-Midi*, 'Carte Blanche'.[3] His broad familiarity with both American and French cinema is abundantly clear in the press column, especially when lauding Chaplin.

> The best, uncontestably, is Charlie Chaplin. His films have no rivals – neither the theatre film where the spectator has the impression of being deaf, nor the Far West film where the landscape blends in with the drama, nor the serial where mysterious men (…) do good and evil under the cape of Rodolphe and with the fortune of Monte-Cristo.[4]

Cinema made a strong positive impression on Cocteau, who drew comparisons between film and the older art forms; for example, he argued that a fight scene in

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[1] Nancy Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 91–92.

[2] Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau* (Boston: David R. Govine, 1970), 238.

[3] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 89.

[4] Jean Cocteau, 'Carte Blanche', *Paris-Midi*, 28 April 1919 and 12 May 1919. In Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History and Anthology*, vol. 1(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 172–174.

Carmen of the Klondike was 'as memorable as the greatest books in the world'.[5]

In addition to Chaplin and Pickford, he admired Buster Keaton, Sergei

Eisenstein, Orson Welles, Robert Bresson, Hollywood Westerns and Cecil B. De

Mille, but tended to be less vocal about the films of his French avant-garde

contemporaries.[6]

Attending the cinema during these early years, Cocteau would have

regularly encountered films accompanied by compiled scores, usually of pre-

existing music. Auric contrasted the silent and sound cinema music as follows:

> Sound cinema demanded the composition of original scores; until then,
> all the music that accompanied silent films amounted only to
> adaptations.[7]

While this is something of an oversimplification, silent films did use a far

greater proportion of pre-existing music or improvisation based on pre-existing

music than sound film. Silent films were often accompanied by live music and

voices and, as explored by Rick Altman, there is no consistent sense that

spectators objected to silence when films were shown without an

accompaniment in the early period.[8] Indeed, it was the talkies that were

objected to when they first arrived, with what many perceived to be extraneous

dialogue. In the early 1910s, the theorist Yhcam praised the muteness of silent

cinema that required spectators to imagine the dialogue.[9] In the early years of

sound film, music was often relegated to opening and closing credits and scenes

[5] Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 237.
[6] James S. Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 22.
[7] Georges Auric, 'How Film Music Was Born and How it is Made Today', *Arts*, 17 July 1952, trans. Roust, in James Wierzbicki, Nathan Platte, and Colin Roust, *The Routledge Film Music Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 143.
[8] Rick Altman, 'The Silence of the Silents', *The Musical Quarterly* 80 (Winter 1996), 648–718.
[9] Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, 22.

involving music-making or dancing. It would be the mid-1930s before music as underscore would pick up momentum.[10]

French film-makers of the early sound era were influenced by imports from the United States and Germany. The sheer volume of American films on the French market is reflected in a 1929 trade press report of one hundred and ten available sound films: one hundred and four were American, four were French, and two were German.[11] However, even when the same technology was made available to both U.S. and French film-makers, they did not utilise it in the same way. This is something that Cocteau was well aware of:

> America made films in which theatre and photography slowly gave way to a new form because they were better equipped than we were and they acted like engineers who instead of stripping the airplane completely of its wings simply reduced them slightly.[12]

Charles O'Brien has noted that, roughly speaking, 1930s Hollywood cinema emphasised sound's intelligibility within a film's story-world, while French film of the same period concentrated on reproducing a staged performance.[13] A distinction emerged in early French sound cinema between the *film parlant* (talking film) and *film sonore* (sound film). The *film parlant* featured direct-recorded sound and prevailed in mainstream French cinema while the avant-garde embraced the *film sonore* with post-synchronised sound.[14]

Although Cocteau was appreciative of Hollywood cinema, he was in favour of the *film sonore* in France. While he never saw himself as part of an avant-garde tradition, the public would understand his own first attempts in

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[10] Neil Lerner, 'The Strange Case of Rouben Mamoulian's Sound Stew: The Uncanny Soundtrack in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931)', in *Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear*, ed. Lerner (New York: Routledge. 2010), 56.

[11] Charles O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound: Technology and Film Style in France and the U.S.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 64–65.

[12] Cocteau, 'Carte Blanche', *Paris-Midi*, 28 April 1919 and 12 May 1919.

[13] O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound*, 1.

[14] *Ibid*., 65.

filmmaking as distinctly avant-garde in style.[15] Furthermore, in his writings of

the period, he encouraged experimentation that was in line with that of

contemporary avant-garde film-makers. He wrote in 'Carte-Blanche': 'I want

disinterested artists to explore perspective, slow motion, fast motion, an

unknown world onto which chance often opens the door'.[16] During the silent

period, French film music theory centred on the function of music as an

illustration of the images, and challenges to this approach only arose when

avant-garde film-makers began to experiment with unconventional visual

styles.[17] The impetus to experiment in the first place was the direct result of

critics and film-makers such as Germaine Dulac (1882–1942), Ricciotto Canudo

(1879–1923), Emile Vuillermoz (1878–1960), and Léon Moussinac (1890–

1964) who drew analogies between cinema and music. These *cinéastes* were

influenced by the idea of 'pure music' and were driven by this to develop a 'pure

cinema', which referred to 'cinema based on inherently visual styles, divorced

from literature and theatre, and shaped into anti-narrative (often dreamlike)

forms'.[18] David Bordwell argues that the Wagnerian model of the

Gesamtkunstwerk allowed film-makers to compare the relationship of music and

drama in opera to the relationship of cinema (defined as the visual elements and

techniques specific to film) and narrative in the motion picture. For many

French film-makers, film's expressive possibilities (lighting, editing, movement,

focus) could play the role of the orchestra in Wagnerian opera by intensifying

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[15] Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau*, 22.

[16] Cocteau, 'Carte Blanche', *Paris-Midi*, 28 April 1919 and 12 May 1919.

[17] Julia Hubbert, 'Eisenstein's Theory of Film Music Revisited: Silent and Early Sound
Antecedents', in *Cultural Politics and Propaganda: Composing for the Screen in Germany and
the USSR*, eds. Robynn J. Stilwell and Phil Powrie (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,
2008), 127.

[18] Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895–1924* (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 167.

emotions latent in the drama.[19] The elevation of and reference to Wagner

continues in film music criticism to the present day, and in connection with all

kinds of film music. Scott Paulin has discussed film commentators' tendency to

fetishize Wagner, the supposed unifier of all the arts, since associating film with

his operas repressed the lack of unity in film and supported the case for film as

art.[20]

      Cocteau was keenly aware of the issues that preoccupied these avant-

garde film-makers and occasionally commented on some of their concerns in the

press, including the emergence of new terminology reflective of a Symbolist

aesthetic in the cinema. Heavily bound up with musical aesthetics, Symbolism

was celebrated in 1920s French Impressionist cinema due to its ability to reveal

hidden truths and to suggest and present dreamlike images without the physical

presence of the actor.[21] In the 1910s, Louis Delluc (1890–1924) coined the term

photogénie, which became key to the success of this cinema. *Photogénie*

described the transformative power of the cinema when an object is imbued with

a new significance by virtue of being filmed. Although he didn't use Delluc's

term, Cocteau clearly agreed with his observation about cinematography itself,

writing in his column 'Carte Blanche', in *Paris-Midi* in Spring 1919, that by

filming objects, 'we believe we are seeing them for the first time'.[22] Richard

Abel notes that, for Delluc, *photogénie* could create access to a new world of

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[19] David Bordwell, 'The Musical Analogy', *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 144–145.
[20] Scott D. Paulin, 'Richard Wagner and the Fantasy of Cinematic Unity: The Idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the History and Theory of Film Music', in *Music and Cinema*, eds. James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 59. On the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and film in the U.S. context, see *Wagner and Cinema*, ed. Jeongwon Joe and Sander L. Gilman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
[21] CatherineTaylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation: The Shift from Stage to Screen in France' (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2000), 163–164.
[22] Cocteau, 'Carte Blanche', *Paris-Midi*, 28 April 1919 and 12 May 1919.

mystery.[23] During the same period, L'Herbier and Vuillermoz strove towards a

subjective, psychological narrative. According to French theorist Jean Mitry,

the essential characteristic of French cinema of this period was exemplified in

L'Herbier's efforts to force the camera lens to represent filmed objects in the

light of a psychological and poetic interpretation.[24] Throughout World War One,

Vuillermoz acted as a proponent for the cinema as a medium of expression for

the subjective where the interior life of the character was an integral part of the

narrative.[25] He constantly drew analogies between cinematic and musical

composition:

> It [cinema] is exactly like a symphony! The cinema orchestrates images,
> scores our visions and memories according to a strictly musical process:
> it must choose its visual themes, render them expressive, meticulously
> regulate their exposition, their opportune return, their measure and
> rhythm, develop them, break them down into parts, reintroduce them in
> fragments, as the treatises on composition put it, through 'augmentation'
> and 'diminution'. […]
> More fortunate than painting and sculpture, the cinema, like music,
> possesses all the riches, all the inflections, and all the nuances of beauty
> in movement: cinema produces counterpoint and harmony… but it still
> awaits its Debussy![26]

Also recognising the musical potential of cinema, Marcel Gromaire argued that

both cinema and music were autonomous arts and that to imagine a film based

on a literary work is to compose an opera for the eyes.[27] Vuillermoz, Delluc,

Moussinac and René Clair behaved as though filmic rhythm automatically

functioned like music, while Canudo conceived of a new musical drama where

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[23] Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, vol. 1, 111.

[24] Jean Mitry, *The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema*, trans. Christopher King
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 110. Also, on French avant-garde cinema, see
Mitry, *Le Cinéma expérimental: Histoires et perspectives* (Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1974).

[25] Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, vol. 1, 106.

[26] Emile Vuillermoz, 'Devant l'écran', *Le Temps*, 29 November 1916, in Abel, *French Film
Theory and Criticism*, vol. 1, 131–132.

[27] Marcel Gromaire, 'Idées d'un peinture sur le cinéma', *Les Crapouillet* 1 April – 26 June 1919,
in Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, vol. 1, 174–182.

rhythm would be generated by music.[28] In a 1911 article, 'The Birth of the Sixth

Art', Canudo evoked Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* to argue that cinema could

synthesise the plastic arts with those of music and poetry into a new form of

theatre, 'plastic art in motion'.[29]

The singling out of music as a model prompted avant-garde film-makers

to imitate one of its distinctive characteristics, rhythm.[30] There was a growing

concern for *cinégraphie* (rhythmic principles that govern the placement, duration

and interrelation of film images) and one of the most important developments in

this respect was Dulac's 'visual symphony'. She contended that 'pure' film was

'a visual symphony of rhythmic images which the feeling of the artist alone

coordinates and projects onto the screen'.[31] In a 1924 lecture, 'The Expressive

Techniques of the Cinema', Dulac explained how the composition of images in

film could be constructed in a manner suggestive of the inner emotions of

characters.[32] Dulac based the construction of her film *La Coquille et le*

clergyman (1928) on music and this allowed her to avoid the constraints of

narrative causality and character development through action.[33] Instead musical

rhythm influenced her cinematic rhythm, which resulted from the careful

arrangement of cinema syntax (shots, fade, dissolve, superimposition, soft focus

and distortion) to reflect the psychology and 'interior life' of the characters.[34]

Dulac lauded Abel Gance's film *La Roue* (1922) as a valuable example of this

sort of cinema in which the order and sequence of the images is manipulated and

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[28] Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, vol. 1, 210.
[29] Ricciotto Canudo, 'The Birth of a Sixth Art', *Les Entretiens idéalistes*, 25 October 1911, in Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, vol. 1, 58–66.
[30] Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation', 164.
[31] Quoted in Mitry, *The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema*, 112.
[32] Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation', 151.
[33] *Ibid.*, 207.
[34] *Ibid.*, 151.

edited in a manner to maximise impact on the spectator.[35] *La Roue* produced an

accelerated rhythmic film form through a montage of shots that become shorter

and shorter.[36] Cocteau was impressed by *La Roue* and described the film as

important to the development of cinema to the same extent that Picasso had been

important to the development of painting.[37]

While avant-garde film-makers looked to musical models in their

approaches to filmmaking, the challenge remained as to how composers

themselves were to face the problem of composing for films that did not always

follow a logical narrative. Satie and Milhaud, both close friends of Cocteau,

offered pioneering solutions to the problem and one can guess that Cocteau's

own interest in this challenge might have been awakened once his close friends

began to express an interest in music for cinema. For instance, inspired by

South American rhythms, Milhaud composed a piece that mixed Brazilian

rhythms, a portuguese fado, tangos, and sambas, hoping that it might be used to

accompany a Chaplin film. Once Cocteau heard a version of this for two pianos,

he suggested that Milhaud might prepare an orchestral version for the ballet *Le

Boeuf sur le toit* (1921)*,* a farce set in a Prohibition-era American speakeasy

(The Nothing-Doing Bar).[38] Performed at the Comédie des Champs Élysées on

21 February 1920, the ballet was described as a 'cinema-symphony on South

American themes staged as a farce by Jean Cocteau'. In fact, Cocteau was

influenced by silent film in his choreography for this ballet and, in spite of

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[35] Arthur Honegger was asked to compose a score for *La Roue* but never completed it. Gance was inspired by musical structures and he drew on musical notation to edit part of *La Roue*. He gave this notation to Honegger so that he could try to match the rhythm of the images with his music. Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 20. This compositional process greatly impressed Auric who recalled the use of an extraordinary little machine that measured tempo in relation to the length of filmstrip. Auric, 'How Film Music Was Born and How it is Made Today', 143.
[36] Mitry, *The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema*, 109.
[37] Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 31.
[38] Claude Arnaud, *Cocteau* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2003), 233.

Milhaud's fast paced dance rhythms, he deliberately encouraged his performers to imitate cinematic slow motion to give the audience the impression they were watching movement in a dream or under water.[39] The idea of moving in a dream state and the contrast between the images and the musical rhythms are both themes that recurred when Cocteau came to work on his first film, an issue that I will return to in the next chapter.

The composer that Cocteau looked up to as the leader of a new musical aesthetic – Satie – was also one of the first among the avant-garde to compose an original film score.[40] Satie was involved with René Clair's first film, *Entr'acte*, which was created for the interval in the *Ballets Suédois*'s production of *Relâche* (1924): Satie composed the music for both ballet and film. His orchestral score for the '*Entr'acte*' film requires flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, one trombone, percussion and strings:[41] a familiar combination in Parisian music halls. Martin Miller Marks observes that Satie built the score out of repetitive patterns connected in units of four and eight bars and notes the existence of Satie's sketches that help to ascertain how to match his music to the film's images.[42] However, Douglas W. Gallez describes the synchronisation of music and image as a challenge due to discrepancies in length and running time reported for the film and the available data and recording of the score. Directions in the score indicate that Satie relied on the conductor Roger Désormière to adjust the tempo and repeat segments as required in order to synchronise the music and action onscreen.[43] As a basic

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[39] *Ibid.*, 234.
[40] Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film*, 167.
[41] *Ibid.*, 170.
[42] *Ibid.*, 169 and 171.
[43] Douglas W. Gallez, "'Satie's Entr'acte': A Model of Film Music', *Cinema Journal* 16 (Autumn 1976): 40–41.

principle, Satie used eight-bar segments as the unit most closely matched with the length of a shot in a film and each segment is filled with a musical phrase that is ripe for repetition.[44] For Miller Marks, Satie's composition provided a unique solution to the problems posed by non-narrative film, matching music to the film images so well that it helped to 'elucidate its structure, and extend its range of meanings'.[45] Music matches events onscreen in its tone and characteristics; for example, section four of the film focuses on a ballerina's exercises and the music becomes correspondingly lyrical, slowing down to a triple metre and including what Marks identifies as 'the first real tune of the score'. The section is rounded off smoothly, reflecting the grace and orderliness of the dancer's exercises. *Entr'acte*'s repetition of musical figures matched with fleeting images also presented one solution to the challenge of form for cinema music. For a sequence where a man shoots at a dancing egg, the performers are instructed by Satie to play the same musical unit repeatedly until the egg is shot. (The music is rhythmically agitated and dissonant, paralleling the effect of the increasing agitation of the man trying to shoot the egg.[46]) The overall effect is of blocks of patterns shifting abruptly from one to the next when the images change on the screen.[47]

Satie's solution to the challenge of composing for film was certainly unique and it was shaped by Paris's music-hall culture. Nancy Perloff has convincingly argued that the music hall and the cinema were closely interlinked in early twentieth-century Paris. She describes how cartoons could be seen at music halls, circuses, and café concerts while theatres such as the Grands

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[44] Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France, 1885 to World War I*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage, 1968), 170–171.
[45] Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film*, 167, 170 and 183.
[46] *Ibid.*, 177–178.
[47] Gallez, "'Satie's Entr'acte", 49.

Magasins Dufayel and the Musée Grevin had evenings devoted to cinema.

Performers such as Chaplin, Maurice Chevalier and Max Linder moved

seamlessly from film to the music hall and film became the subject of music hall

sketches. Vice versa, music hall orchestras often accompanied silent films and

music hall turns were used as the basis of musical 'shorts'; Perloff mentions

military drum music and fanfares accompanying a 1902 film of Franco-Russian

and Spanish celebrations, shown at the Grands Magasins Dufayel.[48] The

closeness of these two worlds during Cocteau's early years in Paris and the

integral part they played in his social and artistic groups undoubtedly impacted

on his developing aesthetics in both arts forms, and I would argue also laid the

foundations for his interest in film sound. With a clearer understanding of

Cocteau's opinions on early cinema and the issues that preoccupied him and his

contemporaries, the focus must now shift to the other side of the coin: Cocteau's

place in and understanding of Paris's musical world.

Early Musical Encounters

Cocteau's interest in getting closely involved with music and sound for the

cinema could be understood as a continuation of his fascination with music from

his earliest years, his understanding of the importance of music in the dramatic

arts, and his desire to be at the cutting edge of what was modern. He was born

into a respectable bourgeois family which had a rather dilettante view of music.

His parents went to the Opéra and the Comédie-française; in *Portraits-Souvenir*

Cocteau described his time spent watching his mother prepare to go to the

Opéra, saying it was a 'prologue to the real spectacle for which all these

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[48] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 42–44.

elegances were invented'.[49] The particular concert series that they attended

reveal their firm placement as members of the bourgeoisie. Cocteau's early

experiences of live music-making were largely due to his grandparents. His

grandmother was acquainted with Rossini and his grandfather owned a set of

Stradivarius violins. Cocteau described the nights when his grandfather's

quartet would assemble in the house and he and the other grandchildren would

spy on them from the staircase.[50] He went to the *petite salle* at the Paris

Conservatoire with his grandfather where he encountered the music of

Beethoven, Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner. He recalled that 'it was another type of

miracle, this room!'[51] These musical encounters seem to have greatly affected

him and gave him a taste for the performing arts and the theatre, leading to his

contraction of the theatrical bug, 'the red and gold disease'.[52] Arguably, these

outings also shaped his taste in later years, when he would draw on classical

music in his film soundscapes and display a good knowledge of the classical

musical canon.

Paris's circus culture and emerging jazz presence also impressed the

young Cocteau as one can see from his descriptions of a daytrip to the circus

with Josephine, his German nanny. He vividly recalled the smell of the New-

Circus and 'the orchestra suspended in the air from the vast nave where we burst

into laughter, in the middle of trombones, cornets, bass drums, and drum

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[49] Cocteau, *Portraits-Souvenir: 1900–1914* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1935), 38.

[50] 'Même les Stradivarius sacrés qui résonnent lorsqu'un autre Stradivarius s'exprime n'importe où [*sic.*], quittaient le velours bleu, le soir où se réunissait le quatour: Saraste, Sivori, Grébert et l'hôte amateur, Eugène Lecomte. Ces soirs de musique de chambre, le jeux consistait, pour mes cousins et moi, à ramper le long des marches de l'escalier solennel qui réunissait les deux étages et qui, je le répète, par suite de cette sorcellerie situant l'appartement supérieur hors de l'espace, faisait de cet escalier un lieu en soi, qui se suffisait, et dont la suprême limite était une grille mise par ma grand-père afin de nous épargner les chutes.' *Ibid.*, 28–29.

[51] *Ibid.*, 23.

[52] 'Depuis l'enfance et les départs de ma mère et de mon père pour le theatre, j'ai contracté le mal rouge et or.' Cocteau, *La Difficulté d'être* (1947; Reprint Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1983), 51.

music'.[53] The music seems to have been jazz-like in its choice of instruments

and use of syncopation:

> The brass and the drums of the orchestra attacked an unknown music
> whose rhythm evoked the marches that Souza [*sic*] directed and
> punctuated with blasts of fire.[54]

> Despite his obvious appreciation of music, Cocteau never formally

learned to play an instrument and later regretted this fact:

> I would like to be a musician and that which Beethoven in a letter to an
> editor on *Fidelio* calls the "science of the art" prevents me from it.[55]

However, there are numerous testimonies from friends and colleagues that he

had a highly musical ear. Auric stated to André Fraigneau that:

> He did not compose any music, because he had not learned music. I am
> certain that if he had had the vaguest notions of what a chord was he
> would have written music but he did not know, he had never learned the
> piano. […] he had in fact a perfect musical memory, he could sing
> anything at all that he wished to evoke in front of us. He used to sit
> himself at the piano, and he who had not learned the piano, I recall
> having heard him play passages from Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*.[56]

Cocteau was also eager to play percussion at the famous Bar Gaya, established

by Jean Wiéner and supported by Cocteau and Milhaud. On the opening night,

all three friends played music together – Wiéner on piano with Cocteau,

Milhaud, and Marcelle Meyer on a bass drum and kettledrum borrowed from

Stravinsky.[57]

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[53] 'L'orchestre suspendu en l'air de la vaste nef où l'on débouche en pleins rires, en pleine musique de trombones, de pistons, de grosse caisse et de tambours'. *Portraits-Souvenir*, 64 and 66.

[54] 'Les cuivres et les tambours de l'orchestre attaquèrent une musique inconnue dont le rythme évoquait les marches que Souza dirigeait et ponctuait de coups de feu.' *Ibid*., 73.

[55] 'J'aimerais être musicien et ce que Beethoven, dans une lettre à un éditeur sur *Fidelio* appelle "la science de l'art" m'en empêche.' Cocteau, *La Revue de Paris*, February 1958.

[56] 'Il n'a pas composé de musique, parce qu'il n'avait pas appris la musique. Je suis certain que s'il avait eu les plus vagues notions de ce que peut être un accord il aurait écrit de la musique mais il ne savait, il n'avait jamais appris le piano. […] il avait en effet une parfaite mémoire musicale, il pouvait chanter n'importe quelle chose qu'il avait l'intention d'évoquer devant vous. Il se mettait au piano, et lui qui n'avait pas appris le piano, je me souviens de l'avoir entendu jouer des passages de *Petrouchka* de Stravinski.' Auric, 'Témoignages', *Avec les musiciens*, vol. 7 of *Cahiers Jean Cocteau*, ed. Léon Dile Milorad (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 71.

[57] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 93.

In spite of his lack of technique, Cocteau did not shy away from writing about music using non-technical language. During the 1920s he frequently went to war in the press in defence of his closest musician friends, *Les Six*. Henri Collet conferred this title upon Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc and Germaine Tailleferre in a 1920 article in *Comoedia*.[58] Cocteau viewed himself as a sort of artistic director of the group and Auric commented that:

> The prodigious activity of "our" poet, whose devotion, affection and friendship rapidly gained us admittance to the most inaccessible places.[59]

It was through close contact with Serge Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* that Cocteau had his first close encounters with theatre music. Although he socialised with the troupe, he was most well known at this stage as a salon poet. He often recounted how a conversation with Diaghilev in 1912 at the Place de la Concorde changed his career forever when the impresario challenged him to astonish everyone, and also how the première of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*, performed by the *Ballets Russes* on 29 May 1913, shocked the young poet in terms of the effect that art could have.[60]

Cocteau's journalism during these early years reveals the extent to which he was aware of major musical currents and was not, as he was often accused, ignorant of the subtleties of musical debate. This is particularly clear in two of his open letters, one published in *Le Mot* on 27 February 1915 and the other in a volume published by Stock in June 1926.[61] In these letters, he discusses Debussy's treatment of melody and he situates himself in the Stravinsky camp in

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[58] *Ibid*., 5.

[59] Auric, 'On the Diaghileff Ballet and Jean Cocteau', *The Ballet Annual*, 11 (1957), 71–77 in *Écrits sur la musique de Georges Auric*, ed. Carl Schmidt (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), vol. 1, 149–55.

[60] Cocteau, *La Difficulté d'être*, 45.

[61] Quoted in *Catalogue de l'exposition: Jean Cocteau, sur le fil du siècle* (Paris: Adagp, 2003).

the Stravinsky-Schoenberg arguments that raged at the time. Cocteau was very

eager to work with Stravinsky on a ballet called *David* that he envisaged would

depict events from the life of the biblical character for a modern audience.

Despite his best efforts to inveigle Stravinsky into composing for the spectacle

over the course of several months in 1914, this project was never realised.

Cocteau's plans for the ballet included phonographs and megaphones,

symptomatic of his desire to interpret the subject for modern times.[62] Cocteau

similarly failed to bring to fruition another project started in 1915: a version of

Un Songe d'une nuit d'été with Edgar Varèse, which instead of containing

Mendelssohn's music was to be composed of a cocktail of Satie, Maurice Ravel,

Florent Schmitt, Varèse and Stravinsky and should have included a mixture of

clowns, cinema, and the circus.[63] Elements of the production appeared in *Le

Boeuf sur le toit* (1920), however, and the principle of a pot-pourri of music can

be found in *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* (1921) as well as in his later films.

Cocteau's eclectic musical tastes from the earliest years inspired his artworks in

other media: he composed numerous poems on favourite classical compositions

including Mozart's Symphony in C Major and Bach's Fugue in C Major and

later in life he stated that it was jazz and popular music that most closely

paralleled his creative process.[64]

Cocteau's taste for contributing to the development of his film

soundscapes can already be detected on examination of his first complete

involvement on a musical project, the ballet *Parade* (1917), for which he

[62] Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge, M.A.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 243.
[63] *Ibid.*, 241–242.
[64] 'Ma méthode de travail ressemble curieusement au jazz. […] J'ai improvisé avec les lignes et les couleurs en 1959 comme Charlie Parker improvisait en 1949 au saxophone.' David Gullentops, *Cocteau et la musique* (Paris: Michel de Maule, 2006), 134 and 147.

provided the texts and scenarios. Diaghilev directed, Léonide Massine was responsible for the choreography, Pablo Picasso designed the sets and costumes, and Satie composed the music. Daniel Albright argues that Cocteau's principal intent in writing the scenario was to devise a form of vaudeville in which high art movements such as Cubism, Symbolism, and Futurism would try to cope with all manner of popular elements.[65] The ballet consists of three acts performed by a Chinese Conjurer, an American Dancer and two Acrobats, overseen by three managers, and the whole is divided into six movements. The narrative follows the efforts of these characters to attract a crowd inside their travelling theatre through short performances on an elevated platform or 'parade' outside the venue. Film influences can be detected in many aspects of the work, and were clearly a part of Cocteau's conceptualisation of the project. Albright argues that *Parade* is a *ballet réaliste* in the same way that films are *réaliste*, offering defamiliarised gestures – bottled emotions for the audience – and this is why Cocteau instructed the little American Girl to emulate leading characters in the popular Pearl White films. Almost all her actions in the scenario were familiar to the audience from American serials, including riding a horse, jumping on a train, dancing a ragtime, and imitating Chaplin. Albright also draws attention to Cocteau's direction that she should vibrate 'like the imagery of the films' – a statement that reflects the extent to which film was at the heart of his development of this ballet.[66]

Cocteau wrote to Stravinsky of *Parade* in 1916: 'may it distil all the involuntary emotions given off by circuses, music-halls, carousels, public balls,

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[65] Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 198.
[66] *Ibid*., 218–219.

factories, seaports, the movies'.[67] In attempting to fulfil this wish, Cocteau was

not willing to step back and let Satie compose the music for the ballet without

his input and he boasted in a letter to Massine that he 'dictated the score to Satie

note by note!'[68] In addition, he wanted everyday sounds to be included in the

soundscape and this could indicate the influence on his thinking of Futurism,

which introduced new sound repertoire into tonal music, and I would argue that

it also foreshadowed his interest in sound effects in later sound cinema. Massine

recalled that Cocteau persuaded Satie to introduce into the score:

> a number of realistic sound effects, such as the clicking of the
> typewriter, the wail of a ship's siren, and the droning of an
> aeroplane engine. All of these, Cocteau explained, were in the spirit
> of Cubism, and helped to portray the feverish insanity of
> contemporary life.[69]

Cocteau also campaigned for Morse code sounds, saying:

> The score of *Parade* ought to serve as the musical base for suggestive
> noises, such as sirens, typewriters, airplanes, dynamos, put there as what
> Georges Braque so justly called 'facts'.[70]

The extent of Cocteau's insistence on the inclusion of these noises irritated his

collaborators, with Satie wryly describing how he felt disengaged during the

early stages of the ballet:

> I only composed a background to throw into relief the noises which the
> playwright considered indispensable to the surrounding of each character
> with his own atmosphere.[71]

In addition to the noises mentioned by Massine, Cocteau wanted the sounds of a

lottery wheel and gunshots. Albright records that Cocteau's scenario even

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[67] Quoted in Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 162.

[68] 'Dicté la partition à Satie note par note', quoted in Frederick Brown, *An Impersonation of Angels: A Biography of Jean Cocteau* (New York: Viking Press, 1968), 154.

[69] Léonide Massine*, My Life in Ballet*, eds. Phyllis Hartroll and Robert Rubens (London: Macmillan, 1968), 102.

[70] Quoted in Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 208.

[71] Quoted in Jeremy Cox, "'Le Théâtre forain': Historical and Stylistic Connections between "Parade" and "Histoire du soldat"', *Music and Letters* 76, no. 4 (1995): 575.

included directions for sounds that would not actually be heard in the theatre that would penetrate the parade. For instance, at the point where clarinets enter, five bars after rehearsal mark fifteen, there is a direction for: 'suppressed words: they gouge out his eyes, tear out his tongue' ('paroles supprimées: ils lui crevèrent les yeux lui arrachèrent la langue)'.[72] Although the audience would not actually hear any of these words, they were intended to infuse the scene with the spirit of torture. While Cocteau's collaborators accepted the sound effects, they rejected his idea for an additional circus barker who would shout aphorisms on a megaphone to entice the crowd into the show.[73] Although these two suggestions never made it into the final version, through situating popular and extra-musical elements in the form of these sound effects within the 'high art' setting of music theatre, the ballet parodied Wagner's pursuit of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and exemplified a new aesthetics of simplicity and a mixture of classicism with popular elements. The orchestra of *Parade*, rich in percussion, brass and clear melodic lines, without heavy strings and inspired by popular musical forms typified the musical direction that Cocteau had in mind.

Cocteau's taste for mixing popular musical styles with classical art music in his later film soundscapes was anticipated years earlier in *Le Coq et l'arlequin* (1918), a publication that crystallised his musical aesthetics of this period.[74] The 'coq' of the title referred to the purely French music of France while the 'arlequin' referred to a mix of different musical styles. *Le Coq et l'arlequin* was directed at young French musicians, and particularly *Les Six*. According to statements by Auric in the 1978 preface, *Le Coq et l'arlequin* was almost a

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[72] Quoted in Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 195.
[73] Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre*, 259.
[74] See Perloff on the influence of Italian Futurism, French Cubism, and the poetics of Apollinaire on the formation of Cocteau's aesthetic views in *Coq et l'arlequin*. Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 7–9.

dictation of the group's general preoccupations.[75] Cocteau argues for a musical

modernism that would be both nationalist and classical. He attacks Wagner's

long and long-drawn-out works, mocking the composer by saying that he

generated boredom as a useful drug for the stupefaction of the faithful. Cocteau

rails against the quasi-religious atmosphere engendered by Wagnerian opera,

particularly at Bayreuth. He identifies a similar atmosphere at performances of

Stravinsky's *Rite* although he recognises it as a masterwork. Debussy is classed

as an Impressionist composer and Impressionism as a hangover from Wagner –

the last reverberation of the storm. Perloff rightly points out the suspect nature

of this grouping, given both Debussy's and Stravinsky's attempts to move away

from Wagner. She suggests that it was partly Cocteau's effort to avenge himself

after Stravinsky's unwillingness to follow through on his *David* project, and

partly an attempt to set Satie apart in music history.[76] In contrast to the large

and complex compositions of these three composers, Cocteau encourages young

French composers to aspire to simplicity. He sees jazz, music hall, fairground,

and music of the circus or café as genres that could drive away the

'Impressionist fog'. Charles R. Batson notes that for Cocteau, *Les Six*, and the

leader of the *Ballets Suédois* with whom he later collaborated on *Les Mariés de

la Tour Eiffel*, the music hall was synonymous with modern life and Frenchness

itself.[77] Satie was the major musical model that Cocteau held up for young

French composers in *Coq*. Satie provided both 'une musique française de

France' and 'de la musique sur laquelle on marche'.[78]

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[75] Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'arlequin: Notes autour de la musique* (1918; Reprint Paris: Éditions Stock, 2009), 19.
[76] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 11.
[77] Batson, *Dance, Desire, and Anxiety in Early Twentieth-Century French Theatre*, 102.
[78] Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'arlequin*, 61.

Milhaud, Poulenc, and Auric in addition to Satie and Cocteau, formed the core group espousing the new aesthetic and, between 1918 and 1924, they created a repertoire which stood against Impressionism and Romanticism, and drew on popular sounds and principles such as parody, diversity, and nostalgia, influenced by Parisian popular entertainment.[79] Cocteau's concert programmes with *Les Six* constituted some of the first introductions of full programmes of popular-influenced music to an elite audience. Examples include his February 1920 Spectacle-Concert, *Le Boeuf sur le toit,* and *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*.[80] The introduction of popular-style music into the theatre attracted hostile criticism and Cocteau was moved to point out in *Comoedia* that the French audience lambasted the appearance of popular resources of their own on the stage, while applauding representations of popular music of other countries on their stage.

In spite of Cocteau's vehemently anti-Wagner and anti-Debussy stance during these early years, his relationship to these composers evolved in later years and this is one of the reasons that his film soundscapes cannot be categorised as displaying any one consistent style, such as the style expounded in *Le Coq et l'arlequin*. Their changing relationship to Wagner and Debussy could be analysed with reference to Harold Bloom's literary theory of the anxiety of influence.[81] Bloom argues that a poet misreads a prior poet so that it appears as though the precursor did not go far enough, then stations his/her own work so as to generalise away the uniqueness of the earlier work. Only then is the new artwork 'held open' to the previous one so that it almost seems as

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[79] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 2.
[80] Batson, *Dance, Desire, and Anxiety in Early Twentieth-Century French Theatre*, 103.
[81] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

though the latter poet could have created the most distinctive aspects of the

previous poet's work.[82] For Bloom, the overshadowing presence felt by young

poets when confronting a precursor is comparable to a fear of being drowned:

'every good reader properly *desires* to drown, but if the poet drowns, he will

become *only a reader*'.[83] There is a sense of Cocteau experiencing a similar fear

of being overcome in 'Souvenirs' in which he admitted that he and the

composers of *Les Six* actually *loved* Debussy but felt the need to revolt.

> In truth, we were pervaded by his reign and we were defending our
> prerogatives with this monstrous injustice of youth that will not be
> dominated and which believes itself to be ill when it succumbs to love.
>   It is the love of Claude Debussy, it is this element mixed with our
> organism that paralyses us and obliged us to revolt.[84]

In later years he readily admitted the importance of Debussy in the French

musical canon. Auric, too, explained in 1978 that the opinions they formed in

these early years were the natural reaction of young artists to their immediate

predecessors.[85] Bloom's literary theory thus affords a richer reading of Cocteau

and Auric's musical aesthetics and prevents a narrow interpretation of Cocteau

as acutely anti-Wagnerian.

Cocteau's relationship with Auric is of central interest to this thesis since

he collaborated closely with him on the music in the films. While they were

working on *Orphée* in 1950, Auric wrote an article 'Jean Cocteau et la musique'

for *Empreintes* in which he described their long-running collaboration on films

as follows:

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[82] *Ibid.*, 14–16.
[83] *Ibid.*, 57.
[84] Cocteau, 'Souvenirs', in Gullentops, *Cocteau et la musique*, 127.
[85] 'Contre quoi, essayons d'être précis, s'était élevée notre jeunesse?…Il serait inutile de le rechercher longtemps: ressemblant en cela à toutes les jeunesses, aussi bien passées que futures, contre ce (ou ceux) qui la précédai(en)t immédiatement.' Auric, Preface to *Le Coq et l'arlequin*, 19–20.

My great joy will have been to be associated, from the beginning, with an absolutely exciting undertaking. I have seen each of his films be born and develop, asking myself what he was going to reveal to me, what new thing he was going to teach me. I had never suspected the kind of adventure that I had committed myself to when I composed the score of my first film. With him, more than ever, I realised what was of value and importance in such an effort. And I know that he has not finished showing me new aspects of this union of music and film which has (re) united us since his *Éternel Retour*.[86]

Colin Roust's research into Auric's attitude to film music during the early years of French cinema as documented in his journalistic writing offers interesting insight into the composer's ideals for collaboration on a film before he worked on his first film score for Cocteau. Understanding the composer's preoccupations and aspirations is very helpful in piecing together the nature of his relationship with Cocteau and the extent of their respective roles. Auric envisaged music for the cinema that would reflect the aesthetics of *Les Six* rather than any Wagnerian musical influence, would not contain much dialogue in the manner of silent film, would enable a composer to write in a new style that would not be as restricted as when writing incidental music for the theatre, but which would not be entirely independent of the images either, and which would achieve a direct connection with the audience, different to any that had been achieved before.[87]

Auric and Cocteau were grappling with similar issues against the wider backdrop of developments in both music and early French cinema, especially since Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* was so widely adopted as a model in both the

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[86] 'Ma grande joie aura été d'être associée, dès le début, à une entreprise absolument passionante. Chacun de ses films, je l'ai vu naître et grandir en me demandant ce qu'il allait me révéler, m'apprendre de nouveau. Je m'avais jamais douté de la sorte d'aventure dans laquelle je m'étais moi-même engagé lorsque j'avais composé la partition de mon premier film. Avec lui, mieux que jamais, j'ai compris ce qu'avait de valable et d'important un pareil effort. Et je sais qu'il n'a pas fini de me découvrir de nouveaux aspects de cette union de la musique et du film qui nous a réunis depuis son *Eternel Retour*.' Auric, 'Jean Cocteau et la Musique', *Empreintes*, 7–8 (1950), 100–101 in Schmidt, *Écrits sur la musique de Georges Auric*, vol. 1, 230–231.

[87] Colin Roust, 'Sounding French: The Film Music and Criticism of Georges Auric, 1919–45' (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2007), 27–42.

musical world and the film world. These challenges in forging a new musical aesthetic and in envisioning the ideal musical accompaniment to theatrical spectacles would achieve new significance when they first turned to their own film project. The fluid interconnections between music and cinema that were present in Paris in the early twentieth century meant that, despite Cocteau's lack of training in traditional musicianship, he was not prevented from getting involved in the musical aspects of his projects. Furthermore, his eager engagement with music as a long-standing listener and critic, and later as a creative collaborator, appears to have been an entirely natural corollary to his interest in all aspects of the artwork. His musical collaborations led to innovative artworks in the genres of music for the stage and these endeavours revealed to him a great deal about designing a musical soundscape in the dramatic arts that would shape his approach to the film soundscape. The aesthetics espoused by Cocteau in *Le Coq et l'arlequin* and in works such as *Parade* display a desire to escape the influence of Wagner, Debussy, and earlier movements such as Symbolism, and to fuse 'art' with everyday life.[88] However, Cocteau's rejection of the work of his predecessors in his writings and artworks demonstrates that he was nevertheless still engaging with them, albeit on a negative level, and in the second part of my thesis, I delve into this emerging paradox surrounding his early film soundscapes and their relation to Symbolism.

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[88] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*. 1.

PART TWO

Coctelian Complexities:

Symbolist Opera and the Inescapable Shadow of Wagner

Cocteau's early musical engagements manifest struggles with both Debussy and Wagner and as such a distinct preoccupation with Symbolist aesthetics. I would argue that all of this affected him when he came to direct films. Cocteau's films are full of symbols that not only exemplify his aesthetics of poetry but also bear scrutiny alongside important events in his own personal life. The exploration of a poet's death and rebirth – multiple times – constitute the narratives of *Le Sang d'un poète* (1930) and *Orphée* (1950) and could be interpreted as reflecting Cocteau's desire for the poet to constantly reinvent himself, as he himself had done, for instance. The theme continues in *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960) where Cocteau's adopted son, Édouard Dermit, who also plays the fictitious poet Cégeste in *Orphée*, tells Cocteau that he is a master of phoenixology – the art of dying and being reborn. The most frequently recurring symbols in Cocteau's films include the figure of the poet, death, blood, dreams, and mirrors. Symbolic objects also often feature in his films, such as the statue in *Sang*, *La Belle et la bête*, and *Les Enfants terribles*. Crucially for the current context, certain melodies and sounds also accrue symbolic significance across Cocteau's films. Musical symbols include a love melody in *Belle* that reappears in *Orphée* and a bassoon melody associated with the poet in *Sang*, *Orphée*, and *Testament*; symbolic sound effects include choirs and tuning forks associated with walking through mirrors and hence passage to supernatural domains in *Sang*, *Belle*, and *Orphée*; they also include the tuning and detuning of radios in *L'Éternel Retour* and *Orphée*, and the use of silence for dramatic significance in *Belle*. I will

return to the significance of melodies that recur across his films in part four, as this part focuses on the influence of Symbolism on Cocteau's first three soundscapes and how his conceptualisation and management of the music, sounds, and silences in these films can be interpreted as evocative of Symbolist aesthetics.

Cocteau's use of symbols can be better understood in the light of his connection with the aesthetics of the French Symbolist poets. He was familiar with the work of all the important Symbolist poets: Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, Gérard de Nerval, and Paul Valéry. In France, Symbolism developed initially in literature, and its practitioners used symbols to capture truth through indirect methods such as suggestion and metaphor, poetic devices requiring the active participation of the audience to create meaning from an artwork. There were numerous factors that gave rise to the development of Symbolist poetry in the late nineteenth century, including increased interest in the philosophy of Schopenhauer and mysticism. A. G. Lehmann has also highlighted the influence of greater public interest in the dream on Symbolist aesthetics: 'the dream provides material suggestions to the poetic fancy which are new and exciting', and suggests a special form of cognition that helped shape Symbolist art.[1] It is difficult to define Symbolism across the arts as a whole due to the lack of any consistent aesthetic programme, though Symbolist poets dealt with common themes, such as strangeness, mystery, and withheld information.[2] Catherine Taylor Johnson observes that the centre of Symbolism is 'the notion of poetry and drama as an evocation of a

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[1] A. G. Lehmann, *The Symbolist Aesthetic in France: 1885–1895* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 125.

[2] James L. Kugel, *The Techniques of Strangeness in Symbolist Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

hidden reality' and that 'while striving to get at the essence of things,

Symbolism focuses on the mystery of an invisible realm beyond the visible'.[3]

The themes of Symbolist artworks are typically drawn from mythology, history,

folklore, and fantasy.[4] In music, Symbolist features can be identified in

evocativeness and suggestiveness; in addition to Debussy, Peter Palmer has

detected Symbolist features in the compositions of a range of composers in the

late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including Edward Elgar, Sergei

Rachmaninov, Alexander Scriabin, Arnold Schoenberg, and Richard Strauss.[5]

Despite his own highly symbolic films, Cocteau had a complex stance

towards Symbolism, which I would argue shaped, in turn, his approach to film

sound. He engaged with the French Symbolist opera par excellence, *Pelléas et*

Mélisande (1902), at numerous junctures throughout his life and this, combined

with the prevalence of Symbolist aesthetics in the work of so many of his

contemporary film-makers, suggests that his early film soundscapes could be

fruitfully explored with Symbolism in mind, and that Cocteau's approach to his

film soundscapes might have been shaped by Symbolist aesthetics. Numerous

scholars have traced a line of influence from the Symbolist poets to Cocteau's

oeuvre. Neal Oxenhandler explores the influence of Symbolism on Cocteau's

poetry and plays, while Taylor Johnson argues that *Le Sang d'un poète*, *Orphée*,

and *Le Testament d'Orphée* show clear evidence of Symbolist influence and an

attempt to construct films in alignment with Symbolist aesthetics generally, and

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[3] Catherine Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation: The Shift from Stage to Screen in France' (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2000), 91.
[4] *Ibid*., 118.
[5] Peter Palmer, 'Lost Paradises: Music and the Aesthetics of Symbolism', *The Musical Times*, 148 (Summer 2007): 37–50.

Symbolist theatre specifically.[6] Taylor Johnson defines Symbolist cinema as cinema that has an author who 'seeks to endow the film's visual images with the same allusive qualities as Symbolist poets', and contains the themes or motifs of traditional Symbolism.[7] Even in works such as *Parade*, which Nancy Perloff describes as exemplifying 'a wish to escape Symbolism and fuse "art" with everyday life', it can be argued that Cocteau was influenced by Symbolist aesthetics.[8] For example, Daniel Albright locates transformations of Symbolism in Cocteau's appropriation of Rimbaud in his unused text for a carnival barker in *Parade*, and also in the concept of a hidden interior spectacle.[9]

Nevertheless, in arguing that Cocteau's early film soundscapes were shaped by Symbolist aesthetics, it is important to confront the apparent discrepancy between that position and Cocteau's own opposition to what he describes as the *manie de symboliser* ('mania for symbolising').[10] It is possible to reconcile these positions as they are not mutually exclusive; Cocteau's disapproval of the *manie de symboliser* probably reflects his own dislike of attempts to interpret his own creative works in a single way, closing them off to future interpretation. As Taylor Johnson argues, Cocteau's dismissal of the *manie de symboliser* seems to be referring to a rejection of symbols as allegories, and she does not read this as antithetical to the aesthetics of Symbolism.[11] In trying to understand Cocteau's outlook, Johann Wolfgang von

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[6] Neal Oxenhandler, *Scandal and Parade: Theatre of Jean Cocteau* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1957). Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation', 237.

[7] Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation', 284–285.

[8] Nancy Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 1.

[9] Albright notes that Cocteau also recontextualised Symbolist poetry in *Le Gendarme incompris*, a skit with music by Poulenc for which he used Mallarmé's *L'Écclésiastique*. Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 200.

[10] Cocteau, *Essai de critique indirecte* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2003), 98.

[11] Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation', 268.

Goethe's distinction between the symbol and the allegory as they apply in poetry

is helpful. He argues:

> The allegory transforms the phenomenon into a concept, and the concept
> into an image, but in such a manner that the concept can only be stated,
> confirmed or expressed in the image in a way that is always limited and
> incomplete. The symbol transforms the phenomenon into an idea, and
> the idea into an image, and does this in such a way that the idea in the
> image has indefinite repercussions, and remains intangible; even when
> expressed in every language it will remain unexpressed.[12]

Stefan Jarocinski builds on this reading to argue that the symbol is 'not an

expressive sign, but a concrete and dynamic system of signs activating the

intelligence and stimulating one's sensibility'.[13] This distinction between

symbol and allegory, and definition of the symbol as evocative, suggestive, and

open to interpretation, permits an understanding of Cocteau's rejection of the

public's desire to have a single meaning for everything while still supporting the

argument that his work is imbued with Symbolist attitudes. This is clear in his

Essai de critique indirecte, which he wrote the same year that *Sang* was

premiered. He had been subjected to numerous calls to explain the 'meaning' of

his film, something that he referred to directly in the essay as he recalls the

Herald's declaration that the snow in *Sang* represented cocaine.[14] While most

films require the audience to piece together a meaning, the distinguishing

characteristic of the Symbolist film is the nature of the images and their

arrangement as sufficiently opaque to encourage numerous interpretations.[15]

Beyond film, Cocteau's conception of poetry as a mode of expression

that can be created in any form and communicated through the arts

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[12] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Spräche in Prosa. Maximen und Reflexionen*, 742–743. Quoted in Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, trans. Rollo Myers (Eulenburg Books, 1976), 23.
[13] *Ibid.*, 25.
[14] Cocteau, *Essai de critique indirecte¸* 98.
[15] Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation', 284–285.

interchangeably itself recalls Baudelaire's 'theory of correspondences'. Cocteau's desire to look inwards and examine the poet as self, as well as his inclusion of symbols that can be interpreted in multiple ways, are all characteristics shared by the Symbolists.[16] Other identifying characteristics of a Symbolist work, such as its exploration of the mystery of existence, the ideal of pure poetry, and the use of mythology, folklore, fantasy and history, are all present in Cocteau's oeuvre.[17] His wish not to be labelled as a Symbolist may be due to a fear that his films would be subject to facile interpretation, but this only brings him closer to the Symbolist artists, who created works requiring the public to think for themselves and piece together a personal meaning.

The importance of music in Symbolist aesthetics shaped Cocteau's approach to designing his film soundscapes, I would argue. The ability of music to communicate without words strongly appealed to the Symbolist poets, who venerated music as the supreme art, one which had the power to suggest in an abstract manner. As Oxenhandler and Taylor Johnson have argued, Cocteau continued to develop the aesthetic in his screenplays and films. However, his soundscapes also encourage diverse interpretations and Cocteau's ambitions for music, sound, and silence often seem designed to add greater depth of meaning in his film soundscapes. As I will explore in this second part of the thesis, Cocteau's attitude to the combination of music and image in film appears to have been shaped by Wagner, who was a powerful influence on the Symbolist poets. Wagner's influence might be best detected in Symbolist poets' desire to

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[16] *Ibid.*, 240–241.
[17] *Ibid.*, 118.

attain musicality in poetry based on some of his theories concerning the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[18]

As Symbolism was born out of the aesthetics of music, the development of Symbolism in musical genres represented the completion of a circle. Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* had the most significance for Cocteau and Auric and their first films were developed in the context of a France that had come to respect this opera as a masterwork.[19] Furthermore, as will be explored in this part, it appears that aspects of *Pelléas* influenced some of Cocteau's films. It is worth reminding ourselves of the opera's plot because it encapsulates the aforementioned Symbolist ideals of mystery and witheld information that must have attracted Cocteau with his desire for open interpretation of his artworks and heavy use of symbols in his films. *Pelléas*'s narrative is simple and comprises a chain of events that ensue following the discovery of the mysterious Mélisande by Prince Golaud in a forest. He falls in love with the fragile young woman and takes her as his bride to his castle, which is occupied by his elderly grandfather Arkel, his mother, half-brother Pelléas, and his child Yniold. Pelléas and Mélisande form an immediate connection and Golaud soon becomes jealous of what he perceives to be a romantic relationship. He is driven to distraction and even uses Yniold to spy on them. At the point where Pelléas and Mélisande confess their love for one another, Golaud rushes out, striking down Pelléas and injuring his wife. She later gives birth to a daughter and slowly dies, leaving a remorseful Golaud still unsure of the truth.

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[18] Lehmann provides a comprehensive outline of the many nuances of some of the Symbolists' misreading of Wagner. See A. G. Lehmann, *The Symbolist Aesthetic in France*, 194–247.

[19] See Jann Pasler, '*Pelléas* and Power: Forces behind the Reception of Debussy's Opera', *19th-Century Music* 10, no. 3 (1987): 243–264 for detailed discussion of the initially divisive reactions to *Pelléas* and their connections to wider social and political issues.

Towards the end of his life Cocteau directed the décor and staging for a version of the opera in Marseille, which then went on to Metz and Strasbourg in 1962. He was too young to have attended the original performances of *Pelléas* in Paris in 1902, although he claimed that he could recall details from his parents' programmes. In the programme notes for the 1962 performance, he recalled that the work's premiere had caused a sensation: 'when Maeterlinck's masterwork was married to another masterwork, there was born from this strange accompaniment, a scandal'.[20] As David Gullentops has already noted, the most striking aspect of these notes is the fact that Cocteau betrays a great admiration for the Belgian playwright and an implicit influence on his own output. In his diary for the 18 September 1962, Cocteau recorded:

> In listening to the singers, I understood fully that Debussy's music was drowning the dialogues instead of foregrounding them, as Poulenc had done it in *La Voix humaine*. The voices were good and it seemed to me that the singers were enunciating and that we understood what they were saying, French singers being usually incomprehensible.[21]

Such an appreciation of the way in which naturalistic dialogue and scenes could be powerful features of an artwork was in line with his own feelings concerning what he described as the poetry of his own films. He frequently argued that his poetry functioned best in the day-to-day scenes in his films because there it is wholly unexpected, for example, the garage scene in *L'Éternel Retour*.[22]

Furthermore, when it came to his production of *Pelléas*, he was in tune with the

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[20] Cocteau, 'Lorsque le chef-d'oeuvre de Maeterlinck fut épousé par un autre chef-d'oeuvre, il naquit de cet accompagnement étrange, un scandale.' David Gullentops, *Cocteau et la musique* (Paris: Michel de Maule, 2006), 149.

[21] Cocteau, 'En écoutant les chanteurs, j'ai compris bien la musique de Debussy noyait les dialogues au lieu de les mettre en relief, comme Poulenc l'a fait dans *La Voix humaine*. Les voix sont bonnes et il m'a semblé que les chanteurs articulaient et qu'on entendait ce qu'ils disent, les chanteurs français étant habituellement incompréhensibles.' Pierre Caizergues, 'Cocteau à Metz', Jean Cocteau de la scène au sacré: Plaquette de Présentation (Les Amis de Jean Cocteau: 2009), 28.

[22] James S. Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 18.

Symbolist aesthetic of the play and the challenges that it presented to anyone

who wished to stage it:

> If I have always refused to do the décor and the costumes for *Pelléas* at
> the Opéra-Comique, at the New York Metropolitan Opera, the one in
> London, at La Scala in Milan, in spite of the affectionate plea of Madame
> Maeterlinck, it is for fear of losing the balance between the dream and a
> pure realism that an old misunderstanding still confuses with the
> unreal.[23]

In light of the labyrinthine symbolism of his own films, it may be that

Cocteau was well aware of the challenges of Symbolist theatre that could be

more comfortably accommodated in film. His presentation of *Pelléas* added to

the already opaque symbolism of the opera itself. It utilised sparse designs

painted on gauzes in large, black out-lines which, while in line with Cocteau's

penchant for line drawings, resulted in some critics finding it a little cold.

Others were more damning. The critic Jean Hamon found the production

generally ugly and its ugliness was exemplified in:

> The two drop curtains, one of which seems to have escaped from a
> publicity poster in St Tropez, the scenery for the well (a baroque
> irrelevance), as well as that for the bedroom which has no poetic mystery
> about it. Who will give us a *Pelléas* in which the décor is simply
> suggested by lighting and drapes? Who will efface himself to leave room
> for the dream? M. Cocteau is too egocentric for that.[24]

While Hamon's opinion is highly critical, his attack on Cocteau as egocentric

raises a point regarding the personal nature of his symbolism and the poet's

desire to add more symbols to the opera. The network of symbols that can be

detected in each of his films closely reflects the preoccupations of Cocteau the

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[23] 'Si j'ai toujours refusé de faire les décors et les costumes de *Pelléas* à l'Opéra-Comique, au
Metropolitain Opera de New-York, à celui de Londres, à la Scala de Milan, malgré la prière
affectueuse de Madame Maeterlinck, c'est par peur de perdre l'équilibre entre le rêve et un pur
réalisme qu'une longue méprise fait encore confondre avec l'irréalité.' Gullentops, *Cocteau et la
musique*, 149.
[24] Jean Hamon, *Combat*, 25 September 1962. Quoted in Roger Nichols, '*Pelléas* in Performance
I: A History', in *Claude Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande*, eds. Roger Nichols and Richard
Langham Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 163.

man, and above all, Cocteau the poet. Thus, any reading of Cocteau's use of sound in film from a Symbolist viewpoint must necessarily take into account the poet's personal understanding of Symbolism.

Throughout his career Cocteau rejected appeals to reveal the meanings of his films and designed his soundscapes in a manner that required the audience to use their own imaginations to develop their own meanings from his films. All of this points to his ongoing allegiance to the Symbolist aesthetics of the late nineteenth century. In light of this, in the following three chapters I argue that he invoked Symbolist aesthetics in the planning and development of the soundscapes of the first three films that he was heavily engaged with: *Le Sang d'un poète* (1930), *L'Éternel Retour* (1943), and *La Belle et la bête* (1946).

CHAPTER THREE

***Le Sang d'un poète*: A Project of Close Collaboration**

The soundscape was a key consideration for Cocteau from the conception of his

very first film, *Le Sang d'un poète*. The extent of Cocteau's interest is best

summed up in a letter to Georges Auric, who composed the music.

Dear Georges
Noises yield nothing; sound effects, they're marvellous. You must give
everything to achieve the guardian angel's music. Me, I am overwrought but I
have found something to give a bit more of myself. I will record this evening
my lungs, my blood vessels, my heart. I can't wait to see Labrély's face. This
work must be saved, we must mix ourselves up in it until we can't take it any
more. In rendering the film impossible to act, impossible to exploit, we will
make history.
Vive les Charles!
Yours,
Jean[1]

All aspects of the soundscape were important to Cocteau as he planned the film;

he not only produced the screenplay and hence the film's spoken words, he was

directly involved with arranging the music, the silences, and the sound effects.

In fact, as this letter enthusiastically relates, he was so concerned with achieving

his desired sound effects that he became involved in creating them himself from

his own body. Both music and sound were part of his plans for the film montage

of *Sang*, and his intentions for the soundscape were in line with Symbolist

aesthetics, requiring the audience to formulate their own understanding of an

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[1] 'Cher Georges
Les bruits ne donnent rien les sons c'est merveilleux. Il faut que tu te saignes pour l'air de
l'ange. Moi je suis à bout mais j'ai trouvé un truc pour donner encore de moi. J'enregistre ce
soir mes poumons, mes branches, mon coeur. On verra la gueule de Labrély. Il faut sauver ce
travail, s'y mêler jusqu'à ce que l'audition devienne pénible. En rendant le film injouable,
inexploitable, on le rendra sacré.
Vive les Charles!
Je t'embrasse,
Jean'
Cocteau (manuscript, folder one, Manuscript Fr277 *Papers Concerning Blood of a Poet* (1930),
Houghton Library Harvard, accessed July 2009). The published version of which is available in
Pierre Caizergues, *Georges Auric: Correspondance: Jean Cocteau* (Montpellier: Centre d'Étude
du XXe Siècle, Université Paul Valéry, 1999), 120.

intentionally ambiguous arrangement. This chapter situates *Sang'*s

synchronisation of image and sound in relation to the Surrealist films of Luis

Buñuel and Salvador Dali, *Un Chien andalou* (1929) and *L'Age d'or* (1930),

with which it shares certain visual connections. Catherine Taylor Johnson, Colin

Roust, and James S. Williams have considered certain aspects of *Sang*'s sonic

design but have not investigated how it relates to the soundscapes of these

contemporary Surrealist films. Taylor Johnson considers *Sang*'s sound effects

in connection with Symbolism, but not its music. Williams refers to Cocteau's

development of a system of 'accidental synchronisation' in a general study of

Sang. Roust has carried out an audiovisual analysis of the technique in his

discussion of Cocteau's handling of Auric's music, but neither Williams nor

Roust explore *Sang*'s soundscape in relation to Symbolism. Here I argue that

'accidental synchronisation' not only offered Cocteau one solution to the

problems associated with combining music and image from the birth of sound

film, it was reflective of the influence of Symbolist aesthetics on his first film. I

suggest it was only one – albeit an important – aspect of his broader, proto-

sound designer concern with conceptualising, creating and managing all aspects

of his soundscapes, even in this earliest of his films.[2]

The Birth of *Le Sang d'un poète*

Sang contains a mixture of themes that Cocteau repeated throughout his career,

including death, blood, the role of the artist, and mirrors, and it belonged to a

period of experimental filmmaking in France.[3] The inspiration for the project

came early in 1930 when Auric, Cocteau and Jean Hugo visited the Viscomte

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[2] Jean Cocteau appears to have coined this term himself to describe the combination of image and sound in *Sang*.

[3] References to timings are to *Le Sang d'un poète*, directed by Jean Cocteau (Paris: Studio Canal, Optimum World Releasing Ltd., 2007), DVD.

Charles de Noailles and his wife. The Noailles had already provided financial support for Buñuel and Dali's early films and were well-known patrons of the avant-garde, so when Auric mentioned his desire to compose for an animated film, the Countess encouraged him to create one with Cocteau. When it became apparent that Cocteau and Auric could not locate the necessary expertise to make an animated film, they decided instead to make a live-action film, which would have the quality of an animated film, as they would film people who resembled hand-made drawings.[4] *Sang* was filmed between April and September 1930 at the Joinville Studios in Paris.[5]

Cocteau's *Sang* is full of symbols; the strongest symbol of all is that the poet can be interpreted as Cocteau himself. The star buckle on the poet's belt encourages this reading; Cocteau's signature was a star and he used it to sign the prefaces to several of his later films. *Sang* comprises four episodes that track the successive deaths and rebirths of a poet: 'La main blessée ou les cicatrices du poète', 'Les murs ont-ils des oreilles?', 'La bataille des boules de neige', and 'La profanation de l'hostie'. The overarching theme is that a poet must continually reinvent himself in order to create art and achieve glory. The first episode begins with a poet (Enrico Rivero) in his studio, sketching. The poet erases the mouth of his drawing and it transfers to his hand. He tries to get rid of it by rubbing it against a statue (Lee Miller), but she then comes to life. She directs him to take a walk through the mirror and thus starts the second episode in the Hôtel des Folies Dramatiques. The poet wanders through a corridor, stopping to peer in keyholes through which he sees unusual disconnected scenes suggestive

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[4] Jean Cocteau, 'Huitième Entretien', *Entretiens/ Jean Cocteau André Fraigneau* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1988), 89.
[5] James S. Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 35.

of some of Cocteau's major preoccupations.[6] At the end of the corridor the poet is presented with a revolver and instructed how to use it. He shoots himself through the temple and is crowned with laurels, symbolic of the artist's continual reinventions of him/herself to achieve glory. Fed up, the poet storms back through the mirror where he destroys the statue and then turns into one himself. This triggers the third episode of a snowball fight in which a young boy is struck and falls to the ground dead. This boy provides the link to the fourth episode where he lies next to a table while the statue and the poet play cards. The poet realises that he has lost unless he has the ace of hearts and so tries to cheat by drawing it from the breast pocket of the dead boy. However, the boy's guardian angel appears, absorbs the boy's soul and removes the ace of hearts. This suggests that the poet must not try to use any voice but his own in creating his art, a theme that Cocteau picked up again in *Orphée* (1950). The poet shoots himself through the temple to the applause of onlookers and the statue returns to her immortal sleep.

The film also includes intertitles that encourage multiple interpretations. For example, in the first episode, Cocteau includes an intertitle that reads: 'the sleeper seen from up close or the surprises of photography' and a second directly afterwards reads: 'or how I was trapped by my own film'.[7] Thus, Cocteau himself suggests at least three alternative readings of the scene that follows. Due to the scandal that had surrounded *L'Age d'or*, projections of *Sang* were cancelled on its release, the licence for distribution was withdrawn and the film

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[6] This is rather reminiscent of moments in Cecil B. DeMille's early work and indeed of Bartók's symbolist opera *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911).

[7] 'Le dormeur vu de près ou les surprises de la photographie; ou comment j'ai été pris au piège par mon propre film.'

was locked away. It was not shown until 20 January 1932 at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier.[8]

Not a Surrealist Film

Cocteau's written statements about this film suggest that he aspired to create a film that would be poetry itself, and evocative of Symbolist aesthetics. In a speech he gave at the premiere of the film at the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier in 1932, he said:

> For the film that you are about to see, I was left free. It is a unique case, and if one likes this film, it is necessary to take it into consideration, so that I don't get all the credit. With the film, we kill death, we kill literature; we make poetry live directly.[9]

Cocteau always insisted that his films could not be interpreted in one way alone and that they had a multiplicity of potential meanings, as with a piece of music.

> *Le Sang d'un poète* draws nothing from either dreams or symbols. As far as the former are concerned, it initiates their mechanism, and by letting the mind relax, as in sleep, it lets memories entwine, move and express themselves freely. As for the latter, it rejects them, and substitutes acts, or allegories of these acts, *that the spectator can make symbols of if he wishes*.[10] [my emphasis]

The analogy that Cocteau draws between the operation of the film and mechanisms of a dream was prefigured by typical descriptions of the way music works in Symbolist artworks. The last phrase, 'that the spectator can make symbols of if he wishes' is reminiscent of Baudelaire's aesthetics concerning the correspondences between the arts.

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[8] Williams, *French Film Directors*, 37.

[9] 'Pour le film que vous allez voir, on m'a laissé libre. C'est un cas unique, et si on aime ce film, il faut le faire entrer en ligne de compte, pour que je n'aie pas la part trop belle. Avec le film, on tue la mort, on tue la littérature; on fait vivre la poésie d'une vie directe'. Cocteau, 'Conférence prononcée au Vieux-Colombier Jan 1932', (manuscript, box twenty-five, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed September 2009).

[10] Cocteau, 1946 Preface to *Sang* in *Two Screenplays: The Blood of a Poet, The Testament of Orpheus*, trans. Carol Martin-Sperry (London: Calder and Boyars, 1970), 4.

Cocteau expressed similar sentiments in the introduction to *Sang*, even stating them on the first title card:

> Every poem is a coat of arms. It must be taken apart. Only blood and tears traded for its axes, its muzzles, its unicorns, its torches, its towers, its blackbirds, its benches of stars and its fields of blue! Free to choose the faces, the forms, the gestures, the tones, the deeds, the places that he liked, he creates with them a realistic documentary of unreal events. *The musician will emphasise the sound effects and the silences.*[11] [my emphasis]

Thus, the music, sounds, and silences should infuse the film with a dream-like quality which heightens its poetry and leads the spectator to develop his/her own meanings. Such a conception of *Sang*'s soundscape resonates strongly with Symbolist aesthetics. Taylor Johnson has also identified *Sang*'s themes of the poet and of introspection as highly Symbolist, and she argues that Cocteau creates a Symbolist *mise-en-scène* through visual and camera effects, additional sound effects, and costume choices.[12] For Taylor Johnson, Cocteau's use of sound is also Symbolist in conception since he employs sound as another channel of symbols, rather than as a realistic narrative device.[13] While I agree with Taylor Johnson that Cocteau's use of sound can be understood as Symbolist, she omits to examine how the music contributed to this Symbolist quality. Furthermore, while she argues that *Sang* can be read as Symbolist rather than Surrealist, she does not explore sonic evidence for this interpretation.

However, given Sang's fantastical qualities, its ruptures between temporal and spatial reality, and its association with *Un Chien andalou* and

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[11] 'Tout poème est un blason. Il faut le déchiffrer. Que de sang, que de larmes, en échange de ces haches, de ces gueules, de ces licornes, de ces torches, de ces tours, de ces merlettes, de ces semis d'étoiles et ces champs d'azur! Libre de choisir les visages, les formes, les gestes, les timbres, les actes, les lieux qui lui plaisent, il compose avec eux un documentaire réaliste d'événements irréels. Le musicien soulignera les bruits et les silences.'

[12] Catherine Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation: The Shift from Stage to Screen in France' (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2000), 253.

[13] *Ibid.*, 257.

L'Age d'or through the Noailles, it is unsurprising that many critics labelled it as Surrealist rather than Symbolist.[14] *Un Chien andalou* has an often incomprehensible narrative and includes shocking images of a woman's eye being slit with a razor, the superimposition of an ant's nest on a human hand, a man towing two grand pianos with donkeys, priests, and tablets displaying the Ten Commandments attached, and a man who erases his mouth using the back of his hand. *L'Age d'or* was a work of *bricolage*, building segmentally on *Un Chien andalou*, though a more direct attack on the institutions of bourgeois society.[15] *L'Age d'or* focuses on a young couple's thwarted attempts to consummate their relationship. Numerous images in the Buñuel and Dali films are echoed in *Sang* such as the superimposition on a hand (the entrance to an ants' nest in *Chien* and the mouth in *Sang*); the death of a child observed by indifferent bourgeois characters on balconies (he is shot in *L'Age d'or* and is struck by a snowball in *Sang*); and scenes where characters appear on the ceiling (the Minister for the Interior in *L'Age* and the girl learning to fly in *Sang)*. Yet Cocteau always denied that either film had any influence on his work, stating in his *Lettre aux Américains* that:

> Buñuel's film, *L'Age d'or*, started at the same time as *Le Sang*, was filmed on one side while I was filming mine on the other. We did not see our respective films until after having finished them. And I should only have known *le Chien andalou*, filmed before *l'Age d'or*, after that. It is thus a mistake to look for influences of Buñuel in my film. It is important to understand that similar waves were recorded by certain minds at the same time and that these waves excuse the confusion that threatens to establish itself between works that opposed each other fiercely at the time and which appear related with hindsight.[16]

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[14] Williams, *French Film Directors*, 50.

[15] Paul Hammond, 'Lost and Found: Buñuel, *L'Age d'or* and Surrealism', in *Luis Buñuel: New Readings*, eds. Peter William Evans and Isabel Santaolalla (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2004), 15.

[16] 'Le film de Buñuel, *L'Age d'or*, commence en même temps que *Le Sang*, se tournait d'un côté pendant que je tournais le mien de l'autre. Nous ne vîmes nos films respectifs qu'après les avoir finis. Et je ne devais connaître *le Chien andalou*, tourné avant *l'Age d'or*, que dans la suite.

Cocteau echoed this idea in an interview in 1951 saying that it was not until long after *Sang* was completed that he saw *Un Chien andalou* or *L'Age d'or*.[17] *Un Chien andalou* opened at the Studio des Ursulines on 6 June 1929 and *L'Age d'or* was first screened in private on 30 June 1930; however the Noailles organised a private screening of *L'Age d'or* at the Cinéma du Panthéon on 22 October 1930 to which Cocteau was invited along with Picasso, André Gide, Alberto Giacometti, and Marcel Duchamp among others.[18] Even if one believes Cocteau's claim that there was a long period between his work on *Sang* and his familiarity with the Surrealist films, *Un Chien andalou* was an enormous *succès de scandale* in Paris where it had an eight-month run, and a similar scandal surrounded *L'Age d'or* between October and December 1930.[19] These films were public knowledge so Cocteau must have been aware of some of the Surrealist films' tropes at exactly the period he was finalising *Sang*.

Thematically, *Sang* can be distinguished from the Surrealists' work since the Surrealists wished to demonstrate the underside of the human mind and the way thought operates; they rarely had overarching narratives in their work. Buñuel recalled that the real purpose of Surrealism was 'not to create a new literary artistic, or even philosophical movement, but to explode the social order,

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C'est donc une erreur de chercher des influences de Buñuel dans mon film. Il importe de comprendre que des ondes analogues sont enregistrées par certains esprits à la même période et que ces ondes excusent la confusion qui risque de s'établir entre des oeuvres qui s'opposaient assez férocement à l'époque et qui paraissent parentes, avec le recul.' Cocteau, *Lettre aux Américains* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1949), 47–48.

[17] Cocteau, 'Huitième Entretien', 91.

[18] Gwynne Edwards, *A Companion to Luis Buñuel* (Suffolk: Tamesis, 2005), 26 and 35.

[19] Priscilla Barlow, 'Surreal Symphonies: *L'Age d'or* and the Discreet Charms of Classical Music', in *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music*, eds. Pamela Robertson Wojcik and Arthur Knight (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 31. Rashna Wadia Richards, 'Unsynched: The Contrapuntal Sounds of Luis Buñuel's *L'Age d'or*', *Film Criticism* 33, no. 2 (2008/2009): 24.

to transform life itself'.[20] In contrast, Cocteau's film has a stronger plot and does not attempt to present a transformed reality. Maurice Mourier argues that while Buñuel desires to transform reality in the name of freedom, Cocteau proposes an acceptance of it.[21] Cocteau wished to reveal a reality of the invisible and focused on the duality between the interior and the exterior. In addition, the core Surrealist premise that there is an unconscious that needs to be unleashed is not present in Cocteau's aesthetic.[22]

Despite the connections between the images of the Surrealist films and *Sang*, the roles played by music and sound effects in *Un Chien andalou* and *L'Age d'or* are very different from their role in *Sang*. At the first screening of *Un Chien andalou*, Buñuel played excerpts from the concert version of Wagner's *Liebestod* and the tango *Olé guapa* on phonographs. *L'Age d'or* was a sound film and incorporated pieces from the classical repertoire, such as the scherzo from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Mendelssohn's *Hebrides* Overture, as well as pieces by Schubert, Mozart, Debussy, Wagner's *Liebestod*, and a new composition by Georges van Parys. As Priscilla Barlow observes, the choice of classical music must have added to the shock factor of these films for a bourgeois audience who would have been familiar with the pieces but would have been scandalised by the way that they were matched with the images.[23] Richards contends that Buñuel was deliberately using sound in counterpoint to the image and that this represents another aspect of the Surrealists' rejection of intelligible narrative, providing another facet to accompany the images 'collage

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[20] Luis Buñuel, *My Last Sigh*, trans. Abigail Israel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, repr. 2003), 107.
[21] Maurice Mourier, 'Quelques aspects de la poétique cinématographique de Cocteau', *Oeuvres et Critiques* 22, no. 1 (1997): 161.
[22] Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau*, 50.
[23] Barlow, 'Surreal Symphonies', 31.

of dislocated time, space and causality'.[24] This holds true for a particular type of

counterpoint and contrasts with the counterpoint espoused by other

contemporary film-makers, such as the Soviets, who were working within a

diegesis or fictional narrative world in their films. Buñuel, by contrast, sought

to undermine the sense of any coherent narrative.[25] For example, the dialogue in

L'Age d'or is frequently jumbled or silenced at unexpected points, thus

removing its signifying power and rendering it pure sound effect. Other key

instances of counterpoint between sound and image include the sudden silence

after the scenes of human disaster in the fifth segment, though there is no

apparent narrative motivation for this, and the dead minister who is also shown

without any sonic accompaniment directly after he has accused the male lead of

causing a great human disaster.[26] Furthermore, Mendelssohn's *Hebrides*

Overture accompanies the opening shots of the scorpions, although this is

entirely at odds with the fierce desert scorpions onscreen, and thus results in a

neat narrative counterpoint.[27] There are however some synchronised sound

effects, such as the cow's bell as it surreally steps off the bed and the gunshot

when the child is killed. In fact, synchronisation of the music with the images

for certain scenes appears to have been a matter of concern to Buñuel; he was

eager to edit the *Liebestod* to make it fit the action as closely as possible'.[28]

Thus, these techniques undermine the sense of the narrative through a thematic

counterpoint between the images and sounds, rather than through technical

disjunction of image and sound. Cocteau created his own style of counterpoint

in *Sang* using an originally composed score and a counterpoint that differed

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[24] Richards, 'Unsynched', 25.
[25] *Ibid*., 27.
[26] *Ibid*., 32.
[27] *Ibid*., 27.
[28] Barlow, 'Surreal Symphonies', 46.

from Buñuel's films but was obviously in line with contemporary explorations with unsynchronised sound. However, his style of counterpoint could not be understood as Surrealist and it advanced beyond that created by juxtapositions based on thematic content or associations.

The Development of a Soundscape for *Le Sang d'un Poète*

The unusual professional equality between Cocteau and Auric in this first film is evident in correspondence with the film office in France co-signed by the two men and immediately points to a parity between director and composer that was very rare in filmmaking at this time.[29] The fact that in the opening credits of the film and in sketch materials and letters *Sang* is referred to as 'a film by Cocteau with music by Auric' demonstrates that music was valued above other considerations such as décor and even the selection of actors, and had been from the beginning of the film's production. Cocteau's creative interest in the development of the soundscape was undoubtedly influenced by the important role he attributed to music in understanding how film montage works and how a film could operate on an audience.[30] The careful arrangement of the images and sounds in the film to suggest the poet's interior life injects a 'musicality' in the work, which has long been recognised. Lily Pons refers to the work as a 'great piece of French visual music' in her translator's note to the 1949 Bodley Press edition of the screenplay – though her invocation of the language of 'visual music' itself recalls the Symbolist aesthetics espoused by earlier French avant-garde film-makers, and the high value attributed to musical qualities, as outlined

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[29] See correspondence held in box twenty-five, BHVP (accessed September 2009).
[30] Cocteau had met Eisenstein in 1930, just before beginning filming *Sang* and it could be argued that the Russian film-maker may have inspired his thoughts on montage.

in chapter two.[31] Beyond both the soundscape and montage, music inflected

Cocteau's pleas concerning the reception of the film, as is evident in his address

delivered at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier:

> When I was working, let me say again, I wasn't thinking of anything,
> and that is why one must let the film act like Auric's noble
> accompanying music. Music gives nameless nourishment to our
> emotions and memories, and if each of you finds your own personal
> meaning in this film, then I will have achieved my ambition.[32]

This crystallises the close connection that Cocteau perceived between the efforts

an audience makes in trying to find meaning in a film and in interpreting a piece

of music. It also suggests that he hoped to endow his own film with a similar

abstraction that would require an audience to reflect on the film's meaning.

Cocteau did all of the voices for the film himself, apart from that of the

statue (Lee Miller), whose voice was dubbed by Rachel Berendt. Layering and

overlapping phrases spoken by Cocteau created the chatter in the theatre boxes.

Indeed, he became directly involved in the creation of the sound effects for the

film, recalling:

> When we were making *Le Sang d'un poète*, as the sound film had just
> appeared, we kept experimenting till we were quite exhausted. We kept
> building up walls and then demolishing them, trying in vain to obtain the
> sound of a crash. At last in desperation I hit upon the discovery that the
> only way to get that sound was by crumpling up two newspapers
> simultaneously. It happened to be the *Temps* and the *Intransigeant* (one
> of which is printed on stiffer paper than the other).[33]

The variety and ingenuity with which the sound effects were treated suggests

that Cocteau drew on his prior experiences in theatre and vaudeville to increase

the impact of these effects. The potential to create an interesting soundscape

was made possible by the use of the American RCA Photophone system, which

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[31] Lily Pons, 'Translator's Note', in *The Blood of a Poet: A Film by Jean Cocteau*, trans. Lily Pons (New York: Bodley Press, 1949).
[32] Cocteau, 'Postscript' to *Sang* in *Two Screenplays*, 66.
[33] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film: A Conversation with André Fraigneau*, trans. Vera Traill (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1954), 109.

emerged in the late 1920s for synchronising electrically recorded audio to a motion picture image. During these early years it was difficult to produce a high quality and complex soundtrack that included dialogue, music and effects with an unselective microphone, and mixing multiple tracks inevitably resulted in a loss of sound quality.[34] Prior to 1933, it was rare for music and dialogue to appear simultaneously, unless they were recorded together, though the latter presented further problems as each element required different microphones and environments. For *Sang*, Auric recalled how Labrély would instruct him on his choice of instruments based on the technology's capacity to record them well, which in turn led to the omission of a string section.[35] A double sound-on-film system was used which enabled Auric's music and the sound effects to be recorded separately from Cocteau's voice-overs; the various soundtracks were then added to the visual material.

The most striking use of these sound effects can be found in the second and fourth episodes of the film. In the second episode, a winding bassoon melody alternates with silence, sound effects, and a contemplative flute melody. The bassoon melody is repeated whenever the poet moves down the corridor. As he peers through the keyholes the music stops and a variety of sound effects can be heard, including a ticking clock, gunshots as the Mexican is shot, bells being shaken at the child learning to fly, drum strokes to accompany the appearance of the hermaphrodite's body parts, and the poet's own heavy breathing to accompany his struggle back down the corridor to leave the hotel. Taylor Johnson reads these sound effects as Symbolist in nature since each one

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[34] Rick Altman, 'The Evolution of Sound Technology', in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, eds. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 46.
[35] Colin Roust, 'Sounding French: The Film Music and Criticism of Georges Auric, 1919–45' (PhD diss. The University of Michigan, 2007), 43.

symbolises a moment in the hotel, and affects the audience's emotions through the auditory sense, rather than simply communicating the visual action.[36] One might go further, however, and note that the suppression of the music at each moment the poet stops to peer in a keyhole leaves room for the audience to ponder the significance of each room even before any sound effects are heard; it also makes the resumption of the bassoon melody when the poet moves further through the corridor doubly significant. Ex. 3.1 shows the bassoon melody, which is ripe for interpretation as symbolic of the poet's journey.

Example 3.1: Melody that accompanies the poet's journey down the corridor[37]

An examination of the production papers for *Sang* enables a clearer understanding of how Cocteau's development of the soundscape was influenced by Symbolist aesthetics. Archival material concerning the development of the film can be found in Houghton Library Manuscript Fr277 *Papers Concerning Blood of a Poet* (1930). These papers in combination with material from the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris provide a vivid insight into the creative process of making the film. The first point to note is the sheer abundance of preparatory sketches that Cocteau made for *Sang*. Charles

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[36] Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation', 257.
[37] Examples 3.1 and 3.2 are transcribed by the author from the film.

O'Brien has noted that such practice was uncommon in conversion era cinema with most aesthetic decisions taken during the shooting and recording itself.[38] The first Houghton paper is the letter to Auric from Cocteau quoted at the start of this chapter, in which the latter describes how he puts 'himself' into the film through its sound.[39] The idea of Cocteau infusing the film with himself through sound effects not only reveals his deep involvement in the creation of the film's soundscape; it is highly Symbolist, reflective of the Symbolist preoccupation with the self. In the manuscript of this letter, it is clear that Cocteau initially wrote 'Les sons ne donnent rien' but subsequently crossed out 'sons' and replaced it with 'bruits'. This suggests that he reflected upon and distinguished between the two, ultimately considering 'noises' to be negative and 'sons', which I understand to be sound effects, to be positive. His intention to record his lungs, limbs and heart was realised and these sounds all feature in the film; for example, the beating of the Poet's heart in the fourth episode becomes increasingly audible as he realises that he has lost the card game (fig. 3.1).

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[38] Charles O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound: Technology and Film Style in France and the U.S.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 79–80.

[39] 'Cher Georges

Les bruits ne donnent rien les sons c'est merveilleux. Il faut que tu te saignes pour l'air de l'ange. Moi je suis à bout mais j'ai trouvé un truc pour donner encore de moi. J'enregistre ce soir mes poumons, mes branches, mon coeur. On verra la gueule de Labrély. Il faut sauver ce travail, s'y mêler jusqu'à ce que l'audition devienne pénible. En rendant le film injouable, inexploitable, on le rendra sacré.

Vive les Charles!

Je t'embrasse,

Jean'

Cocteau (manuscript, folder one, Manuscript Fr277 *Papers Concerning Blood of a Poet* (1930), Houghton Library Harvard, accessed July 2009). The published version of which is available in Pierre Caizergues, *Georges Auric: Correspondance: Jean Cocteau* (Montpellier: Centre d'Étude du XXe siècle, Université Paul Valéry, 1999),120.

Figure 3.1: *Le Sang d'un poète*: The poet looks down at his (Cocteau's) thumping heart.

As far as I am aware, this recording of a heart is the first such instance in the history of French cinema. It was a trick that Paramount publicised heavily on the release of Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931) a year later, as Mamoulian likewise recorded his heartbeat to accompany the transformation of Dr Jekyll. As Neil Lerner has argued, such an imaginative use of sound effect rather than melodramatic music at this crucial point injects a sense of corporeality into the film that inspires fear through identification with human physicality.[40]

The idea that *Sang* was influenced by Symbolist aesthetics is also supported by a sentence regarding the very origin of the film found in an early version of the preface to the screenplay in the third Houghton folder:

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[40] Neil Lerner, 'The Strange Case of Rouben Mamoulian's Sound Stew: The Uncanny Soundtrack in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931)', in *Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear*, ed. Lerner (New York: Routledge, 2010), 55–79.

> A project of a tragic cartoon was originally the 'life of a poet' where the musical code prevents the silences from becoming gaps and the character of the sound effects from being imitative harmonic accompaniment.[41]

Cocteau's description of the soundscape as a 'musical code' suggests that he expected the spectator to attempt to decipher it. At the very least, it indicates that he was aware of the potential of the sonic elements to instil another layer of significance in his film. Nevertheless, *Sang* was not a straightforward project and, technically, Cocteau knew nothing about making a film at this stage and had to invent his own approach. Auric was equally unclear as to how to compose a film score.[42] The composer took a close interest in the proceedings, and not simply as they related to the score: he travelled to Joinville each day for the filming and wrote his music gradually, based on the projections he saw. Although the manner in which Auric's music was used would not always remain the same, Cocteau permitted Auric a great deal of compositional freedom in the preparation of the music for *Sang*. Auric recalled:

> Very spontaneously Jean Cocteau trusted me. He used to say quite simply: at this passage I imagine music of this character, that was as far as it went.[43]

Cocteau ultimately divided up Auric's music for *Sang* in the postproduction stage of the film but the composer noted that this acceptance of the musical

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[41] Cocteau, 'Un projet de dessin animé tragique fit à l'origine de "la vie de poète" où le code musical enlevant aux silences un aspect à lacunes et aux bruits leur caracatère d'harmonie imitative.' Cocteau (manuscript, folder three, Manuscript Fr277 *Papers Concerning Blood of a Poet* (1930)).

[42] Georges Auric, 'Témoignages', *Avec les musiciens*, vol. 7 of *Cahiers Jean Cocteau*, ed. Léon Dile Milorad (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 67–68.

[43] 'Très spontanément Jean Cocteau m'a évidemment fait confiance. Il me disait simplement évidemment: à tel passage j'imagine une musique de tel caractère, enfin ça s'arrêtait là. Quand je jouais, quand il entendait ma musique, il n'y eut aucune espèce de discussion entre nous. Il était content de ce que j'avais fait, pour moi ça été très important car cela était mon premier contact avec le cinéma, ce qu'on appelait à ce moment-là le cinéma sonore ou le cinéma parlant, tellement nous étions émerveillés à l'idée qu'on pouvait enregistrer des sons ou faire parler des images. Mais après beaucoup d'années sont passées et Jean Cocteau est devenu à son tour non seulement un grand créateur du sujets, de matières cinématographiques, mais il connaissait la technique de son métier, il pouvait discuter d'une façon irréfutable avec un technicien, on ne pouvait plus le tromper sur ce qui se passait, il connaissait très bien les ressources dont il pouvait disposer.' *Ibid*., 68–69.

material that he had composed was very important to him, as this was his first film. Auric recalled that in later years Cocteau would develop a far greater understanding of all aspects of the filmmaking process, with the implication that the director would become much more heavily involved in the plans for the musical score from the earliest stages. This is seen to be the case in the various case studies in this thesis, which demonstrate that Cocteau becomes increasingly personally involved in all aspects of his film soundscapes.

Auric's music for *Sang* is similar in character to that of *Les Six* and ties in with the aesthetics espoused in *Le Coq et l'arlequin*. The clear melodies and regular rhythms are accompanied by tonal or modal harmonies, and the music is orchestrated for small ensembles.[44] Although Auric was relatively free to develop the score as he wished, Cocteau's sketches for the film reveal that he was thinking about the placement of the music and sound effects from the preparatory stages. The third part of the fifth Houghton folder is a preliminary section of the shooting script that includes a full list of the sounds in the film. In the published versions of the screenplays (and indeed in the preliminary scripts of folder five and the outlines of the shooting script in folders six through to ten) these sounds are incorporated into the text, but the Houghton papers as a whole demonstrate that Cocteau composed a list of the events in the film structured purely by sounds *before* the filming took place. He was not only aware of the crucial role that sound would play in his film but had suggestions about how it should be arranged in the film's structure. Sound was not an addition after the screenplay was finalised but rather an integral part of its conception and structuring. Silences are marked in, too, indicating that an absence of sound at

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[44] Roust, 'Sounding French', 47.

particular moments was held to be as important as the sounds themselves.

Folder eleven contains a brief listing of the sounds, and while the nature of the

effects is highly specific, the nature of the music is not. Cocteau simply uses

arrows to indicate where 'musique' should be placed; there are no notes at all

about the *type* of music. The reason for this lack of detail is most likely due to

his intention to give Auric compositional freedom in the preparation of the

music and then to use accidental synchronisation, a technique whose

development is reflective of Cocteau's close role in the development of the

soundscape and whose effects are highly Symbolist.

Accidental Synchronisation

The creative conceptualisation and practical work involved in the development

of accidental synchronisation is one of the features of Cocteau's work on *Sang*

that prefigures later sound design, and the resulting effects of accidental

synchronisation encourage the audience to reflect on the significance of the

combinations. This means that the way music is used in *Sang* is arguably its

most Symbolist sonic feature. The sound designer David Sonnenschein has

already suggested a direct link between Cocteau's practice and the work of

Walter Murch, since the latter has used a similar technique to accidental

synchronisation in editing both image and sound. Murch orders his storyboard

in columns and discovers leaps of time, asynchronies, and juxtapositions out of

context between his columns. Sonnenschein advises aspiring sound designers

today that such shuffling of the elements opens new possibilities and can be

applied to sounds and images in other films to unlock unexpected modes of

storytelling.[45] Cocteau's initial inspiration to think about the effects of

imperfect synchronisation in film can be traced to his experiences with *Le Sacre*

du printemps. He wrote in *Le Coq et l'arlequin*:

> I have heard *Le Sacre* again without the dances; I would like to go over
> them again. In my memory, the impetus and the method balanced each
> other, as in the orchestra. The defect consisted in the parallelism of the
> music and the movement, in their lack of interplay, of counterpoint.[46]

Thus, years before he would make his first film, Cocteau claimed that he

realised that the 'defect' was the lack of counterpoint between the gestures and

sounds. His recognition of the lack of counterpoint as a defect again reflects a

fundamentally Symbolist aesthetics since a close alignment of gestures and

sounds usually means that the audience does not have to be as imaginative in

piecing together their significance. We might also detect a proto-accidental

synchronisation in his arrangement of Milhaud's fast paced music with the slow

choreography in *Le Boeuf sur le toit*. Cocteau later used the technique in his

work on the ballet *Le Jeune homme et la mort* (1946), in which he decided to use

Bach's *Passacaglia* at the last minute. This was intended to give extra grandeur

to the dances, which were based on jazz dance rhythms. However, Cocteau

noted that, from the second performance onwards, the dancers 'inclined' towards

the music and the conductor 'inclined' towards the dancers so that people did

not believe that the choreography had not been based on Bach to begin with![47]

The technique was one that he wished to use throughout his work, stating in *La*

Difficulté d'être that he had long sought ways of employing 'the mystery of

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[45] David Sonnenschein, *Sound Design: The Expressive Power of Music, Voice, and Sound Effects in Cinema* (California: Michael Wiese Productions, 2001), 56.

[46] 'J'ai réentendu *Le Sacre* sans les danses; je demande à les revoir. Dans mes souvenirs l'impulsion et la méthode s'y équilibrent, comme dans l'orchestre. Le défaut consistait dans le parallélisme de la musique et du mouvement, dans leur manqué de *jeu*, de contrepoint.' Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'arlequin: Notes autour de la musique* (1918; Reprint Éditions Stock, 2009), 92.

[47] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 72.

accidental synchronisation' other than through cinematography'.[48] His own

description of accidental synchronisation as a mystery resonates with Symbolist

aesthetics.

Cocteau was not alone in experimenting with synchronisation in cinema

and the issue of synchronisation was a highly contentious one among

contemporaneous film-makers. Synchronisation can be defined as any fixed or

purposeful relationship between sound and image. Critics such as Rudolf

Arnheim, Theodor Adorno, and Siegfried Kracauer among others debated the

issue of synchronisation; it is rooted in the very nature of the art form. During

the years of silent cinema, there were conflicting opinions as to whether film

was essentially an aural medium to which spectacle was an addition, or a visual

form to which sound was an accompaniment.[49] The presentation of the plot in

an intelligible manner was crucial for the narrative Hollywood film-makers and

so sound had a supporting role to image. Composers such as Erich Wolfgang

Korngold and Max Steiner became famous for their classical Hollywood film

scores which closely matched the image with music, although in time they

would come to be denigrated for the most literal-minded example of this

practice, namely, mickey-mousing.[50] However, even at its earliest stages, there

were objections to close synchronisation of image and music. In Russia, as early

as 1928, Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Vasilyevich Alexandrov

published a joint statement on the sound film in a Leningrad magazine

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[48] 'De longue date, je cherchais à employer, autrement que par le cinématographe, le mystère du synchronisme accidentel'. Cocteau, *La Difficulté d'être* (1947; Reprint Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1983),196.

[49] James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 92–94.

[50] Scott Paulin, 'Richard Wagner and the Fantasy of Cinematic Unity: The Idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the History and Theory of Film Music', in *Music and Cinema*, ed. James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 69.

advocating a contrapuntal use of sound and images, enabling them to function as neutral fragments of material whose potential meaning is realised in a montage sequence.[51]

It is possible that Cocteau, who admired Eisenstein's work, may have been influenced by his approach to the marrying of sound to image, particularly the effects of imperfect synchronisation, and one might question the extent to which Cocteau's use of the technique was original. It is clear that he preferred the inventive use of music with silent cinema to the dull illustrative synchronisation that was to be found in many early sound films. Writing of the problem of sound in cinema, as he perceived it, Cocteau stated:

> Nothing, it seems to me, can be more vulgar than musical synchronism in films. It is, again a pleonasm. A kind of glue where everything gets stuck rigid, and where no play (in the sense of 'play' in wood) is possible.[52]

and

> At the moment, sound clings too tightly to film, dragging it back. If the poet-film-maker were forced to resort to post-synchronisation, he would have to use sound humorously and inventively, which is what happened at the start.[53]

Cocteau's solution was to avoid aligning the image and the music in the way one might expect, deliberately placing music composed for certain images with completely different ones. He stated that his re-shuffling, shifting and reversing of the order of the music in every single sequence, heightened the relief of the images.[54] While the separateness of the image and soundtracks should remain evident, Cocteau found that in some instances, the 'displaced' music adhered too

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[51] Reprinted in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, eds. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 76.
[52] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 71–72.
[53] Cocteau, 'Great Sixteen', *St Cinéma des Prés*, no. 2 1950 in *The Art of Cinema*, eds. André Bernard and Claude Gauteur, trans. Robin Buss (London: Marion Books, 2001), 70.
[54] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 73.

closely to the gestures, and seemed to have been written on purpose.[55] Taylor Johnson argues that Cocteau's desire for his film images to create 'relief' and to prevent narrative flow can be understood as indicative of Symbolist cinema since the resulting juxtapositions and gaps cause the audience to search for meaning.[56] I would argue that Cocteau saw the music performing a similar task and that his development of accidental synchronisation was very much in line with the desire for audiences to search for meaning.

A scene in the first episode of the film gives a sense of the way in which music and image are combined and how they can be interpreted as operating in a Symbolist manner. Following the poet's discovery of the mouth on his hand, a slow and contemplative melody enters. While he is sitting at his table (6:50), the music suddenly becomes frenetic in tempo although there is no sudden movement on the screen to trigger this (fig. 3.2). Again, the audience would find such a combination of image and music surprising and would be encouraged to interpret its significance. Perhaps it indicates the poet's inner torment or portends the frantic action that follows; there is no definitive reading. In fact, at the moment when he appears to be most agitated (7:23) and furiously waves his arm back and forth as though trying to shake off the mouth, there is a mysterious silence (fig. 3.3). The silence gives the audience a moment to reflect on the image alone. The combination of such fast passages of music with slow moving images, and at times visuals that include very little action at all, is perhaps the most obvious manifestation of accidental synchronisation. Such occurrences cast the moving pictures in a very different light from that which

[55] Cocteau, *Jean Cocteau: The Art of Cinema*, 72–73.
[56] Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation', 244.

would result if there was action-packed music synchronised with fast moments

on screen or, conversely, slow music with slow movement.

Figure 3.2: *Le Sang d'un poète*: The poet stares at the mouth on his hand.

Figure 3.3: *Le Sang d'un poète*: He waves his arm furiously in an effort to get rid of the mouth.

The soundscape in the third episode of the film also encourages multiple readings of the film. The use of accidental synchronisation is subtler in this scene but seems to be clearest at the beginning where some of the musical phrases are audibly juxtaposed, sometimes in an abrupt fashion (29:04). It is evident in the almost continuous music throughout the scene of a snowball fight between schoolboys (30:11) where a trill on flutes and a clash of cymbals signals the theme shown in ex 3.2:

Example 3.2: Melody that accompanies the snowball fight.

The slow steady melody echoes the mood of the tableau rather than reflecting the specific action moments in the fight, again indicative of accidental synchronisation (fig. 3.6). In fact, during a most uncomfortable moment when a group of young boys strangle their fellow pupil with a scarf, the music appears subdued and unreflective of the pain in the scene (32:04). There are no sound effects for most of the episode; when a boy falls wounded and lies on the ground, blood ebbing out of his mouth, we hear only his murmurs of pain. The lack of sound effects throughout most of the episode means that it operates

almost like a silent film montage, apart from Cocteau's occasional voice-overs, which are reminiscent of the silent film lecturer. Silent film lecturers added coherence and deeper significance to a projected slide or film show.[57] As Rick Altman outlines, the strength of the lecturer was not just in the explanation of images but in their capacity to make the audience perceive something beyond what could be seen in the images, and thus to redefine their meaning.[58] By placing images in a new light, they could provide a narrative between otherwise disconnected images.[59] In a similar fashion, Cocteau's voice-overs provide information and suggest narrative associations that we could not otherwise deduce from the images. For example, he explains Dargelos's position as the leader of the schoolboys and the power of a snowball in his hands. In the early part of the scene, there are some allusions to the bassoon theme of the second episode (29:14) that accompanied the poet's walk down the hotel corridor (ex 3.1). Similarly when the boy falls down, the theme returns (33:04). This instantly muddies any reading the audience might have been forming. Is the young boy a younger version of the poet? Are they separate people? Is the connection reflective of a theme of struggle? The lack of a close match between images and music throughout episode three prevents the audience from drawing any firm conclusions about its meaning.

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[57] On lecturing in the years of silent film, see Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[58] *Ibid.*, 71.

[59] *Ibid*., 142.

Figure 3.4: *Le Sang d'un poète*: The snowball fight.

The effectiveness of accidental synchronisation in *Sang* remains a moot point. Developing Michel Chion's terminology in his audiovisual analysis of the first two episodes (only) of the film, Roust uses the terms 'primary synchronisation point' and 'secondary synchronisation point' to account for the operation of accidental synchronisation in *Sang*. A synchronisation point is primary when 'a significant amount of rhetorical emphasis' is placed on it; all other synchronisation points are secondary.[60] For Roust, the prevalence of primary synchronisation points throughout the film demonstrates that Cocteau's approach to placing 'musical cues' was probably less random than he claimed: in other words, the 'accidental' aspects of Cocteau's editing arise principally from those secondary synchronisation points and the serendipitous result of the music and images unfolding in time alongside each other.[61] My examination of

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[60] Roust, 'Sounding French', 82.
[61] *Ibid*., 98.

Cocteau's sketch materials in both folder eleven of the Houghton papers and some notes in the preliminary list of shots at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris concurs with Roust's reading.[62] The lack of detail in those sketches concerning the nature of the music accounts for the seeming synchronisation at primary points, as he had clearly planned *where* music should appear in the film very carefully, just not what the character of that music would be. There is certainly a stronger sense of synchronisation than randomness at key points. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind that one's perception of 'appropriateness' might also be partly explained by an effect that Chion has noted, namely, that spectators will automatically match up and try to make sense of sounds and images that are presented together. Cocteau admitted to the power of this effect when he himself observed that at times even displaced music will seem to adhere to onscreen gestures.[63]

Cocteau retrospectively admitted that he annoyed Auric in his insistence on the non-alignment of music and image. However, he went on to say that the composer eventually agreed with what he had done, which if true would seem to indicate that their artistic differences were usually resolved in the completed artwork.[64] The archival evidence relating to *Sang* demonstrates that Cocteau's engagement with Auric's music and the broader development of the soundscape was very personal indeed. While his use of accidental synchronisation was innovative, from the very outset, music and sound were also integral parts of his thinking about the montage of the project and how it would be interpreted, and

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[62] See typed early version of list of shots in box twenty-five, BHVP (accessed September 2009). This includes a note stipulating that the music should play 'en sourdine' at the moment the poet hears a knock on the door. There is also a note next to shot five that he should turn his head at the same time as 'un bruit'.

[63] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 63.

[64] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 72.

even led him to record his own sound effects. Not only did Cocteau place an equal emphasis on the music as on the images, but his development of a technique that would deliberately require the spectator to use his/her imagination in order to make sense of the work is the sonic aspect that most convincingly renders *Sang* Symbolist.

CHAPTER FOUR

Cocteau and Wagner: *L'Éternel Retour*

Cocteau's ambivalent political stance during World War Two and his complex

attitude towards Wagner inflect my interpretation of *L'Éternel Retour* (1943), a

blockbuster film based on the Tristan myth and released during the Second

World War.[1] Jean Delannoy directed the film but Cocteau wrote the screenplay

and was heavily involved in its conceptualisation and production. Cocteau's

diary paints a vivid account of life in Occupied France but his entries relating to

L'Éternel Retour also outline the extent to which he was practically involved in

the arrangement of the score for the film and how he envisaged its effects.

Drawing attention to parallels between Wagner's writings on poetry and music

on the one hand and Cocteau's writings on image and music in film on the other,

I argue that Cocteau's ambitions for *L'Éternel Retour*'s soundscape were shaped

not only by Wagner's music dramas, but also by the Symbolist aesthetics to

which Wagner's gave rise. Yet to invoke Wagner during World War Two was

not a neutral gesture. Indeed, *L'Éternel Retour* has been widely acknowledged

as politically ambiguous; the film has been subjected to varying readings since

its release, and its use of a score reminiscent of Wagner has been central to its

appropriation by both Collaboration and Resistance political factions. I

therefore contextualise the film within Occupation period French cinema, and in

so doing illuminate the interpretative problems raised by a score whose style

could be heard as reminiscent of Wagner.

This chapter builds on Carolyn Abbate's and Colin Roust's observations

that there are certain connections between *L'Éternel Retour*, Wagner's *Tristan*

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[1] References to timings are to *L'Éternel Retour*, directed by Jean Cocteau (France: SNC
Releasing 2008), DVD.

und Isolde, and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*. For Roust, there are links between Auric's use of leitmotif technique and Debussy's techniques in *Pelléas* as well as some parallels with the practices of Symbolist poetry.[2] Extending his reading, I argue that *L'Éternel Retour* can be interpreted as operating in line with Symbolist aesthetics in a more holistic way: Cocteau's approach reflects his desire to discourage people from interpreting his films in one way alone, while his broader interest in the conceptualisation and postproduction stages of combining its images with music reflects his ongoing desire to be closely involved with film soundscape design.

Rhetorical Parallels: Wagner and Cocteau

Wagner's and Cocteau's theoretical writings display striking parallels and suggest that Cocteau's understanding of music in film was shaped by Wagner's theories for the ideal artwork. Describing the first synchronisation of the music with the images for *La Belle et la bête* (1946), made just three years after *L'Éternel Retour*, Cocteau recorded in his diary: 'This music marries the film, impregnates it, exalts it, completes it'.[3] This highly sexual phrase evokes Wagner's writings concerning the union of poetry and music to produce drama, as expounded in *Opera und Drama* (1851) in which he highlighted problems in opera and put forward a solution in the artwork of the future. Wagner felt that poetry had become subservient to music and criticised composers such as Rossini for supporting nonsensical dramas with extravagant musical display:

> as a means of expression (Music) has been made the object; and […] the object of expression (Drama) has been made the means.[4]

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[2] Colin Roust, 'Sounding French: The Film Music and Criticism of Georges Auric, 1919–45' (PhD diss. The University of Michigan, 2007), 225.

[3] 'Cette musique épouse le film, l'imprègne, l'exalte, l'achève'. Jean Cocteau, April 1946, *La Belle et la bête: Journal d'un film* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2003), 241.

[4] Richard Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, trans. Edwin Evans, vol. 1 (London: W.M. Reeves, 1913), 27.

He proposed elevating drama to what he considered its rightful place and

presented an ideal model of music and poetry based on a sexual metaphor.

> The organism of music is only capable of bearing living melody, when fructified by the poet's thought. Music is the female – destined to bring forth – the poet being the real generator; and music had, therefore, reached the very summit of its madness when it aspired, not only to bear – but also to produce.[5]

And later:

> The necessary incentive of the poetical understanding in poetical creation is love, therefore: and, in fact, the love of the man to the woman. […]
> *The procreative seed is the poetical object, which leads Music (as the glorious, loving woman) to the material which causes it to bear.*[6]

Numerous scholars have discussed issues of Wagner and sexuality. Most

recently, Laurence Dreyfus has carried out a study of Wagner's erotics in which

he explores the centrality of eroticism to Wagner's operas: in their musical

representations of sensuality, in their conceptualisation, and in how they were

subsequently received by friends and the public.[7] Cocteau's description of the

relationship between music and image in film is closest to Wagner's argument in

Opera and Drama that music drama results less from an equal unity of poetry

and music than from a fertilisation of music by the poetic intent, but *in reverse*.

'Poetry' in Wagner's writings can be interpreted in a broad sense: not simply as

the libretto, but rather as the poetic intent or the essence behind the words.[8]

Wagner presents the idea that poetic intent inspires the musical response and

helps to bring it forth as drama, and this is the foundation upon which *Opera*

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[5] *Ibid.*, 185.
[6] *Ibid.*, 417–418.
[7] Laurence Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2010). See also: Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne: A Study in Interpretation*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Jack M. Stein, *Richard Wagner and the Synthesis of the Arts* (Ann Arbor: Wayne State University Press, 1960).
[8] Frank Walter Glass, *The Fertilising Seed: Wagner's Concept of the Poetic Intent* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1983), 4.

and Drama is built.[9] Cocteau, however, understood music to complete a film, which is a little different to Wagner's notion of the poetic intent impregnating the music. Although Cocteau's own sexual metaphor involves a reversal of Wagnerian logic, it nonetheless owes a rhetorical debt to the man he so desperately sought to avoid in his early years; moreover, the sense of music completing the film is noticeable in Cocteau's aspirations for the music in *L'Éternel Retour*. While Cocteau did not advocate borrowing Wagner's music, in early preparatory sketchbooks he noted that the film's music 'should play a major role lighting up the legendary side of the film', thus completing and highlighting a fundamental characteristic of the work.[10]

Cocteau's interest in every parameter of film and his efforts to shape the film soundscape on both creative and technological levels also recall Wagner's theories concerning the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In an article about *L'Éternel Retour*, Cocteau described cinema as 'on the way to becoming the complete art, *par excellence*, a popular theatre from which nothing is absent: music, dance, words, Greek masks (close up), the whisper that hundreds of ears can hear and everything that goes to make up drama.'[11] In this music-dramatic context, Cocteau's description of the cinematic close-up as a Greek mask again carries strong echoes of Wagnerian poetics. Wagner repeatedly invoked Greek tragedy in his development of his opera, and the importance he attributed to it is evident in his writings and in his ambitions for the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In *Art and Revolution* he argues that:

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[9] *Ibid.*, 15.

[10] 'Doit jouer un rôle capital allumant le côté légendaire du film'. Cocteau, *L'Éternel Retour* (sketchbooks, box thirty, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

[11] Cocteau, *The Art of Cinema*, eds. André Bernard and Claude Gauteur, trans. Robin Buss (London: Marion Books, 2001), 192–193.

our modern art is but one link in the artistic development of the whole of Europe; and this development found its starting point with the Greeks.[12]

In *The Artwork of the Future* the unified art of the Greeks becomes the model for the total artwork.[13] Wagner hoped that his *Gesamtkunstwerk* would renew Attic tragedy and wished the orchestra to act in a similar fashion to the Greek chorus in his operas, capable of communicating the deepest aspects of the drama and commenting on the action at hand.[14] Cocteau's reference to Greek art and his description of the elements of film functioning in a unified manner appears to echo Wagner's hopes for the elements of his opera to operate in a unified synthesis.

Cocteau's thematic preoccupations were also very Wagnerian in their focus on sacrifice, blood, and death with none quite so explicitly inviting comparison with Wagner as *L'Éternel Retour*. Cocteau also frequently referred to *Tristan* in his diary while he was developing *L'Éternel Retour*. In contrast to his early attitude to the German composer, he admitted in his diary at this time that he found Wagner's opera sublime.[15] On 5 June 1943, during the shooting of the film at Lake Geneva, he notes that they were close to the location where Wagner composed *Tristan* and that the film should even be called *Tristan* (the working title was, in fact, *Tristan* for a while).[16] During the filming of the final scene he also reports that he had often pictured its tableau while listening to

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[12] Wagner, *Art and Revolution*, vol. 1 of *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1892), 32.

[13] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, vol. 1 of *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1892), 90.

[14] See for instance Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Ulrich Müller, 'Wagner and Antiquity', in *Wagner Handbook*, eds. Ulrich Müller and Peter Wapnewski, trans. John Deathridge (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 227–235. Mark Berry, 'Richard Wagner and the Politics of Music-Drama', *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 3 (2004): 663–683.

[15] Cocteau, 14 March 1942, *Journal (1942–1945)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 35–36.

[16] *Ibid*., 307.

Tristan,[17] and manifests a similarly admiring tone in notes that he made following the release of the film, in which he describes the masterwork that the myth had become in the 'prodigious hands of Wagner'.[18] Two days after the release of *L'Éternel Retour*, on 31 October 1943, Cocteau argued that:

> the strength of Wagner, was to have organised Bayreuth, to have dragged pilgrims face to face with his work, to have invented the hypnosis of cinema for drama.[19]

This opinion encapsulates the close relationship he perceived between Wagner and cinema. On many levels, therefore, *L'Éternel Retour* brings Cocteau's complex relationship with Wagner under the spotlight and elucidates how Wagner's poetics partly informed Cocteau's writings about and approach to film music.

Made in Occupied France: *L'Éternel Retour*

L'Éternel Retour was the film event of 1943 and the most popular film of the whole Occupation.[20] Its success was tied up with the changing production conditions of the wider industry and with the political climate. Its place in French film history is contentious, however, as today most criticism of the film is in line with James S. Williams's statement that 'there is no theme of resistance in *L'Éternel Retour* powerful enough to justify a critical attempt to recuperate

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[17] 9 June 1943, *Ibid.*, 308.

[18] 'Dans *L'Éternel Retour*, l'histoire de Tristan et Yseult est prise à l'origine. Je ne pouvais me permettre de toucher un chef d'œuvre qu'elle est devenue entre les mains prodigieuses de Wagner'. Cocteau, 'Puisque vous avez la gentillesse de me demander quelques renseignements sur *L'Éternel Retour*' (undated text, box twenty-six, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

[19] 'Le film […] montre […] un peu du monde que j'ai accumulé dans mes oeuvres et qui reste encore invisible au public des salles – qui lui est encore inconnu. Ce succès m'apporte la preuve que ce monde et que, s'il devenait visible – c'est-à-dire si les gens écoutaient, lisaient, comparaient, il saurait ensorceler au même titre que ce défilé d'images. La force de Wagner, c'est d'avoir organisé Bayreuth, d'avoir traîné de force les pèlerins en face de son oeuvre, d'avoir inventé l'hypnose du cinéma pour le drame.' 31 October 1943, *Journal (1942–1945)*, 398.

[20] Colin Crisp, 'What Did Wartime Audiences Want to Watch?' (conference paper, Rutgers University, New Jersey, October 1996). Quoted in Carrie Tarr, '*L'Éternel Retour*: Reflection of the Occupation's Crisis in French Masculinity?' *SubStance* 27, no. 3 (1998): 55.

the film politically'.[21] While Roust has presented a convincing argument for

Auric's attempts to convey Resistance sentiments in the music, at face value,

L'Éternel Retour's narrative themes could be seen as a perfect blend of French

culture with German culture, as advocated by the German occupiers.

Although one might speculate that the French film industry must have

suffered greatly during the Occupation, the reality was complex and numerous

scholars present a paradoxical picture of an industry that flourished under the

strict regime. Evelyn Ehrlich outlines how the Germans were concerned with

maintaining the French cinema's reputation for quality, since they saw it as

providing an opportunity to dominate European cinema and rival Hollywood.[22]

Occupation cinema was brought under control through legislation and

restrictions on access to materials. The principal measures undertaken were the

German administration's control of the availability of Paris studios, an initial

ban on French production, foundation of a censorship committee, establishment

of *Continental Films* to produce French-language films under German

administration, and creation of distribution firms for German films.[23] Films that

expressed a defeatist or triumphant France were discouraged, as were any

attacks on the Church, family or state.[24] However, a system of advances to

producers was also introduced during this period, making the industry much

more efficient and a potential asset to the expected German Empire.[25]

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[21] James S. Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 62.

[22] Evelyn Ehrlich, *French Filmmaking Under the German Occupation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), xiii.

[23] Colin Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema: 1930–60* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 46.

[24] *Ibid*., 60.

[25] Phil Powrie and Keith Reader, *French Cinema: A Student's Guide* (London: Arnold, 2002), 13.

Official support, in addition to financial assistance, laid the foundations for a strong output during the war, with many film-makers declaring that they were developing a body of quality French films. Gregory Sims asserts that the 'quality' aspect of the films is often connected with supposed political neutrality and films set 'out of time'.[26] *L'Éternel Retour* could be viewed in this light. Indeed, Delannoy described *L'Éternel Retour* as an escapist film, recalling:

> Why make *L'Éternel Retour*? Why make *Les Visiteurs du soir*? Always for the same reason, to provide people with a means of escaping current life which was full of coercions and obligations.[27]

The extent to which Occupation period French films were representative of either the politics of Resistance or Collaboration is up for debate. On the one hand, Sims notes that such escapist trends were often actually indicative of the Vichy ideology in the sense that they promoted an effacement of history and a construction of a New France.[28] On the other hand, in the wake of the Liberation, a two-week festival was organised by the Ministry of Information, the Comité de Libération du Cinéma, the Cinémathèque Française, and the Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques and they selected *L'Éternel Retour* as an example of the quality film productions that France had made during the Occupation period – films that were presented as maintaining political integrity while representing a new aesthetic.[29]

The reputation of *L'Éternel Retour* as a film with collaborationist sympathies and its fall from favour as a representative of French film of this period may be partly due to expressions of revulsion for the film that appeared

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[26] Gregory Sims, 'Tristan en chandail: Poetics as Politics in Jean Cocteau's *L'Éternel Retour*', *French Cultural Studies* 9, no. 25 (1998): 22.

[27] 'Pourquoi a-t-on fait *L'Éternel Retour*? Pourquoi a-t-on fait *Les Visiteurs du soir*? Eh bien toujours pour la même raison, essayer de faire évader les gens de la vie courante qui était pleine de coercitions et d'obligations.' Quoted in Sims, 'Tristan en chandail', 31.

[28] *Ibid*., 31.

[29] *Ibid.*, 23.

in the British press after Liberation. Most critics could not envisage any way to

approach the film as a Resistance work and unequivocally linked it to Nazism.

An article from the *Daily Express* stated that 'The hero is as blonde and

inexpressive as any of the thousands of SS parachutists that I saw in Normandy

two years ago'; another from the *Daily Mail* stated that 'This film, produced in

France during the Occupation, remains heavily German…. Every Teutonic soul

recognises himself in the hero'.[30] Finally, Campbell Dixon of *The Daily*

Telegraph saw it 'smeared with the marks of German ideology, as blatant as

many swastikas'.[31] Cocteau responded to the accusations of Germanisms in an

article, saying:

> I have been very amused by some articles published in London that
> accused *L'Éternel Retour* of being Germanic in inspiration because of its
> blond heroes and, I suppose, because of Wagner's opera. Yet *Tristan*,
> paraphrased in *L'Éternel Retour*, is a work that belongs as much to
> England as to France. […]
> I belong to a generation that fought against Wagnerism. I am pleased to
> say that I have now reached the age when you lay down your arms. I let
> myself be carried away on Wagner's waves and allowed his magic to
> work. So it was not through senseless anti-Germanism, but out of
> respect for his work that I did not even consider using it.[32]

Whether this statement can be taken at face value is debatable, but Cocteau's

claim that he did not consider using Wagner's *Tristan* seems suspect since his

input into *L'Éternel Retour* appears to be so heavily imbued with Wagner, even

without explicit borrowing of music from the opera.

A Creative Collaboration: The Development of *L'Éternel Retour*

L'Éternel Retour is most obviously linked to Wagner through the Tristan legend;

Cocteau based his adaptation on the 1900 novel by Joseph Bédier *Le Roman de*

Tristan et Iseult. The extent of Cocteau's control was anticipated in his diary:

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[30] Quoted in Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, '*L'Éternel Retour* : Un Choix idéologique',
CinémAction 65, 142-51.
[31] Campbell Dixon, 'Brilliant Film with a Nazi Smear', *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 February 1946.
[32] Cocteau, 'L'Eternel Retour', in *The Art of Cinema*, 190.

> I conceive the film, I edit it myself and I write the dialogue. I have chosen my director (Delannoy) and my actors. We will pitch this unit to the producer.[33]

Delannoy recalled that he had a close working relationship with Cocteau and that they met every second day to discuss their plans for the film.[34] In an interview by Simone Dupont de Tervagne for *Les Cahiers du film* in November 1943, Cocteau admitted that he never quit the studio stage during the shooting and Jean Marais recalled in his memoirs that Cocteau's presence impacted on the mood of the film and injected a poeticism into proceedings.[35] Roger Hubert shot *L'Éternel Retour* in April 1943 at the Studios de la Victorine, Nice; the sea scenes were filmed at Lake Geneva; and postproduction editing was conducted at the Joinville Studios in Paris. Cocteau described setting the Tristan myth in his own time as a problem that he was able to solve in the cinema with the support of André Paulvé and the friendship of Delannoy.

> What would I have become without Delannoy, who wanted to get on my wavelength and asked me to join him in the cutting and montage; or without Roger Hubert, who filmed through my eyes and my heart?[36]

However, Cocteau's impatience with sharing the direction of the film is evident in many of his diary entries; for instance, on 13 July 1943, Cocteau stressed that he felt impatient and wanted to see 'this film finished, edited, mixed, flooded with music'.[37]

Before turning to Cocteau's involvement with the music, a short plot summary will be useful. Cocteau prefaced his film as follows:

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[33] 'J'invente le film, je le découpe moi-même et j'écris les dialogues. J'ai choisi mon metteur en scène (Delannoy) et mes interprètes. Nous proposerons ce bloc au producteur.' Cocteau, 11 March 1942, *Journal 1942–45* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1989), 28.

[34] Jean Delannoy, *Ses Années lumières: 1938-1992* (Toulon: Éditions les Presses du Midi, 2010), 86.

[35] Simone Dupont de Tervagne, 'L'Éternel Retour', *Les Cahiers du film*, November 1943. Jean Marais, *Histoires de ma vie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1975), 147.

[36] Cocteau, *Aspects*, 1, 5 November 1943, in *The Art of Cinema*, 189–190.

[37] 'Ce film terminé, monté, ajusté, mixé, noyé de musique'. Cocteau, 13 July 1943, *Journal (1942–45)*, 319.

> *L'Éternel Retour*, this title, borrowed from Nietzsche, signifies, here, that the same legends can recur, without their heroes' knowledge.
> – The Eternal Return of very simple circumstances which comprises the most famous of all the stories of the heart.[38]

Cocteau was not engaging in a faithful reading of Nietzsche's philosophy; he simply claims that the exact circumstances of a legend can be reborn eternally and their heroes follow, without realising it, the same path that leads from love to death.[39] *L'Éternel Retour*'s plot revolves around Patrice (Marais) and two versions of Nathalie – his true love Nathalie the blonde (Madeleine Sologne), and Nathalie the brunette (Junie Astor), whom he meets later in the film. Patrice's Uncle Marc lives in a castle with his nephew and the Frocin family: his sister-in-law Gertrude (Yvonne de Bray), her husband Amédée (Jean d'Yd), and her dwarf son Achille (Pierre Piéral) who is the villain of the piece. Patrice offers to find a bride for his lonely uncle, rescues Nathalie from her abusive fiancé, Morolt (Alexandre Rignault), and asks her to marry Marc. Nathalie marries Marc but following the accidental consumption of a love potion, she and Patrice become closer. Achille spots his chance to destroy Patrice and endeavours to prove that Nathalie is unfaithful. Caught in an embrace with Patrice, Nathalie is banished but Patrice runs away to rescue her. When Nathalie is discovered and returned to the castle, Patrice goes to work at a garage where he meets a brunette Nathalie, the sister of the mechanic Lionel (Roland Toutain). Believing that Nathalie the blonde no longer cares for him, he proposes to

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[38] '*L'Éternel Retour*, ce titre, emprunté à Nietzsche, veut dire, ici, que les mêmes légendes peuvent renaître, sans que leurs héros s'en doutent.
– Éternel retour de circonstances très simples qui composent la plus célèbre de toutes les grandes histoires du coeur.'

[39] 'Lorsque Nietzsche a fait sa découvre éblouissante de l'éternel retour, découverte sur laquelle il ne donne aucun détail, il lui attribuait, je suppose, une signification plus complexe. Par ce titre que je lui emprunte, je veux dire ici que les circonstances précises d'une légende peuvent renaître éternellement et leurs héros suivre, sans qu'ils s'en doutent, le même chemin qui mène de l'amour à la mort.' Cocteau, 'Lorsque Nietzsche a fait sa découvre éblouissante de l'éternel retour' (undated text, box twenty-six, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

Nathalie the brunette but the latter soon realises that Patrice does not really love her. When he lies dying following a failed attempt to see Nathalie the blonde, she lies about his true love's imminent arrival. Patrice dies before Nathalie the blonde arrives, and she lies down next to him so that they can be together in death.

Cocteau's sketchbooks include a few thoughts and suggestions for placements of music. For example, prior to the potion scene he indicated: 'The music should contradict the action most lightly – and build up to the passion'.[40] However, such directions are not comprehensive and it is impossible to build a complete picture of Cocteau's role in the development of the music. Nevertheless, his close interest in proceedings relating to *L'Éternel Retour*'s wider soundscape is clearly revealed in his diary, which also reflects how his understanding of the soundscape can be connected to Symbolist aesthetics. On 27 September 1943, he recorded:

> My great joy in this film, will have been to obtain permission from Jean Delannoy to help him from the first to the last minute, to simplify the text to the extreme and to orchestrate the silence. An eye which opens in the darkness, a human mouth that sings like a nightingale, a dog who breaks his chains and jumps into his master's arms, a wounded head that emerges from the shadow and hears the sound of a motor on the sea, all of this excites me a thousand times more than words.[41]

This statement is particularly evocative of the earlier film-makers of Symbolist cinema such as Germaine Dulac who were preoccupied with arranging their images in a rhythm akin to music, as outlined in chapter two. In addition, the

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[40] 'Pendant tout le scène suivant la musique doit contredire l'action presque légère – et monter jusqu'à la passion'. Cocteau, *L'Éternel Retour* (box thirty, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

[41] 'Ma grande joie dans ce film, aura été d'obtenir de Jean Delannoy qu'il me laisse l'assister de la première à la dernière minute, simplifier le texte à l'extrême et orchester le silence. Un oeil qui s'ouvre dans l'obscurité, une bouche humaine qui chante le chant de rossignol, un chien qui brise sa chaîne et saute dans les bras de son maître, une tête malade qui émerge de l'ombre et qui écoute le bruit d'un moteur sur la mer, tout cela me passionne mille fois plus que des paroles.' Cocteau, 'L'Éternel Retour', *Présent*, September 27, 1943.

idea of orchestrating the silence and the importance of the human singing like a

nightingale or listening for the sound of a motorboat all suggest that Cocteau felt

that the sounds and silences in the film could carry a symbolic significance. He

was present at Joinville too for the mixing of the soundscape, and recalled the

effects of inclusion of the sounds effects of nightingales, frogs, and a

thunderstorm.

> At Joinville for the mixing of *L'Éternel Retour*. In the end the mistakes
> stared me in the face. But beautiful aspects appear. The music and the
> sound effects (nightingale, frogs, thunderstorm) mix together, on the
> screen, thanks to Carrère's operation of the organ like a race car. This
> morning, we are mixing the last six reels.[42]

His description of these days suggests that he saw the mixing of all elements of

the soundscape as very important to the poetry of the film, and that these sound

effects injected extra significance into the scenes when combined with the

images. It is interesting that at the time Cocteau and Auric were working on the

film, they were simultaneously sharing a personal interest in Charles Baudelaire

– the leading Symbolist poet. Cocteau notes in his diary that he read Mercure's

Au temps de Baudelaire at the composer's home, perhaps inspiring a frame of

mind in tune with Symbolist aesthetics.[43] Cocteau also evokes themes of

spirituality and mysticism, common in Symbolist artworks, in his descriptions of

the recording of the music with the images and he spoke about how the music

rendered the faces ethereal:

> Recording of the film music at Gaveau's. Deeply moving days. Georges
> Auric's music is admirable. I can't remember a more beautiful
> atmosphere since Diaghilev. This film – or I should say – the ghost of

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[42] 'À Joinville, mixage de *L'Éternel Retour*. À la longue les fautes me crèvent les yeux. Mais des beautés apparaissent. La musique et les bruits (rossignol, grenouilles, orage) se mélangent, sur l'écran, grâce à l'orgue manipulé par Carrère comme une voiture de course. Ce matin, nous mixons les six dernières bobines.' 16 August 1943, *Ibid.*, 333.
[43] Cocteau, 30 July 1943, *Journal (1942–1945)*, 330–331.

the film, projected in the air on a sheet. The orchestra underneath. And the faces that the music rendered marvellous, ethereal, heavenly.[44]

Production papers suggest that Cocteau offered ideas about how he envisaged the music for the film operating, although, in contrast to *Sang*, he did not heavily edit the music.[45] Nevertheless, he was present at every meeting between Delannoy and Auric during the postproduction process and he noted the dates in his diary when Auric came to look at various scenes from the film in order to compose his music.[46] He also wrote about his hopes for the music and was particularly concerned with the final scene of the film, the death of Patrice and Nathalie:

> This ending is heart-rending. […] Again, here, the music should play an important role and I won't be able to breathe until 2 August when I should hear it and will be present at the recording of the orchestra.[47]

Cocteau had clear ambitions for music's role in the film and was evidently keen to be present during the recording process.

The sound engineers Monchablon and Canère used the Western Electric system, and improvements in every aspect of the recording and exhibiting process resulted in superior sound quality to that of *Sang*, enabling Auric to compose a complex and densely layered musical score for a lush, string-heavy orchestra with many doubled parts, which could be interpreted as Wagnerian in its breadth and style. However, in his diary entry for the recording on 6 August,

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[44] 'Enregistrement de la musique du film chez Gaveau. Journées bouleversantes. La musique de Georges Auric est admirable. Je ne me souviens d'une atmosphère plus belle, depuis Diaghilev. Le film – que dis-je – le spectre du film, projeté en l'air sur un linge de lessive. Dessous l'orchestre. Et les visages que la musique rendait merveilleux, aériens, célestes.' Cocteau, 9 August 1943, *Ibid*, 331.

[45] Cocteau, *L'Éternel Retour* (découpage technique, box thirty, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

[46] Cocteau, *Journal (1942–1945)*, 319.

[47] 'Cette fin est poignante. […] Là encore la musique doit jouer un grand role et je ne respirai pas jusqu'un 2 août, date où je dois la connaître et assister à l'enregistrement de l'orchestre.' *Ibid*., 323.

Cocteau laments that, even though technology was improving, no one

microphone could truly capture the orchestra:

> Presentation of the film's music. The recording is good – but one speaker can never give a true sense of the orchestra. The microphone is an instrument. Through it the orchestra becomes mixed up and becomes a sonic mixture where the translucencies, spaces, and flowing lines disappear.
> I suppose that this loss on the orchestra's part would be made up by the image where the eye adds its role to that of the ear and – in the end – works faster.[48]

He also displays a keen awareness and interest in the sonic possibilities offered

by improvements in technology as he continues:

> It seems that America is recording today with two sound channels (on either side of the image) and there results considerable progress from this. I have just heard, at Francoeur, a new attempt at musical recording (after our work was done). It is very brilliant, very rich, but the flaws are magnified. We therefore need to become a daguerreotype of the cinema. The sad part is to have to struggle with poor substance that resists completely.[49]

He was clearly very interested in how music and sound were handled in these

postproduction stages and I would argue that these experiences had a lasting

influence on his handling of sonic materials in later films.

Although the manuscript of Auric's music is not available, a reduced

orchestral score for three parts at the Bibliothèque Nationale allows for a

detailed examination of the composer's intentions for this film. The score

comprises twenty-nine cues, labelled according to their corresponding scenes.

This is not to suggest that the score is straightforward in a quasi-Hollywood

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[48] 'Projection de la musique du film. L'enregistrement est bien – mais jamais une machine à bouche unique ne donnera une idée exacte d'une orchestre. Le microphone est un instrument. L'orchestre s'y malaxe et forme une pâte sonore où les transparencies, les espaces, les fluidités disparaissent.
Je suppose que cette perte sur l'orchestre doit se rattraper avec l'image où l'oeil ajoute son travail a celui de l'oreille et – tout compte fait – fonctionne plus vite.' *Ibid*., 332.
[49] 'Il paraît que l'Amérique enregistre aujourd'hui avec deux bandes de son (de chaque côté de l'image) et qu'il en résulte un progrès considérable. Je viens d'entendre, à Francoeur, un essai d'enregistrement musical nouveau (après le nôtre). C'est très brillant, très riche, mais les fautes s'y aggravent. Nous devons en être un daguerrotype du cinéma. La tristesse est de se battre contre une matière insuffisante et qui résiste à bloc.' 6 August 1943, *Ibid*., 332.

classical style; on the contrary, it contains several features that add further layers of meaning to the film and provide more clues to Cocteau's paradoxical relationship to Wagner, Debussy, and above all Symbolism. The most arresting feature of the music is that it is reminiscent of Wagner, both in terms of its large symphonic forces and the fact that a system of recurring motives is used. The harmonic language is far removed from Auric's earlier compositional style, evident in the diatonic and simple language of *Les Six* and indeed that of *Le Sang d'un poete*; instead, chromaticisms abound and there are numerous modulations.[50] The film opens with a romantic-sounding orchestral overture, dense in texture with thick string and brass parts, similar to Wagner's orchestrations (ex. 4.1). The overture presents a bombastic theme on brass.

Example 4.1: Opening theme to *L'Éternel Retour*. Georges Auric, *L'Éternel Retour*. © Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1944. Reproduced with permission of Durand-Salabert-Eschig (Universal Music Publishing Group).

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[50] Roust, '*Tristan* and *Pelléas* in the Composition of *L'Éternel Retour* ' (conference paper, *Music and the Moving Image* conference, New York University, New York, 31 May 2008), 3.

Cocteau's wish for the music to highlight the mythical quality of the film and the fact that *Tristan* was evidently on his mind while filming *L'Éternel Retour* suggests that he might have encouraged Auric to compose music that would guarantee an injection of monumentality.[51] The power of music to do this is clear in the final scenes, the heroism of which particularly delighted Cocteau.[52] In the closing moments, Patrice dies alone and is joined by Nathalie who lies next to him on an upturned boat so that they can be together in death (fig. 4.1). The transformation of the lovers into heroes is communicated visually by the fade from the lovers in the boathouse to a tableau in a heavenly grotto with classical columns, filled with light (fig. 4.2). Auric's cue for this final scene, shown in ex. 4.2, is even called 'apotheosis', indicative of Nathalie and Patrice's elevation to divine status.

Figure 4.1: *L'Éternel Retour*: Nathalie and Patrice lie together in death.

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[51] It was Cocteau and not Delannoy who undertook to ask Auric for a musical arrangement for the adaptation of *L'Éternel Retour* for sound record. Cocteau, 29 January 1944, *Journal (1942–1945)*, 451.
[52] 18 August 1943, *Ibid.*, 335.

Figure 4.2: *L'Éternel Retour*: The lovers are transported to a heavenly state.

The music in this scene includes reminiscences of earlier themes; for example,

the melody which begins B flat, D flat, B flat, A flat in the upper part in bars 3–7

is the cue 'Vin d'amour', which has become associated with the lovers' drinking

the magic potion and falling in love. The cue is first heard in this scene on a cor

anglais – which an audience might find evocative of the cor anglais solo in

Tristan given the subject matter. As Nathalie and Patrice lie together and the

film draws to a close, the music grows in texture and volume until the whole

orchestra appears to be united in a final rendition of the film's main theme with

flourishes on percussion and brass fanfares, an obviously majestic musical

ending.

Example 4.2: Apotheosis cue. Georges Auric, *L'Éternel Retour*. © Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1944. Reproduced with permission of Durand-Salabert-Eschig (Universal Music Publishing Group).

On 5 November 1943, Cocteau later described Auric's music in *L'Éternel Retour* as having 'cut the last thread that still held us to the ground', hinting at the power of music to imbue the film with a poetic quality.[53] A few days earlier, on 31 October 1943, he expressed a wish for the audience to piece together the meaning of the film to access his own world.[54] These observations

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[53] Cocteau, *Aspects*, no. 1, in *The Art of Cinema*, 190.

[54] 'Le film […] montre […] un peu du monde que j'ai accumulé dans mes oeuvres et qui reste encore invisible au public des salles – qui lui est encore inconnu. Ce succès m'apporte la preuve que ce monde et que, s'il devenait visible – c'est-à-dire si les gens écoutaient, lisaient, comparaient, il saurait ensorceler au même titre que ce défilé d'images.' 31 October 1943, *Journal (1942–1945)*, 398.

encapsulate the influence of Symbolist aesthetics on Cocteau's thought

processes and the close relationship he perceived between Wagner and cinema.

It is also worth noting that Cocteau decided to work with the Bédier translation,

one that Bertin-Maghit tells us was inextricably linked to 1900s France and the

fin-de-siècle Symbolist atmosphere.[55]

The motivation behind composing a Wagnerian-style score for the film

may have been intertwined with its subject matter but Roust presents a

compelling argument for the score as evidence of Auric's political agenda.

Auric was a notable member of the Resistance and fiercely promoted French

national artwork during the war, which leads Roust to argue that the composer

manipulated the musical features of the Germanic-style work so that he could

ultimately 'Frenchify' the music variously through references to Debussy,

interpolation and manipulation of the Marseillaise, and some features of

'Impressionist' orchestration.[56] Roust highlights a particularly interesting

thematic connection between Auric and Wagner, in which the former draws on a

theme from *Tristan* but then modifies it into the Marseillaise.[57] By the 1940s

both Cocteau and Auric readily admitted Debussy's influence; in fact Auric

perceived Debussy as an example of a Frenchman who had subsumed German

influence and superseded it.[58] While the *Tristan* thematic references in the plot

are obvious, Abbate and Roust have also drawn parallels with Debussy's

Pelléas.[59] Patrice (who, Abbate points out, has a name that conflates 'Tristan'

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[55] Bertin-Maghit, '*L'Éternel Retour*: Un Choix idéologique', 142-151.
[56] Roust, '*Tristan* and *Pelléas* in the Composition of *L'Éternel Retour* ', (conference paper, *Music and the Moving Image* conference, New York University, New York, 31 May 2008).
[57] Roust, 'Sounding French', 220.
[58] Note Auric's 1940 review of *Pelléas* in *La Nouvelle revue française*: 'Voici donc le moment d'écouter sans nul trouble la grande voix de Claude Debussy. Jamais l'humanité si profonde dont sont pleines tant de scènes de *Pelléas* ne nous a semblé aussi proche ou aussi précieuse.' Antoine Goléa, *Georges Auric* (Paris: Ventadour, 1958), 24.
[59] Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 170–171.

and 'Pelléas') suffers a similar problem to Pelléas when he falls in love with his uncle's young bride. Nathalie has the same predisposition to death as Mélisande and, when Patrice first meets her, she explains that she is engaged to marry Morolt who will inevitably kill her. When Marc realises that his nephew is in love with Nathalie, like Golaud in *Pelléas*, he is displeased and sends Patrice away but fate cannot separate the lovers and they are joined in death at the end. Similarly to Mélisande, Nathalie's death is not due to any clear cause but rather to a steady decline after separation from Patrice.

There are numerous sonic connections between the works; at times, Auric suggests danger by employing cues associated with characters when they are not present. For example, when Moulouk finds Marc's glove in the mountains, Nathalie realises the proximity of the danger and the 'Uncle Marc' theme interjects. Similarly, Langham Smith notes that Debussy added to the literary Symbolism by introducing Golaud's motif at times when he is neither present nor mentioned.[60] In Act IV of *Pelléas*, following Pelléas and Mélisande's declaration of love expressed by scalar figures on C major, an augmented G flat triad on trombones and double bass interrupts twice, alternated on the second occasion with chromatic figures on the cello. For Susan Youens, this recalls the chromatic scalar underplay to Golaud's last words in Act IV, scene two: 'Vous ferez comme il vous plaira, voyez-vous', and so immediately suggests Golaud's presence.[61] In establishing a connection between Symbolist theatre and the penchant for disembodiment in sound cinema, Abbate makes a direct comparison between act three, scene one of *Pelléas*, and the scene in

[60] Richard Langham Smith, 'Motives and Symbols', in *Claude Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande*, eds. Roger Nichols and Richard Langham Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 104.

[61] Susan Youens, 'An Unseen Player: Destiny in *Pelléas et Mélisande*', in *Reading Opera*, eds. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 78.

which Patrice returns to see Nathalie for a final time in *L'Éternel Retour*. She emphasises associations of unheard timbres between the opera and film and notes how Cocteau has reversed the character roles, since in the opera Pelléas describes Mélisande's singing as strange and birdlike, whereas in the film, it is Patrice who uses birdcalls to attract Nathalie's attention. Nevertheless, both *Pelléas* and *L'Éternel Retour* share the concept of the wordless sound as an acoustic cipher.[62]

Taking these varying readings of *L'Éternel Retour* into account, I would argue that, since the film's score encourages multiple interpretations, the thematic and sonic references to Wagner and Debussy and the 'Resistance moments' identified by Roust can be interpreted as moments operating within a larger network of references in a Symbolist fashion. The effect of the film's score could be read as comprising at least three simultaneous levels of meaning:

1. A Wagnerian style score to accompany a myth made famous by the German composer. This would undoubtedly have met the approval of censors.

2. A Wagnerian style score with covert political allusions to the Marseillaise, which would have been detectable by several spectators, and could be interpreted by members of the Resistance as 'Frenchifying' the German elements.

3. A Wagnerian style score with subversive political sentiments and *Debussyan* references that might be *seen* in the plot but might not be *heard* unless the spectator was familiar with the music to *Tristan* or *Pelléas*.

An article published by film critic François Vinneuil on the release of the film reveals that he recognised that not all audience members would detect the Wagnerian influence on the film, and one could thus hypothesise that the same would hold true for the film's score and detection of either Wagnerian or

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[62] Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 170–171.

Debussyan musical tropes.[63] It requires a certain amount of general musical knowledge and an act of imaginative deciphering on the part of the audience to make these connections, in the same way that an audience would decipher a Symbolist artwork. It is abundantly clear that Auric's score includes thematic and sonic allusions to both Wagner and Debussy and that it could mean a great many things to different audiences depending on the context in which they watched the film; I would situate this characteristic as very much in line with Cocteau's desire for his films to remain open to interpretation.

The Reception of the Soundscape

The complex and densely Symbolist nature of *L'Éternel Retour* gave rise to conflicting reviews in the press as critics struggled to make sense of it both at the time of and in the years since its release. The reception of the music has been subsequently intertwined with the reception of Cocteau's own actions and ambivalent political attitude under the Vichy regime. His outlook was not one of straightforward collaboration with the ruling powers; yet he sought German licences in order to continue producing his artworks, which necessitated his undertaking work that met official approval. Cocteau's chosen German friends were all cultured and influential and included Otto Abetz, the German ambassador and former professor of drawing, and Bernard Radermacher, the artistic and personal representative of Goebbels.[64] His biggest error of judgement at this time was his publication of a laudatory article on the work of Hitler's favourite sculptor Arno Breker in *Comoedia* in 1942, which led to disgust from the Resistance. He later claimed that the article allowed him to

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[63] François Vinneuil, 'Mais les wagnériens de salles obscures, si nombreux soient-ils, ne sont qu'une petite minorité. Comment va réagir l'énorme foule, ignorant aussi bien le *Tristan* de Bédier que celui de Bayreuth?' 'Tristan en chandail', *Je suis partout*, 13 October 1943. Published in *Journal (1942–1945)*, 698.
[64] James S. Williams, *Jean Cocteau* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2008), 179.

obtain the exemption of French film employees from being forced to work in Germany.[65]

However, he also wrote an article 'Adresses aux jeunes écrivains: Les Territoires de l'esprit', in which he praised André Gide (who was living in as-yet unoccupied Nice) and decried the condemnation of pre-1940 writing, referring to the 'war of art' during and after World War One.[66] On a personal level, as a prominent homosexual, Cocteau trod a fine line in terms of gaining the approval of those with Nazi sympathies; during the filming of *L'Éternel Retour* he also assisted Sologne's Jewish husband, who was in hiding. Williams notes that, on the Liberation, Cocteau was extremely eager to witness de Gaulle's triumphant march down the Champs Élysées, later publishing a poem on the event in *Les Nouvelles littéraires* and producing a line drawing of Marianne that came to be used as the stamp of the new Republic.[67] It is not clear whether he was exonerated by one of the Conseils d'Épuration or was not summoned in the first place after the Liberation.[68] His ambiguous political attitude was paralleled in his poetics. Cocteau maintained a policy of the *inactuel*, believing that he could transcend the contemporary political context and simply celebrate art. The potential for *L'Éternel Retour* to be read in multiple different ways was in line with this ideology; for example, Marais's character can be read as both French and German.

Although Cocteau drew on Bédier's synthesis of the legend, he was likely to have been familiar with the medieval versions, and we know that he was aware of Wagner's *Tristan*, which was based on Gottfried von Strassburg's

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[65] Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 440.
[66] *Ibid*., 441.
[67] Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 185.
[68] Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 440.

telling of the myth.[69] Sims argues somewhat vaguely that Cocteau's adaptation is in line with the ideals of courtly romance,[70] but does not address the extent to which, in doing this, Cocteau was underlining a Wagnerian influence. Nevertheless, this influence was the one most strongly identified by critics and the public alike. W.H. Auden noted the differing approaches to the myth in Wagner's opera and Cocteau's film and indeed the crucial part played by the leading characters' appearance:

> I once went in the same week to a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* and a showing of *L'Éternel Retour*, Jean Cocteau's movie version of the same story. During the former, two souls, weighing over two hundred pounds apiece, were transfigured by a transcendent power; in the latter, a handsome boy met a beautiful girl and they had an affair. This loss of value was not due to any lack of skill on Cocteau's part but to the nature of the cinema as a medium. Had he used a fat middle-aged couple the effect would have been ridiculous because the snatches of language which are all the movie permits have not sufficient power to transcend their physical appearance. Yet if the lovers are young and beautiful, the cause of their love looks 'natural', a consequence of their beauty, and the whole meaning of the myth is gone.[71]

In addition to the choice of subject matter, the ripeness of *L'Éternel Retour*'s soundscape for political appropriation is clear from its newspaper reception. Various themes emerged but one of the most striking is that Wagner was invoked numerous times in interpretations of the film and its score, elucidating the political problems that Wagner's shadow presented. Contemporaneous issues of *Le Film*, the leading trade journal of the film industry demonstrate both the extent to which the journal bought into the aims of the Vichy regime as well as the enormity of *L'Éternel Retour* as a film event. The film premiered in Vichy on 12 October at a gala attended with great pomp and circumstance by Mme la Maréchale Pétain, representatives of the diplomatic

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[69] Sims, 'Tristan en chandail', 37.
[70] *Ibid*., 39–40.
[71] W.H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1963), 469.

corps, several ministers and official personalities. The choice of premiere

location emphasises that the film was certainly not officially perceived as a

Resistance work! It reached Parisian cinemas the following day, running at the

Coliseum and the Aubert Palace. Its huge success was presented as 'a big step

forward towards a production of a distinctly original French cinematographic

trait and of an inspiration specifically belonging to the national genius'.[72] In the

credit list at the start of the review, Auric was listed directly after Cocteau and

before anyone else involved with the film. The film review makes the following

initial reference to the importance of the music:

> The beauty of the settings, the quality of Roger Hubert's photography,
> the appearance and costume of the characters, the editing, the musical
> accompaniment all constitute an ensemble of exceptional quality.[73]

The official nature of this publication and its efforts to portray the film as a

national treasure make it obvious that *L'Éternel Retour* was a success in terms of

presenting a positive image of French style under the Occupation. Regarding

Auric's score, the critic also stated that:

> Georges Auric succeeded in freeing himself from Wagnerian influences
> entirely and composed a perfectly original score, very delicate and very
> expressive.[74]

This seems surprising given the aforementioned audible connections in the score

to Wagner's compositional style, and one wonders whether the critic intended to

present an image of *L'Éternel Retour* as a leap forward in French national

cinematography within the context of the Vichy regime. A similar viewpoint

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[72] 'Un grand pas en avant vers une production d'une caractère cinématographique français
nettement original et d'une inspiration spécifiquement propre au génie national'. *Le Film*, 23
October 1943, 1.

[73] 'La beauté des cadres, la qualité de la photographie de Roger Hubert, l'aspect physique et les
costumes des personnages, le montage, l'accompagnement musical constituent un ensemble
d'une qualité exceptionnelle.' *Ibid*.

[74] 'Georges Auric a réussi à se dégager entièrement des influences wagnériennes et a écrit une
partition parfaitement originale, très fine et très expressive.' *Ibid*.

was expressed in *Illustration* on 23 October 1943 in a review that stated that the film reached a degree of perfection unrivalled by any other French film production of the period. The author drew special attention to the music and cinematography:

> Finally, particular mention must be made of M. Auric's music and M. Roger Hubert's photography, two collaborators who have brought to the directors a precious help and who also contributed to making *L'Éternel Retour* a film which will go down in the history of French cinema.[75]

Le Franciste was a strongly Nationalist Socialist publication and published a glowing review of the film on October 16, 1943 in which Sylvie Dalbane stated 'I am thus completely at ease that *L'Éternel Retour* is a film of a high standard, a film that is a credit to French production.'[76] The review went on to say that the film was aimed at an elite and might be misinterpreted by the wider public.

The film was also attacked as inferior to Wagner's *Tristan* by François Vinneuil, who was a well-known collaborator with the Nazis. He reviewed the film for *Présent* and found that it fell short of the opera, although he admitted that Auric had done well with the music considering the impossible task of following in Wagner's footsteps:

> We are forced to make a persistent comparison between the screen, with its detailed images, its everyday dialogue, and the immortal symphony, the duos, the fanfares, the ecstasies, the strange and bewitching themes of the most spectacular love poem, the most voluptuous and at the same time the most intangible a man has undoubtedly ever sung. And the cinema, in spite of its efforts, appears to us short of breath, immature. […]

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[75] 'Il convient enfin de mentionner particulièrement la musique de M. Auric et le photographies réalisé par M. Roger Hubert, deux collaborateurs qui ont apporté aux réalisateurs une aide précieuse et contribué eux aussi à faire de *L'Éternel Retour* un film qui fera date dans l'histoire du cinéma français.' J.L., 'L'Eternel Retour', *L'Illustration*, 23 October 1943.

[76] 'Je suis donc tout à fait à l'aise pour que *L'Éternel Retour* est un film de toute tenue, un film qui fait honneur à la production française.
Voilà un langage cinématographique rare et pur. Nous trouvons dans cet *Éternel Retour* un style d'une poésie rare. […] Avec *L'Éternel Retour*, nous avons un film qui s'apparente à la meilleure production littéraire.' Sylvie Dabone, 'L'Ecran', *Le Franciste*, 16 October 1943.

Georges Auric had the crushing task, in the wake of Wagner, of composing music for the Tristan and Isolde story. He has coped with this challenge discreetly. It would be bad grace to ask more of him.[77]

L'Éternel Retour was also reviewed in the Nationalist Socialist publication *Notre combat pour la nouvelle France socialiste* on 23 October 1943 but this publication was not accessible at the Bibliothèque Nationale. One can imagine the slant that was taken and the positive review that the film probably received, given the glowing reviews presented in *Le Film* and *Le Franciste*.

The varying opinions in the press about the music in *L'Éternel Retour* exemplify the challenges to interpreting the film in one way alone, and the influence of Symbolist aesthetics on Cocteau's cinema means that the possibility of interpreting the film and its soundscape in a multitude of different ways must have pleased him. Symbolist influences can be detected in Cocteau's descriptions of the music rendering the images ethereal, the power of the sound effects to carry symbolic significance, and in his belief in the images operating with a rhythm of their own. Cocteau's approach to *L'Éternel Retour* seems to have been heavily shaped by his engagement with Wagner whose theories for opera are echoed in the poet's ambitions for the combination of image and music in cinema generally and for the score in *L'Éternel Retour* in particular. Cocteau's close interest in the role music would play, from his initial development of the film through to his personal presence and interest in all

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[77] 'Une obsédante comparaison s'impose pour nous entre l'écran, avec des images détaillées, son dialogue de tous les jours, et l'immortelle symphonie, les duos, les fanfares, les extases, les étranges et ensorcelants motifs du poème d'amour le plus grandiose, le plus voluptueux et le plus immatériel à la fois qu'un homme ait sans doute jamais chanté. Et le cinéma, malgré tout ces efforts, nous apparaît bien court de souffle, bien enfantin. […]
Georges Auric avait l'accablante charge de mettre, après Wagner, de la musique autour de Tristan et Isolde. Il est parvenu à s'en tirer discrètement. On aurait eu mauvaise grâce à exiger davantage de lui.' Vinneuil, 'Tristan en chandail'. Published in *Journal (1942–1945)*, 696–697.

stages of the postproduction recording and editing of the music, illustrates his

continued fascination with designing a film soundscape.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Significance of Silence: Parallels with *Pelléas* and Symbolist Resonances in *La Belle et la bête*

Cocteau's fascination with the poetic articulacy of silence is the final area in which I see Symbolist aesthetics lingering in his films. He was convinced of the power of silence in film and ensured that it was used for expressive effect in *La Belle et la bête* (1946). Describing his collaboration with Cocteau for *Belle*, in a 1952 article, Auric described how the director decided to incorporate silence into the film soundscape:

> In *La Belle et la bête* […] the music is simply adapted to each scene. And Cocteau had an excellent idea: I wrote a continuous cue to accompany certain scenes in the castle, and he had the stroke of genius to break it up with silences. I turned this to my advantage. Cocteau taught me the importance of silence.[1]

In another article in November of that year for *Music Review*, Hans Keller spoke with Auric concerning the characteristics of British film music in contrast to those of France, recording that:

> It is […] interesting to hear from Auric that when working on *La Belle et la bête*, he had written continuous music for several concluding scenes, but that Jean Cocteau, the director, "had the excellent idea to have the music interrupted by intervals of complete silence. Thus Cocteau has made me realise the significance of silence, and I am very grateful to him."[2]

Keller highlighted this point to show that *Belle*, which the British felt was saturated with music, was perceived by the French themselves to have more silence than usual, and indeed Auric's own understanding of sound in cinema was shaped by his experience on this film.

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[1] Georges Auric, 'How Film Music Was Born and How it is Made Today', *Arts*, 17 July 1952, trans. Roust, in James Wierzbicki, Nathan Platte, and Colin Roust, *The Routledge Film Music Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 144.

[2] Hans Keller, *Film Music and Beyond: Writings on Music and the Screen: 1946–59*, ed. Christopher Wintle (London: Plumbago Books, 2006), 24.

Silence in film has carried different meanings across cultures and throughout its history. As Danijela Kulezic-Wilson argues, silence can engender uneasiness in a Western audience as easily as it can create a sense of fulfilment and unity in a Japanese one; it is as ripe for analysis as all other components of a film soundscape and the primacy of human perception in understanding silence means that there is ample room for diverse interpretations of its dramatic and structural functions in cinema.[3] Indeed, scholars have read silence in cinema as indicative of states as diverse as death or dreams.[4] Stan Link highlights the challenges to establishing any definitive theory as to the 'meaning' of silence onscreen.

> Many of silence's arenas – musical, spiritual, cultural, linguistic, social, sensual – might be understood to make not only complementary, but competing and even irreconcilable claims.[5]

The idea that silence is a constructed part of the soundscape is particularly useful when analysing *La Belle et la bête* (1946) where the silences can be understood as heightening the sense of mystery and suggestion in a way that recalls the importance of silence in Symbolist artworks.[6] The conductor Adriano Martinolli D'Arcy has suggested that *Belle*'s music might be characterised as Symbolist in its 'excursion into the realm of the magic[al] the irrational and the atmospheric' and I would add that the silences in the film are equally integral to the

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[3] Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, 'The Music of Film Silence', *Music and the Moving Image* 2, no. 3 (2009): 1.

[4] See Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Also, Stan Link, 'Going Gently: Contemplating Silences and Cinematic Death' in *Silence, Music, Silent Music*, ed. Nicky Losseff and Jenny Doctor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 86.

[5] Link, 'Going Gently', 86.

[6] References to timings are to *La Belle et la bête*, directed by Jean Cocteau (London: BFI Releasing, 2001), DVD.

soundscape's Symbolist nature.[7] Cocteau attributed a great deal of importance to silence in *Belle* and I argue that his decision to place silences at strategic points in the fairytale for maximum dramatic effect was a crucial feature of his editing of Auric's music and was intended to heighten the power of the soundscape and the film's overall poetry.

Silence in film is usually created by a recorded ambient silence rather than by a gap in the soundscape, since the audience would perceive a gap as a technical break.[8] Ed Hughes suggests that contemporary sound designers who utilise a dense soundscape full of dialogue, music, and sound effects could endeavour to make greater use of silence's organising and clarifying agency in their sound structures.[9] While contemporary audiences might be unused to the employment of silence in film, silence was not a problem for early audiences who Rick Altman has demonstrated might not have found a lack of musical accompaniment unusual at all.[10] However, by the 1940s in both Hollywood and France, audiences were accustomed to a soundscape that included diegetic sound and a heavy use of nondiegetic music, so silence was atypical. Claudia Gorbman quotes Maurice Jaubert's complaint in 1936 that film-makers usually called on composers to constantly underscore mood and actions and 'plug any hole' with music.[11] This desire to fill all of a film's soundscape with music and sound means that silence had great potential to be manipulated for strange effect, as was notably done by the New Wave directors.

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[7] Adriano Martinolli D'Arcy, Sleevenotes to Georges Auric, *La Belle et la bête*, with the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Adriano, Marco Polo B00000464E, 1994, compact disc.

[8] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (1990; Reprint New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 57.

[9] Ed Hughes, 'Film Sound, Music and the Art of Silence', in *Silence, Music, Silent Music*, 91.

[10] Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[11] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 18.

Cocteau's use of silence in film may have been shaped not only by experiences of real silence in early silent cinema, but also by his experience of Symbolist opera, and particularly Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*. The alliance between mystery and silence was key to Symbolism given the importance Symbolist poets and artists accorded to unknown forces. Maurice Maeterlinck described the importance of silence in his plays by saying that 'the most dramatic moments are those silent ones during which the mystery of existence, ordinarily observed by bustling activity, makes itself felt'.[12] Likewise, Stéphane Mallarmé famously described the importance of *not* naming an object in poetry:

> To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of a poem, enjoyment meant to develop gradually; but to suggest it – that is the ideal. To make perfect use of this mystery is the function of the symbol: to evoke gradually an object in order to show… and to release from it a state of mind.[13]

Silence encourages the audience to reflect and to make sense of an artwork with the information that they do have, however incomplete it might be. Maeterlinck's Symbolist play *Pelléas et Mélisande* revolves around the unknown: characters of unknown origin reside in an unspecific land and their relationships play out primarily based on what they do *not* say to each other. According to David A. White, the dramatic structure of Debussy's opera on the same play generates an aesthetic silence defined by the gap between what the opera explicitly says and what the audience desires to know.[14] The play *Pelléas* caused a sensation due to its strange narrative and partly because of the long

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[12] Quoted in Catherine Taylor Johnson, 'Symbolist Transformation: The Shift from Stage to Screen in France' (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2000), 88.

[13] Quoted and translated by Marie Rolf, 'Symbolism as Compositional Agent in Act IV, Scene 4 of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*', in *Berlioz and Debussy: Sources, Contexts and Legacies: Essays in Honour of François Lesure*, eds. Barbara Kelly and Kerry Murphy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 119.

[14] David A. White, 'Echoes of Silence: The Structure of Destiny in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*', *The Music Review* 41 (1980): 270.

structural silences between each of the thirteen scenes. Symbols and allusions

are key to *Pelléas*, as are the subconsciousness of the characters, their words,

gestures and above all their silences.[15] Carl Dahlhaus describes the relationship

between language and silence in the play:

> In *Pelléas et Mélisande* language is nothing but a thin veil covering the
> silence that reigns between the characters, less agents in the plot than
> objects of inscrutable destiny. The key moments in the drama are those
> of a sudden hush, when we sense the abyss separating the characters.[16]

Susan Youens has argued that there was a sense in the late nineteenth century

that language was limited in its ability to express human existence and thus the

door was open for music to express in a more abstract fashion, without the need

for words.[17] I would add that this recognition of the limitations of language

also led to increased awareness of the expressive potential of silence within a

musical framework. Indeed, the Symbolist poets equated silence as a symbol

with profound knowledge and they developed the principle of understatement

both as a reaction to Romanticism and as a means of communicating truth.[18]

In the opera we find numerous instances of withheld information or

ambiguous answers and silence as part of Debussy's compositional technique.

Debussy repeatedly stated that silence was crucial to *Pelléas*, writing to Ernest

Chausson in October 1893:

> I am searching now for a little chemical formula of more personal
> utterances, and I have tried to be both Pelléas and Mélisande; I have been
> seeking music behind all the veils with which she is surrounded as a
> protection against even her most ardent devotees […] I have made use,
> quite spontaneously, of a medium which I think has rarely been used,

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[15] Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, trans. Rollo Myers (London: Eulenburg Books, 1976), 130.
[16] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 351.
[17] Susan Youens, 'An Unseen Player: Destiny in *Pelléas et Mélisande*', in *Reading Opera*, eds. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 63.
[18] Stephen Anthony Barr, '"Pleasure is the Law": *Pelléas et Mélisande* as Debussy's Decisive Shift Away from Wagnerism' (DMA Research Project: West Virginia University, 2007), 259.

that of *silence*, as an expressive element which is perhaps the only way in which the emotion of a phrase can be conveyed.[19]

Similarly, he wrote to Pierre Louÿs in July 1895 that:

Silence is a beautiful thing […] the empty bars in *Pelléas* are evidence of my love of this sort of emotional expression.[20]

Richard Langham Smith draws attention to Golaud's fear of Arkel's powerful silences and reticence, noting that Arkel says that he has nothing to say about Golaud's marriage; his first note dovetails with the last notes of the preceding string melody and he sings over *pianissimo* horns and trombones. This reflects his deep understanding of the mystery that pervades the opera, which requires few words to express.[21] Debussy frequently withdraws the orchestra when moments of importance or deep significance occur.[22] In Act II, scene one, Mélisande loses her wedding ring and when Pelléas asks what she will tell Golaud, she responds that she will tell him the truth, unaccompanied by the orchestra. In the following scene, when Mélisande refuses to tell Golaud the truth, there is both figurative silence in her refusal and literal silence in the musical fabric as she stumbles over her words (ex. 5.1). There are also pauses after Golaud's questions in which the silences intensify the sense of Mélisande's uncommunicativeness and her uneasy relationship with him.

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[19] Quoted in Richard Langham Smith, 'Motives and Symbols', in *Claude Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande*, eds. Roger Nichols and Richard Langham Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 151–152.

[20] Quoted in Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 204.

[21] Langham Smith, 'Debussy and the Pre-Raphaelites', *19th-Century Music* 5, no. 2 (1981): 105.

[22] Barr, "'Pleasure is the Law,'" 260.

Example 5.1: Act II, scene two. Claude Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*. © Paris: Éditions Durand, 1957, 120–121. Reproduced with permission of Durand-Salabert-Eschig (Universal Music Publishing Group).

Silence is used to convey a sense of foreboding when Golaud takes Pelléas to the caves in Act III, scene two in order to frighten him and they both leave in silence. As shown in ex. 5.2 , after Golaud tortures Mélisande in Act IV, she declares that he does not love her any more and her vocal line is entirely unaccompanied; the audience listens to her voice breaking the silence.

Example 5.2: Act IV, scene two. Claude Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*. ©
Paris: Éditions Durand, 1957, 298. Reproduced with permission of Durand-
Salabert-Eschig (Universal Music Publishing Group).

Golaud questions a dying Mélisande about her relationship with Pelléas in the

last scene of Act V; their vocal lines are divided up by musical rests and are

frequently unaccompanied, suggesting that a great abyss of communication

exists between the husband and wife. Also in this scene Arkel pleads for silence

as Mélisande approaches death, saying that 'L'âme humaine est très

silencieuse… L'âme humaine aime à s'en aller seule', and at the very moment of

Mélisande's death the servants fall to their knees in silence. Indeed, the whole

opera concludes with an orchestral fade to silence.

These silences or understatements are all the more effective in the opera

given the inextricable bond with destiny that seems to be fulfilled in such

moments. At arguably the most important point in the opera, shown in ex. 5.3,

when Pelléas and Mélisande declare their mutual love, the orchestra, which has

been playing *forte*, is suddenly silent, only to reappear *ppp* to accompany

Pelléas's next recitative. During the declaration itself, Mélisande remains

largely silent and Langham Smith points out how unoperatic her declaration of

love is, speech developed from silence.[23]

Example 5.3: Act IV, scene four. Claude Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*. © Paris: Éditions Durand, 1957, 332. Reproduced with permission of Durand-Salabert-Eschig (Universal Music Publishing Group).

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[23] Langham Smith, 'Debussy and the Pre-Raphaelites', 105.

Silence at such a highly dramatic point was uncommon practice in the romantic operas of Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss. Dahlhaus has explored the relationship between Wagner's and Debussy's compositional techniques and highlights silence as an important differentiating factor. Contrasting Debussy's leitmotif system with that of Wagner, Dahlhaus concludes that, rather than developing motifs symphonically using sequences, Debussy tends to retract any motifs that emerge as symbols through the course of a scene in dissolution into silence.

> It is his tendency to retract, not his use of musical symbols, that reveals his proximity to the literary current […] known as symbolism. If the lyrical process in Mallarmé's poems consists in "retracting" the meaning of the words until they stand as ciphers for the unutterable, a similar process takes place in Debussy's music as the nominal meanings attached to his leitmotivs gradually fade.[24]

Thus, silence as a marker of unspoken information and suggestion is a central Symbolist feature of *Pelléas* and it operates on both a dramatic and musical level in the opera.

Cocteau's Hands-On Approach in *Belle*

Cocteau's self-reflexive approach in *Belle* is reflected in the opening shots, in which the director interrupts Henri Alekan in order to include an introductory text, shouting 'Cut! Just a minute'. Auric remembered how Cocteau would speak to technicians to specify exactly what he wanted: 'one could no longer fool him about what was happening, he was very familiar with the resources at his disposal'.[25] This familiarity simply increased his potential to become heavily involved in the shaping of every aspect of the film. *Belle* was filmed and edited from the end of August 1945 to the beginning of June 1946 at the

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[24] Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 351.

[25] 'On ne pouvait plus le tromper sur ce qui se passait, il connaissait très bien les ressources dont il pouvait disposer.' Auric, 'Témoignages', *Avec les Musiciens*, vol. 7 of *Cahiers Jean Cocteau*, ed. Léon Dile Milorad (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 69.

Studios Saint Maurice at Epinay, with exteriors from the Moulin de Touvoie and

the Chateau de Raray.[26] Christian Bérard designed the sets and costumes, René

Clément was Cocteau's technical assistant, and Alekan was the

cinematographer. The sound team included Bouboule as Sound Assistant,

Jacques Lebreton as Sound Engineer, and Rouzenat for the sound effects.

Cocteau's involvement included encroaching on the sound teams' individual

roles; for instance, he recorded a few sound effects in the film such as creating

the whistling of an arrow by swishing a stick near the microphone.[27] Cocteau's

aim in engaging with all aspects of the film was ultimately to create a work that

would be open to interpretation, stating:

> I shall try to build a table. It will be up to you then to dine at it, to
> examine it or to chop it up for firewood.[28]

This is reflective of similar desires expounded in relation to both *Le Sang d'un

poète* and *L'Éternel Retour*.

Cocteau's thoughts on the role that the soundscape would play in his film

and the potential for him to follow a Symbolist aesthetic were shaped by the

nature of the narrative used: a fairytale that contrasted an ordinary family with

an enchanted castle. This choice stood in stark contrast to the work of

contemporary French film-makers who were mostly engaging in creating gritty,

realist dramas in the years just after the war. Perhaps Cocteau's decision to

make a film based on such a well-known tale, devoid of time or geographic

specificity, was an attempt to take the spectator out of the contemporary political

period. It endowed the work with an air of timeless appeal, in the same manner

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[26] James S. Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 63.

[27] Cocteau, 12 September 1945, *La Belle et la bête: Journal d'un film* (Monaco: Éditions de Rocher, 2003), 68.

[28] 'J'essaie de construire une table. A vous, ensuite, d'y manger, de l'interroger ou de faire du feu avec.' Cocteau, Preface to *La Belle et la bête: Journal d'un film*, 17.

as the mysterious Allemonde in *Pelléas*. Cocteau based his film on Madame

Leprince de Beaumont's 1757 fairytale and presented a magical castle and an

enchanted Beast who defies natural laws. Belle (Josette Day) is a slave for her

stepsisters Adélaïde (Mila Parély) and Félicie (Nane Germon), her brother

Ludovic (Michel Auclair), and her impoverished merchant father (Marcel

André). Her brother's friend Avenant (Jean Marais) repeatedly proposes

marriage to her but she wishes to remain at home with her family. It seems as

though luck is about to turn when the father learns that one of his ships

previously thought lost has been found. He travels to meet the cargo only to

find that creditors have impounded it and, getting lost on the way home, he

stumbles on the Beast's castle and ventures inside. He dines and dozes off,

waking at the noise of a distant scream. On leaving the castle grounds he picks a

rose for Belle triggering the arrival of the Beast (Marais). The Beast strikes a

deal with the merchant that either he must die or sacrifice one of his daughters.

When the merchant returns home, Belle resolves to take his place. She is

initially disgusted by the Beast's ugliness but with time she warms to him,

realising that he has a gentle soul. Still tormented by the thought of her ailing

father, Belle begs the Beast to be allowed to visit him for one week. He gives

her the key to his treasure as proof of confidence that she will return to him.

Once Belle arrives home her father recovers and her siblings resolve to keep her

there so that Ludovic and Avenant can travel to the castle in order to kill the

Beast and steal his treasure. But once Belle realises that the Beast is dying

because she has abandoned him, she returns to the castle. Simultaneously,

Avenant breaks into the Beast's treasure trove and, in a characteristically

Coctelian move, a statue of Diana comes to life and shoots the intruder with an

arrow. Avenant immediately transforms into a Beast and the Beast transforms

into a prince (Marais) who carries Belle away as his queen.

The use of this fairytale for the narrative encouraged Cocteau to consider

how best to achieve a magical quality in the cinema. He eschewed soft focus

techniques commonly used to create a sense of the unreal, instead directing

Alekan to obtain sharp photography, arguing that the crisp images would not

lessen their enchanted quality.[29] For the family home, Cocteau was also inspired

by the paintings of Vermeer, Rembrandt and Le Nain, and for the Beast's castle,

he was influenced by the more sombre style of Gustave Doré's engravings, and

he encouraged Bérard and Alekan to draw on these influences.[30]

Cocteau's desire to differentiate the magical domain from the world of

the merchant and his family must have encouraged him to consider how sound

could aid this division. As I will discuss below, this led him to suggest different

orchestrations for the different domains to Auric. Given that this was Auric's

second collaboration with Cocteau as director, it is likely that he had *Sang* in his

mind as he set about work for *Belle*, and he might have been anticipating that the

director would wish to get personally involved again in the editing of his music.

However, once again, Cocteau had complete faith in Auric's abilities to produce

a high quality score and the composer recalled:

> Regarding *La Belle et la bête*, in which the score is very important, Jean
> Cocteau trusted me completely. When we recorded the music of *La
> Belle et la bête*, he had not heard a note of what I had composed and he
> had the revelation of my music.[31]

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[29] Interview with Henri Alekan in 'Screening the Majestic', Extra Feature, *La Belle et la bête*, DVD.

[30] Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau*, 67.

[31] '*La Belle et la bête*, où il y a une partition très importante, Jean Cocteau m'a fait absolument confiance. On a enregistré la musique de *La Belle et la bête*, il n'avait pas entendu une note de ce que j'avais composé et il a eu la révélation de ma musique'. Auric, 'Témoignages', 69.

This should not be interpreted as a lack of interest on Cocteau's part in the

importance that the music would have in the film. Even more so than for

Cocteau's previous projects, music appears to have been integral to the

development of the film. He also perceived the potential of the soundscape to

'link up and strengthen some of the images', which suggests something of the

closeness with which he envisaged image and music interlocking to create

unified film poetry.[32]

Music was closely intertwined with Cocteau's thoughts about the

construction of the montage. He revealed in the January 1947 issue of *Masques*

that the rhythm of the film as a whole was provided for him by Lully's minuet in

Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.

> It is this frightening music, slow, irreparable, that I tried to translate into
> the rhythm of my characters and my decor. Thus, in some ways, this is
> the key to the film and the reason why so many people accuse it of
> slowness. In filming it, I constantly sang the minuet to myself, so
> strange due to its syncopations, just as Apollinaire sang the melodies of
> Schubert to himself while writing his poems.[33]

Mozart also inspired Cocteau and in a diary entry of 12 November 1945 he

compared the scenes where the merchant receives important guests to the house

and the draper's farce (which was omitted in the final version) to the overture of

The Magic Flute.[34] He described the experience of watching the images in these

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[32] 'En repassant dans ma tête le nombre incroyable de petites choses qui restaient à faire, entre autres avec le son, pour lier et nourrir certaines images'. Cocteau, 28 October 1945, *La Belle et la bête: Journal d'un film*, 143.

[33] 'C'est cette musique effrayante, lente, irréparable, que j'ai essayé de traduire dans le rythme de mes personnages et mes décors. Voilà, en quelques sorte, la clef de ce film et pourquoi tant de personnes l'accusent de lenteur. En le tournant, je me chantais sans cesse le menuet si étrange à cause de ses syncopes, comme Apollinaire se chantait des mélodies de Schubert en écrivant ses poèmes.' Pierre Caizergues, *Jean Cocteau, quarante ans après 1963–2003* (Centre d'Étude de XXe Siècle – Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier III, Centre Pompidou, 2005), 20.

[34] 'Projection des notables et du premier jour de la farce du drapier. C'est de l'écriture directe, qui ne traverse aucun filtre. Peu importe les fautes. Elles deviennent en relief. Je croyais *regarder* de la musique de Mozart. (Cette musique où le moindre detail, quatre notes peuvent s'isoler et dont le grand mouvement est admirable.) Cela ressemble visuellement – jusqu'à nouvel ordre – à l'ouverture de la *Flûte enchantée*.' Cocteau, *La Belle et la bête: journal d'un film*, 166–167.

scenes as like looking at Mozart's music: music in which the least detail (a few

notes) can stand out well in isolation and the whole movement is admirable.

Drawing analogies between montage and musical rhythms was not new, but

confessing to having particular pieces in mind takes the technique beyond a

conceptual comparison and suggests that actual musical compositions shaped

Cocteau's development and interpretations of *Belle*. It also recalls the tendency

of the Symbolist film-makers to use musical analogies when describing their

work on editing their images.

On 20 December 1945, Cocteau recorded in his diary that he would start

the postproduction process early in 1946. He appears to have anticipated his

input into the musical arrangements, and found placements for Auric's music

even before it was composed:

> At the end of shooting (in a fortnight) I will start the film, in a way. It
> will need editing, mixing, finding the place for Georges's music. It will
> be necessary to imprint upon it his rhythm and mine.[35]

The requirement to bring together the poetic and musical rhythms to ensure the

success of *Belle* brings to mind Debussy's statements concerning the suitability

of *Pelléas*'s libretto for his opera as well as again evoking the rhetoric used by

Symbolist film-makers. Furthermore, if read metaphorically, this statement

could be interpreted as reflective of the importance Cocteau accredited to the

music within the film (he says he would only 'start' the film at this

postproduction stage) and indicative of a desire to subsume Auric's as yet

unwritten music within the poet's aesthetics. On Christmas Day 1945, Cocteau

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[35] 'À la fin des prises de vues (dans une quinzaine) je commencerai le film, en quelque sorte. Il
faudra monter, mélanger, trouver la place des musiques de Georges. Il faudra lui imprimer son
et mon rythme.' *Ibid.*, 209.

and Auric dined together and discussed the work that the composer was about to undertake; he was due to start the following week.[36]

On 11 January 1946 Cocteau expressed an eagerness for the music to be mixed with his images, noting that when he saw a rough edited copy of the images that 'it is hard to watch a film like this when it's not pervaded by the element of music'.[37] He outlined his projected plan to show the film to Auric so that the composer could start writing the music:

> I shall wait for Monday. On Monday perhaps I will see things a little more clearly. I will start the montage. After this new montage, I will work on the detail, after the detail the synchronisations, after the synchronisations, the mixing and the music. I will not show it to Georges Auric until it has been purged of its major errors.[38]

He did not want to hear Auric's score before completion as he had absolute confidence in the composer and wanted the full effect to be a surprise.[39] However, he did outline his hopes for the music from his earliest meetings with Auric. Particularly, Cocteau wished to create a different 'tempo' for the images in the Beast's castle, one that would be 'more relaxed and quiet' than those of the family home and this desire for a distinction between the two worlds encouraged him to seek distinguishing factors in the soundscape.[40] In the New Year, on 25 January or 1 February (it is not possible to tell for sure which date is correct from the diary), Cocteau recorded:

> This morning, I corrected the three reels. Georges Auric came at two thirty. After lunch, I showed them to him and he timed them on the chronometer. I returned to Paris, I took him to the Gymnasium where we could lock ourselves in Mme Rolle's office to talk about work. I would

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[36] *Ibid.*, 213.

[37] 'Il est dur de voir un pareil film sans qu'il baigne dans l'élément de la musique.' *Ibid.*, 226.

[38] 'J'attendrai Lundi. Lundi j'y verrai peut-être un peu plus clair. Je commencerai le montage. Après ce montage neuf, j'attaquerai le détail, après le détail les synchronisations, après les synchronisations, le mixage et la musique. Je ne le montrerai à Georges Auric qu'une fois nettoyé de ses grosses erreurs.' *Ibid.*, 227.

[39] (no specific date) April 1946, *Ibid.*, 240.

[40] *Ibid.*, 193.

> like choirs, a normal orchestra and a small unusual orchestra for the
> Beast's domain.
> After having imagined the placement of these three styles of music, we
> went to the set.[41]

Cocteau asked Auric to use orchestration to differentiate the music of the

Beast's domain from that of the other locations in the film and it is possible that

he gave Auric the idea of using choirs.

It was towards the very end of the project, in April 1946, that music and

sound effects were added, and it took fifteen days to complete the

synchronisation of music and image. Cocteau was fascinated to observe

Rauzenat working on the sound effects, and spent a day watching his employee;

he also described how Rauzenat used his own body to create the sound effects.[42]

Cocteau was likewise present throughout the eight-hour recording of the music

with the images and the importance with which he credited the role of the music

to the success of the film is evident in his description of this first playing: 'This

operation is the most moving of all. I will say it again, it is only through the

musical element that the film comes to life.'[43] Cocteau was very pleased with

Auric's composition observing that the species of 'music' created by his images

ultimately made way for Auric's music, and that the score was 'wedded to the

film' and exalted it.[44]

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[41] 'Le matin, j'ai corrigé les trois bobines. Georges Auric venait à deux heures et demie. Après déjeuner, je les lui montre et il minute au chronomètre. Je retourne à Paris, je l'emmène au Gymnase où je nous enferme dans le bureau de Mme Rolle pour parler travail. J'aimerais des choeurs, un orchestre normal et un petit orchestre très singulier chez la Bête.
Après avoir imaginé la place de ces trois styles de musique, nous nous rendons sur le plateau.' *Ibid.*, 234.
[42] *Ibid*., 239.
[43] 'Cette opération est la plus émouvante de toutes. Je le répète, ce n'est que sur l'élément musical que ce film peut prendre le large.' *Ibid*., 240.
[44] *Ibid*., 241.

Belle's Soundscape

Auric's manuscript for *Belle* is not publicly available, although Adriano

Martinolli D'Arcy did access it to assemble the film's twenty-four cues for a

recording in 1994.[45] The orchestra for *Belle*'s soundscape includes: three flutes

(with piccolos), two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two

bassoons, three horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, eight

percussion instruments, vibraphone, xylophone, glockenspiel, celesta, piano, two

harps, a mixed chorus, and strings. Adriano notes that nine of the cues are

scored for smaller ensembles without brass and ten to fifteen strings omitting

double basses; these are predominantly the scenes in the Beast's castle, which is

in line with Cocteau's directions.[46] The style of the music is apparent from the

overture that accompanies the opening credits. It is tonal and the strings and

woodwinds carry the themes with frequent flourishes and fanfares on brass and

percussive interjections.

Adriano argues that the music in *Belle* is Symbolist and he draws

attention to the blurred atmosphere in the castle scenes obtained by unusual

rhythmic counterpoint, dynamic changes, and intricate instrumental colouring.[47]

Following his desire that the orchestration should differentiate the castle and

home locations, Cocteau removed music from the home apart from when the

theme of love arises or when there is a direct connection with the Beast's castle,

for example when the Beast sends the magic mirror. In contrast to this, music is

practically omnipresent during the scenes at the castle. The heavy use of music

in the Beast's domain combined with the economy of dialogue instils the film

with a dream-like atmosphere, comparable to that of the corridor in the Hôtel des

[45] Adriano, Sleevenotes to *La Belle et la bête*.
[46] *Ibid*
[47] *Ibid*.

Folies Dramatiques in *Sang* and the Zone in *Orphée*. The scenes that occur

without any dialogue are predominantly in the castle and these are accompanied

by orchestral music, which is both reminiscent of early silent cinema and closest

to the mystical atmosphere of *Pelléas*. While Auric does not engage in a

leitmotif technique of the sort found in *L'Éternel Retour*, one melody recurs

again and again, the love theme (ex. 5.4):

Example 5.4: The love theme in *La Belle et la bête*.[48] Transcribed from
Adriano, Sleevenotes to Georges Auric, *The Classic Film Music of Georges
Auric*, vol. 2, with the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by
Adriano, © Marco Polo 8.225066, 1998, compact disc. Reproduced with
permission of Naxos.

Auric's presentation of this theme throughout the film is close to that of

Debussy's ambiguous themes in *Pelléas*, where a melody is not fixedly

associated with a character or idea, but rather an emotion and could potentially

mean something different, depending on the context. When Avenant proposes

marriage to Belle, the melody is heard on soft woodwinds (flute then oboe) with

triangle the first time (06:59), and it is repeated on violins with decorative harp

arpeggios as Belle rejects him (fig 5.1).

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[48] Adriano labels this as the 'La Belle et Avenant: Cocteau-Marais theme'.

Figure 5.1: *La Belle et la bête*: Avenant proposes marriage to Belle.

It grows in intensity with Avenant's impassioned flattery and entreaties for Belle

to marry him, becoming fragmentary on the celesta but then developing lyrically

in the strings, although it instantly dies away when Ludovic enters the room.

The second presentation of the theme on full orchestra occurs in the moments

before Belle sees the Beast for the first time, the use of the full orchestra

seeming to underline the greater importance that her love for the Beast will have

than her interest in Avenant (34:19). The melody is woven throughout the film

and is closely shaped in line with the drama at hand; for example, it recurs when

Belle contemplates the Beast's gift (43:10). When the Beast questions Belle

about Avenant, a variation of the melody is hinted at in a minor key inflection

on woodwind, but it is then swept away by rushing scales on strings and

dissonant chords on brass, reflecting his tortured state of mind (51:26). Later, a

variation of the love theme on woodwind accompanied by the wordless chorus

suggests that the Beast misses Belle, as it accompanies images of him wandering into her room and caressing her bedclothes (1:13:20).

Arguably, this use of music to carry what Youens terms 'second-degree dialogue' is another connection between the soundscape in *Belle* and the use of music in *Pelléas* to suggest emotions that are not verbalised.[49] However, it must be acknowledged that Debussy's use of such techniques was developed from Wagner's use of leitmotifs, which was taken up in various ways by many film composers. Furthermore, Auric's score highlights some important moments in the narrative in a manner similar to music in the Hollywood classical narrative film; for example, he uses cymbal clashes and drum rolls with brass fanfares to accompany the Father's discovery of the castle for the first time. Similarly, the scenes in which the Beast and Belle converse in the garden employ music that mirrors exactly the characters' sentiments. The score at this point is subdued and full of suspended notes, foregrounding their dialogue. It is interesting that the music stops mid-chord (46:12) and we adopt the Beast's point of view with a close-up shot of his face, ears cocked, listening intently as he homes in on the rustle of a deer. Belle is unaware of the reason for his distraction, but the suppression of music communicates that the Beast is attempting to resist temptation. The orchestra returns (46:47) with a gentle theme and he takes Belle's hand to walk away together.

Such close mirroring of the action resulted from Auric's composition of his score for one image after another. Cocteau respected this and claimed that to break a single rhythm that Auric had created would have been discourteous to

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[49] Youens, 'An Unseen Player', 69.

the composer.[50] Yet, he appears to have instructed the composer to avoid very close synchronisation of sound and image before the project got underway. In his diary entry for the day that music and image were first joined together, Cocteau states: 'Here is the wonder of this joining of music and image, of which there is no synchronisation since Georges Auric avoids it, at my demand, and which could not happen but for the grace of God.'[51] In his reception of the music he describes the charming effect of accidental synchronisations when they occur and how they can bring some images into relief or muffle them.[52] He therefore seems to have detected some instances of it in the combination of the images with Auric's music. Nevertheless, in another interview with André Fraigneau many years later, Cocteau made some statements that raise questions as to whether Auric may have attempted to 'write in' something akin to accidental synchronisation into his score, perhaps to prevent it being divided up and reshuffled. In the interview, Cocteau states: 'The music was so beautiful that I felt that Auric, who is against explanatory music, had deliberately used the method of contrasts, slow choruses fastened on quick action, and so on.'[53] Regarding Cocteau's own sense of organisation of the music, his diary for April 1946 states that he intended to 'direct' the musical sequences:

> In *Le Sang d'un poète* I had displaced the musical sequences, which were too close to the images, in order to obtain accidental synchronisation.

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[50] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film: A Conversation with André Fraigneau*, trans. Vera Traill (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1954), 73.

[51] 'Voici le prodige de synchronisme qui n'en est pas un puisque Georges Auric l'évite, à ma demande, et qu'il ne doit se produire que par la grâce de Dieu.' Cocteau, *La Belle et la bête: Journal d'un film*, 241.

[52] 'Ce qui étonne dans ce scaphandre d'où j'observe l'amalgame de la musique et des images, c'est le synchronisme accidentel dont une demi-seconde d'avance ou de retard du chef d'orchestre peut rompre le charme. Parfois il empoigne l'image et la soulève, parfois il l'étouffe. L'essentiel est d'observer, aux répetitions, où il tombe, et de reproduire sa chance après. Certaines bouffées de choeurs enveloppent un gros plan, l'isolent, le poussent dans la salle. Certaines nuages éteignent un style d'apothéose et le rallument pour peu que l'orchestre attaque la suite plus rapidement.' *Ibid.*, 241–242.

[53] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 73.

> This time, I shall respect them, but I shall direct them. The result will be an interplay, that is, that they will not run together, which would create redundancy, neutralising the ear and the eye.
>
> I will emphasise the creation of these syncopations where the imagination trips and wakes up, through suppressing music in certain passages. So one will be even more aware of the music when it is heard and the silence (since it has its own music) will not constitute a void in the least. (A void that would have been produced if I had asked Auric to decide on the cuts).[54]

Based on this, one can conclude that although Cocteau did not employ accidental synchronisation in *Belle* to the extent that he did in *Sang*, he was acutely aware of the importance of placing music in such a way as to create expressive impact. Yet, he also favoured unexpected combinations of images and music and even the suppression of music. This is apparent when he talks about emphasising creative syncopations that awaken the imagination, as discussed above. He knew that appropriate use of silence could be highly effective. Indeed, it is the device that most closely binds *Belle* to the Symbolist aesthetic.

Silences in the Beast's Castle

In his 1945 *Theory of the Film*, Béla Balázs speculated on the importance of silence in the sound film, including its potential for dramatic effect. Balázs pointed out that one does not perceive silence as hearing 'nothing'; silence is bound up with the impression of space and thus one has the impression of silence even if a distant sound or a close rustle is audible. 'The experience of

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[54] 'Dans *Le Sang d'un poète* j'avais déplacé les séquences musicales, trop proches de l'image, afin d'obtenir le synchronisme accidentel. Cette fois, je les respecte, mais je les dirige. Il en résulte un jeu, c'est-à-dire qu'elles ne "collent pas à la roue", ce qui provoquerait un pléonasme, neutraliserait l'oreille et l'oeil.
J'affirmerai la création de ces syncopes où l'imagination bute et se réveille, en supprimant la musique sur certains passages. Ainsi la remarquera-t-on mieux et le silence (puisque sa musique existe) ne formera-t-il pas le moindre vide. (Vide qui se produirait si j'avais demandé à Auric de décider les coupes).' Cocteau, *La Belle et la bête: Journal d'un film*, 242.

silence is essentially a space experience', as he puts it.[55] Silence is very rarely

absolute in the real world and total silence in film (through suppression of all

diegetic and nondiegetic sound) appears unnatural. Perception of contrast has a

great deal of influence in determining how silence is defined and interpreted and

Michel Chion employs this argument to demonstrate that silence is never neutral

but is the product of contrast with previously heard or imagined sounds.[56] In

approaching silence in film, in addition to total silence, one can differentiate

between 'silence' resulting from suppression of underscore music and muting of

the soundtrack or suppression of music within the diegesis. Claudia Gorbman

describes these two categories as 'nondiegetic silence' and 'diegetic musical

silence' respectively.[57] Nondiegetic silence refers to a soundtrack entirely

without sound and is exceedingly rare, and when used, tends to accompany

dream sequences or other depictions of intense mental activity. Regarding

diegetic musical silence, diegetic sound is present but background music is

removed. Gorbman argues that since conventional practice has made an anchor

of background music, removing it from a scene whose emotional content is not

obvious could confront the audience with an image that they might fail to

interpret.[58] Her third category of silence is 'structural silence'; in this case,

sound previously present in a film is later absent at structurally corresponding

points to emphasise a narrative message. The audience expects to hear the

sound again and takes note when it does not appear.[59] Cocteau used silences of

all three types in *Belle*.

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[55] Béla Balázs, 'Theory of the Film: Sound', in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, eds. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 117–118.
[56] Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 57.
[57] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 18.
[58] *Ibid.*, 18.
[59] *Ibid.*, 19.

The most effective silences in *Belle* are those employed for dramatic

effect in the castle, where silence can last for several seconds thereby

heightening the mystery of the Beast's domain. Silence is used to great

structural and expressive effect in the two sequences of arrival at the castle: the

arrival of Belle's father and the arrival of Belle. In the former (15:56–24:10),

her father arrives at the castle and nondiegetic music is suddenly suppressed as

he walks inside (fig. 5.2). This unexpected silence immediately creates the

impression that he has traversed into a magical domain. The merchant proceeds

silently down a long corridor lit by bodiless arms holding candelabras to a

dining room.

Figure 5.2: *La Belle et la bête*: The merchant arrives at the castle.

Only the diegetic sounds of the fire burning and the clock ticking and chiming

are audible. These particular sounds can be heard as aspects of silence since

they mark time and draw attention to the lack of music. Nondiegetic choral

music re-enters (17:38) as he sits at the dinner table and consumes the

mysterious dinner served by bodiless hands and observed by human faces in the

mantelpiece. He falls asleep at the table and the choral melody suddenly stops

upon the sound of a distant roar (19:27). He then leaves the table and walks

back down the candlelit corridor, again in total silence; both diegetic and

nondiegetic music are suppressed. Once outside, the nondiegetic music starts

again (20:05) and continues as the merchant roams the castle grounds shouting

'hélas!' to no avail. The music continues until he picks a rose for Belle and the

Beast appears to a stinger chord followed by a few seconds of silence (21:44)

(fig. 5.3). Rather than accompanying this frightening moment with heavy

orchestration and percussion as one might expect in a classical Hollywood film,

there is a silence. Arguably, this makes the Beast's appearance even more

terrifying as we have a moment to anticipate; it is as if the music is holding its

breath.

Figure 5.3: *La Belle et la bête*: The Beast appears.

By contrast, when Belle arrives at the castle (27:58 to 34: 58), choral music is heard straight away (27:58), and as it has not been used before, it immediately suggests that her arrival is significant. This time the diegetic sound is suppressed and the sequence plays out like a silent film with 'silent' images of Belle moving through the castle in slow motion accompanied by nondiegetic underscore (fig 5.4).

Figure 5.4: *La Belle et la bête*: Belle arrives at the castle.

The choir provides an effective introduction to the return of the love theme on woodwind (28:24) as Belle climbs the stairs and the theme then passes through the orchestra in variations. At the moment when she discovers the room meant for her, the door speaks and the nondiegetic music stops for a fifteen-second silence, heightening tension since we do not know what to expect. The choir re-enters (30:10) as she looks around her room and she pauses to gaze into a magical mirror which speaks to her over quiet nondiegetic music. Frightened, Belle runs out of the castle and downstairs, the music reflecting her descent in

descending scalar figures on woodwind and strings. When the Beast appears (31:41), there is a cymbal crash and a repeated overblown note on brass; Belle faints and the Beast approaches her and then kneels beside her accompanied by tremolos that increase our sense of fear. Later in the scene, the Beast picks her up as she lies unconscious, and there is another dramatic moment of complete silence at the moment they first enter the castle (32:57) (fig 5.5). This silence is broken only by the sounds of the fire burning in the grate, but all nondiegetic music is suppressed for thirty-six seconds, as the Beast walks down the candlelit corridor and up the first flight of stairs.

Figure 5.5: *La Belle et la bête*: The Beast carries Belle inside.

Halfway upstairs, the choral music returns; the preceding silence makes the return of the music, and most notably the love theme as he places her on her bed, all the more striking. The love theme grows to a climax, and when Belle opens her eyes, sees the Beast for the first time and gasps, there is a return to silence

for a full five seconds (34:25). This pregnant silence at a moment where in mainstream cinema one might expect the arrival of a love theme or some musical accent creates a moment that seems to be loaded with significance. The meaning lies in what is not heard and this silence is far more effective than if there was a continuation of strident underscore.

The silences in these scenes divide the sequences on a microlevel by highlighting the most important dramatic moments and drawing attention to them by creating spaces in the soundscape. Silences shape the way diegetic and nondiegetic sounds and music are heard in relation to preceding silences: the entry of nondiegetic music at the moment the merchant leaves the castle is doubly effective because of the preceding mysterious silence in the candlelit corridor; likewise, the love theme is heard in a completely new light when it enters after the silence of the Beast's first encounter with Belle. The silences in these castle sequences highlight the magic of the Beast's domain and influence the way in which the nondiegetic music is heard in the same sequences, imbuing them with heightened significance through strategic placement around silence in the soundscape. There are numerous other moments where silences are used later in the film and suggest moments of knowing; for example, as Belle walks in the garden (43:40), she is accompanied by a bucolic melody on woodwinds, soon taken up by the whole orchestra. She hears the Beast drinking and sees him at the pond; the music dies out completely at this point and the only sounds are of him lapping the water. The orchestra returns as she walks away to a melancholy and slower variation on the folk-like theme, suggestive of her reflection on his nature (44:26). Even the moment of the Beast's transformation into the Prince is silent, the sort of dénouement that would typically employ

nondiegetic underscore music (1:25:27). These silences create spaces that allow the preceding music to resound and give the audience opportunities to piece together the possible meaning of the moment.

Cocteau's arrangement of the silences in *Belle*'s soundscape is powerfully dramatic and expressive. Both the silences and the diminished roles that dialogue and music play in the communication of sentiments evoke the world of Symbolist opera. Based on testimony from Auric and Cocteau's detailed diary of the filming, it is clear that the director had a very hands-on approach to the development of *Belle*'s soundscape and that his vision for the role of the music in the film was bound up with bringing the film to life. His employment of silence in this film can be interpreted as close to the role that music played for the Symbolists, who saw it as providing another vehicle to communicate the core meaning of the drama and to imbue it with a sense of mystery. The silences in *Belle* give the audience moments to reflect on the significance of the drama and they also represent Cocteau's engagement with a crucial aspect of soundscape design.

PART THREE

The Sounds of Cocteau's Literary Adaptations:

Melodrama, Monothematicism and Melville

Throughout the 1930s, French cinema had a predilection for filming in a
'staged' manner, as though the spectator was witness to a play. This approach
affected every parameter of filmic style and generated considerable discussion
among both critics and the public; the debate was fuelled by statements from
established dramatists such as Marcel Pagnol and Sacha Guitry who advocated
seizing the opportunities provided by the talkies to immortalise theatrical
productions on film. It was hoped that cinema would come to be endowed with
some of theatre's prestige.[1] As mentioned in chapter two, the main categories of
French film that emerged with the onset of the sound era were the *film parlant* or
'talking film' and the *film sonore* or 'sound film'.[2] The more prevalent 'talking
film' featured direct-recorded sound and was theatrical in character, often based
on a stage play.[3] The 'sound film' used post-synchronised sound, and typically
employed every aspect of the cinematograph, including sound, to create a
qualitatively cinematic experience.[4]

Cocteau had drawn on silent-era editing conventions in his early films
and, like many of his contemporaries, was initially suspicious of the overtly
theatrical 'talking film'. He saw himself firmly in the camp of the 'sound film'
in the early years of sound, as such films would maintain some of the
conventions of the silent era. Given this early public support for the 'sound

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[1] Colin Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema: 1930–60* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 286.
[2] Charles O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound: Technology and Film Style in France and the U.S.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 65.
[3] In the following years, and during the 1940s, mainstream French cinema was primarily using post-synchronised sound systems. (See conclusion to *Ibid.*)
[4] *Ibid.*, 65.

film', his decision to adapt material that seemed obviously suited to the 'talking

film' in three consecutive projects, in the late 1940s, might seem rather

surprising. The two plays, *L'Aigle à deux têtes* and *Les Parents terribles*, were

written by Cocteau. *L'Aigle à deux têtes*, which was written in 1943 and first

performed in 1946, was filmed in 1947 and released in the cinema in 1948. As a

play it received little critical and much public success. *Les Parents terribles* was

written in 1938 and was, by contrast, one of Cocteau's great popular successes,

although it also prompted some controversy over its portrayal of family

relations. The third project was *Les Enfants terribles*, directed by Jean-Pierre

Melville, which was released in the cinema in 1950.

Cocteau's decision to adapt three literary texts may seem less surprising

when considered in the context of post-World War Two French cinema.

Following the Liberation, the cinema industry in France was in flux and initially

ground to a halt, though mechanisms were in place to get production moving

again quite quickly.[5] There were some challenges to be faced following the war,

including the disgrace of some workers due to collaborationist activities, and the

Blum Byrne agreements, which opened up the market to unrestricted numbers of

American films in 1946. The agreements introduced a quota system for French

films, which many working within the industry felt to be restrictive. However,

ample government advances and funding remained to support the home industry,

which was also bolstered by the nationalisation of large exhibition circuits.[6]

Due to pressure from the French film industry, the agreements were amended

and greater financial subsidies were offered for filmmaking, with the result that,

by 1948, ninety-six films were being made annually, which was the highest

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[5] Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema*, 64.
[6] Phil Powrie and Keith Reader, *French Cinema: A Student's Guide* (London: Arnold, 2002), 16.

figure since 1938.[7] Official involvement continued; on 23 September 1948, the

government committed to a large-scale intervention to subsidise production, and

on 19 October 1949, it signed an agreement formalising the principle of

international co-productions.[8] Film-makers found themselves in the position

where funding for a new venture could only be secured if their previous effort

had enjoyed box-office success. Further support was given through the Comité

d'Organisation de l'Industrie Cinématographique (COIC), which became the

Centre Nationale de la Cinématographie in 1946. In 1949 this institution

established a committee to award *primes de la qualité*, with prizes notably going

to literary adaptations.

Such a controlled industry resulted in a tendency to repeat themes and

styles if they had resulted in an initial commercial success. The market was

flooded with literary and historical films, usually adaptations of canonical

literary texts, and a whole spate of films presenting traditional narrative plot

lines competed with Hollywood cinema. Nevertheless, the automatic

redistribution of funds due to the quota system also led to a closed-shop, which

made it difficult for newcomers to break into the industry.[9] In response to this

problem, a smaller tranche of funding rewarding aesthetic quality was made

available. From August 1953 this funding was offered for short films and, two

years later, was extended to longer feature-length films.[10] In spite of such

measures, there was continued over-reliance on the repetition of old formulae.

Such films provided a new forum for the so-called *monstres sacrés*, theatrical

actors with imposing personalities who tended to get typecast for their acting

[7] Georges Sadoul, 'The Postwar French Cinema', *Hollywood Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1950): 236.
[8] Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema*, 73.
[9] Frédéric Gimello-Mesplomb, 'The Economy of 1950s Popular French cinema', *Studies in French Cinema* 6, no. 2 (2006): 144.
[10] *Ibid*., 147.

style and were in high demand in these literary *qualité* films.[11] Typical

examples of *tradition de qualité* films include Christian-Jacque's *La Chartreuse*

de Parme (1948) and Claude Autant-Lara's adaptation of Raymond Radiguet's

Le Diable au corps (1947). The genre was not without its contemporary critics,

however, and Georges Sadoul correctly hypothesised in 1950 that *qualité* films

would be judged harshly by posterity, and that they would seem rather flat and

academic in comparison to earlier French cinema.[12] In 1951, André Bazin

argued that the way in which the system of aid was implemented encouraged

mediocrity. With the passage of time, the films themselves did indeed become

highly stigmatised by later directors, with Truffaut coining the label 'le cinéma

de papa' to describe them[13] – a sneering reference to the political and aesthetic

paralysis of the Fourth Republic.[14] The *qualité* films have since fallen out of

favour both in France and abroad with most *cinéphiles* remembering the later

New Wave films more favourably.

In this part, I consider Cocteau's approach to music and sound in the

various screen adaptations he made of his own earlier plays and novel, and

contextualise this in relation to developments in adaptation theory. Adaptations

of literary works for the screen have not only always presented challenges to

directors but also invited critique from film critics and the public, the latter

particularly from the point of view of their fidelity to their sources.[15]

Traditionally, there has been a tendency in Adaptation Studies to carry out close

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[11] Edwige Feuillère was one such actress and Cocteau's employment of her for *L'Aigle* would have automatically aligned his film with the theatrical 'quality' films.

[12] Sadoul, 'The Postwar French Cinema', 244.

[13] André Bazin, 'La Difficile Définition de la qualité', *Radio-Télévision-Cinéma* 64 (1951), 6.

[14] Powrie and Reader, *French Cinema*, 16.

[15] Adaptation Studies has formed a cornerstone of Literature and Film Studies since the 1960s, encouraged by New Criticism, which Robert B. Ray has characterised as grounded in 'individual critical sensibility […] and a reified notion of the text.' Robert B. Ray, 'The Field of "Literature and Film"', in *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore (London: Athlone Press, 2000), 45.

studies of works which, combined with a dislike of translation, has led to the prevailing view that film adaptations usually fail to live up to their literary sources. In more recent decades, Adaptation Studies has shifted away from emphasising fidelity to a literary source, and turned more towards intertextual approaches. Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, with its emphasis on the idea that meaning in a text is constructed from a permutation of many other texts and is shaped by cultural discourse, has had a lasting effect on the way texts and their adaptations have been interpreted and situated in relation to one another.[16]

Structuralist and poststructuralist thought were particularly influential in Adaptations Studies during the 1960s and 1970s; as Graham Allen has noted, the concept of intertextuality has implied greater flexibility since its employment by, on the one hand, poststructuralist theorists to disrupt notions of meaning, and on the other hand, structuralist theorists to locate literary meaning.[17] For Robert Stam, structuralism's treatment of all signifying practices as productive of 'texts', worthy of as much attention as literary texts, suggests that adaptations merit the same importance as their source texts.[18] Roland Barthes's argument that meaning does not come from the author but from language viewed intertextually contributes to this.[19] His levelling of the hierarchy between literature and literary criticism suggests that film adaptation could be viewed as a form of criticism and that films are not subordinate to literary sources.[20] The latter idea informs my exploration of Cocteau's film adaptations here. I argue

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[16] Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 35–36. See Julia Kristeva's essay 'The Bounded Text', *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 36–63.

[17] Allen, *Intertextuality*, 4.

[18] Robert Stam, 'The Dialogics of Adaptation', in *Film Adaptation*, 54–76 (58).

[19] Allen, *Intertextuality*, 74.

[20] Robert Stam, 'Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation', in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 8.

that the adaptations are quite distinct from their literary sources and are indeed equally interesting works that can be analysed according to their own specific contexts and the characteristics of their medium.

Stam's proposal that one ought to take a dialogic approach to studying adaptations seems particularly fruitful in my exploration of the soundscapes in Cocteau's adaptations. Stam builds upon structuralist and poststructuralist thought, particularly upon Gérard Genette's concept of transtextuality, which puts one text in relation to all other texts, to propose a model of adaptation as intertextual dialogue; a text as 'an intersection of textual surfaces' with 'open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture'.[21] Invoking this idea, I shall interpret Cocteau's films in relation to a broad range of works and influences, and not simply their literary sources; indeed, the films can even shape the way in which we return to read their sources. Genette presented 'hypertextuality' as a type of transtextual relation, where a 'hypertext' modifies or transforms an anterior 'hypotext'. For Stam, one could view adaptation as:

> a matter of a source novel hypotext's being transformed by a complex
> series of operations: selection, amplification, concretisation,
> actualisation, critique, extrapolations, analogisation, popularisation and
> reculturalisation.[22]

The source novel is situated in one medium and context and then transformed into another equally situated utterance in a different context and medium. Thus, the source text forms a network of cues that the film can take up, ignore, or transform according to the protocols of the cinema medium: it can mediate them by filters such as studio style, ideology, directorial preferences, technologies

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[21] Stam, 'The Dialogics of Adaptation' in Naremore, *Film Adaptation*, 64.
[22] *Ibid.*, 68.

etc.[23] Shaping a film according to the potentialities of cinema and the style of a

particular period may in turn alter that style. Dudley Andrew points to André

Bazin's 1951 discussion of the post-war adaptations by Cocteau, Orson Welles,

Laurence Olivier and William Wyler as exemplars of this. For Bazin, films such

as *Macbeth*, *Les Parents terribles*, *The Little Foxes*, and *Henry V* successfully

adapted theatre for the cinema and suggested new options for mise en scène.[24]

A dialogic approach to adaptation permits an examination of Cocteau's

films based on literary sources as hypertexts that draw on particular aspects of

their source material, while standing alone as quite distinct artworks with their

own contextual framework, moulded by their specific medium, including their

arrangement of film sound. In practice, this means that I situate the films in

relation to their literary sources and explore their particularly cinematic qualities

as shaped by contexts, resources, and directorial objectives. My particular focus

on music and sound means that Cocteau's ambitions for the soundscapes and the

materials and resources that were available to him are of prime importance. In

the following three chapters, I argue that the soundscapes of *L'Aigle*, *Parents*,

and *Enfants* are integral contributors to the distinctive cinematic quality of each

work. My invocation of such dialogic theory and interpretation of the role of the

soundscape is encouraged by Cocteau's belief that theatre and cinema should

reinvigorate each other.[25] Despite their close chronological proximity,

Cocteau's experimental approach to his soundscapes contributed to three

different solutions to this problem of transferring a work from one medium to

another. Each one of these succeeds in offering a work distinct from its

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[23] *Ibid.*, 68–69.

[24] Dudley Andrew, 'Adaptation' in Naremore, *Film Adaptation*, 35.

[25] Thomas Armbrecht,, '"La Dixième Muse" meets "Un Monstre Sacré": Theatricality and the Cinema in Jean Cocteau's *L'Aigle à deux têtes*', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 25, no. 1 (2008): 39.

theatrical or novel source. Furthermore, Cocteau's approach to music and sound in *L'Aigle*, *Parents*, and *Enfants* distinguishes his work from contemporary *tradition de qualité* films, and presents us with clear moments of anticipation of later sonic endeavours by directors such as Godard.

CHAPTER SIX

The Melodramatic Soundscape of a Theatrical Film: *L'Aigle à deux têtes*

L'Aigle à deux têtes was Cocteau's first major adaptation of one of his own

literary works for the screen and presented him with the challenge of

determining how best to make use of the cinematic apparatus, including its

sound apparatus, to render a stage play cinematic.[1] Cocteau was wary of the

public interpreting the genre of the play as melodrama, as he feared that this

might equate to failing to approach it as serious theatre.[2] Nevertheless, his

attempts to reconcile theatre and cinema led him to create a 'theatrical film', a

genre with characteristics that recall the melodramatic plays with thrilling plots

that became so popular in the nineteenth century. Cocteau stated that the film

L'Aigle 'takes its inspiration from […] the time when Sarah Bernhardt was

young and when great ladies, princesses or actresses, discovered sport in long

dresses and Chinese ornaments'.[3] Bernhardt was young at the height of the

nineteenth-century melodramatic play and appeared in many of them. Cocteau's

alternative titles for his play appear to support a connection with melodrama; he

proposed *L'Amour et la mort* or *La Mort écoute aux portes* or *Azraël* (the angel

of death), each more sensational than the last. The music for *L'Aigle* includes an

underscore by Georges Auric and waltzes by Johann Strauss II that Auric

arranged for the ball scenes, a musical mélange that Cocteau likened to a 'liquid

in which this drama of love and death is immersed'.[4] Although he did not

expand on this statement, it aptly reflects the way in which music operates both

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[1] References to timings are to *L'Aigle à deux têtes*, directed by Jean Cocteau (Paris: Films Ariane, 1990), VHS.
[2] Jean Cocteau, 'Préface', *L'Aigle à deux têtes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), 11.
[3] Cocteau, *The Art of Cinema*, eds. André Bernard and Claude Gauteur, trans. Robin Buss (London: Marion Books, 2001), 146.
[4] *Ibid.*, 148.

in stage melodrama, where drama is punctuated by music, and indeed in the underscoring practices of Hollywood composers who composed in a melodramatic style.

Thus, in addition to the fundamental question of adaptation, melodrama provides a secondary layer to my study of Cocteau's film adaptation of *L'Aigle*. I situate the film in relation to melodrama with a view to illuminating the way in which melodramatic techniques inflect the interconnection of music and text. I also examine the role of Cocteau's melodramatic voice in the adaptation. The interplay that he designed between music and dialogue is one of the key melodramatic features of this film soundscape. Music's role in *L'Aigle* raises questions about the function of music in adapting a play for the screen, since at times the music appears to transgress the boundary between diegetic and nondiegetic music. These moments of ambiguity concerning the narrative function of music in the film represent another point of connection with stage melodrama, which engages in similar movements through the gap between diegetic and nondiegetic music. Furthermore, the fluid movement of music across 'realistic' divisions within the soundscape creates moments when music provides a secondary narration, or offers access to a character's inner thoughts, sometimes in conjunction with Cocteau's voice-over, imbuing the adaptation with a distinctly cinematic quality.

Melodramatic Musical Techniques and 'Theatrical Film'

Cocteau was preoccupied with the relationship between theatre and cinema throughout his career. *L'Aigle à deux têtes* was an early attempt to address some of the problems he perceived in contemporary theatre, and by adapting his play for the cinema he was able to resolve some of the conflicts he perceived between

stage and screen. He believed that the cinema could return action to the theatre and the theatre could lend theatricality to the cinema.[5] Cocteau longed for a return to the theatre of Bernhardt and Edouard de Max, both of whom epitomised the *monstre sacré* of the French stage. Their acting style was exaggerated in comparison to that of actors in the mid-twentieth century and their larger than life individual personalities were a crucial part of their fame. Thus, in writing the play *L'Aigle*, Cocteau had specific actors in mind: Edwige Feuillère and Jean Marais. Such was the influence of Marais on the shaping of his role that Cocteau admitted he had responded to his request for a production in which he could be silent in the first act, weep for joy in the second act, and fall backwards down a set of stairs in the third act.[6] In an effort to counter the tendencies of actors to decrease their vocal and gestural impact for cinema, as appropriate for capturing on camera, Cocteau created a play that offered huge potential for theatrical acting and use of gesture.[7] The play also called for music during the queen's inspection of her troops, which Georges Auric provided in the form of a 'royal hymn'.[8]

When it came to adaptation of *L'Aigle* for the cinema, the director was at pains to transfer the particularly theatrical qualities of the play to the screen to create a 'theatrical film'.

> My intention, this time, was to transfer a play to the screen while keeping its theatrical character. It was in some senses a matter of walking, invisibly, around the stage and catching the different aspects and nuances

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[5] Thomas Armbrecht, '"La Dixième Muse" meets "Un Monstre Sacré:" Theatricality and the Cinema in Jean Cocteau's *L'Aigle à deux têtes*', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 25, no. 1 (2008): 39.

[6] Cocteau, *Entretiens/ Jean Cocteau André Fraigneau* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1988), 139.

[7] Armbrecht, '"La Dixième Muse" meets "Un Monstre Sacré", 40.

[8] Benjamin Britten composed the royal hymn for the performance of the play at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, London, on 4 September 1946. Cocteau, *The Eagle Has Two Heads*, trans. Roland Duncan (Reprint; 1947 London: Vision Press, 1979), 8.

in the play, the urgency and the facial expressions that escape a spectator who cannot follow them in detail from a seat in the stalls.[9]

A 'theatrical film' that relied on excessive theatricality appeared to invite musical accompaniment that could reflect such qualities. Melodramatic musical techniques, already well established in the theatre, must have seemed an obvious choice.

The word 'melodrama' tends to have one meaning in musical literature, another in Film Studies, and yet another in common parlance. It has also signified different things in different places and at different times. In a musicological context, melodrama refers to 'a kind of drama in which the action is carried forward by the protagonist speaking in the pauses of, and later commonly during, a musical accompaniment'.[10] It is bound up with a French tradition of works for the stage and a parallel German concert tradition of monologue and/or dialogue with musical accompaniment. For instance, in the French theatre, Sarah Hibberd observes that following the French Revolution, melodrama was used to refer to the works of René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, which mixed spoken dialogue, gesture, *mise-en-scène* and music and were very popular in the Parisian boulevard theatres.[11] In literary studies, 'melodrama' is used in connection with the gothic novel in England and Victorian stage plays on the one hand, and the costume drama and historical novel in France on the other.[12]

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[9] Cocteau, *The Art of Cinema*, 145. The concept of a theatrical film anticipated Alexandre Astruc's *caméra stylo* and the *auteur* theory of New Wave cinema. See Cocteau's full description in *Ibid*, 149.

[10] *Grove Music Online*, 'Melodrama', by Peter Branscombe, accessed 18 November 2011, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.

[11] Sarah Hibberd, 'Introduction', *Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 1. This introduction offers a good outline of varied meanings of melodrama across different disciplines.

[12] Thomas Elsaesser, 'Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama (1972)', in *Home is Where the Heart Is*, 44.

On the screen, 'melodramatic films' are commonly identified as a clutch of Hollywood films produced between 1940 and 1963, by directors such as Vincente Minnelli and Douglas Sirk, involving bourgeois family dramas.[13] Yet, attempts to describe melodrama are further complicated by the fact that 'melodrama' can indicate a genre or can describe a mode of operation, a complicating factor which has led to film and genre historians taking radically different approaches to the term. Some film historians such as Christine Gledhill approach melodrama as a modality that persists across genres throughout history, while Peter Brooks examines the melodramatic mode operational specifically in literature.[14] Other scholars have addressed historically and generically specific questions, while still others, such as Ben Singer and Jon Burrows, have combined the two approaches in efforts to understand how melodrama has functioned as a genre with plural identities.[15] Singer proposes that it can be understood as both genre and mode and can be analysed as a 'cluster concept' that usually combines key elements such as 'strong pathos; heightened emotionality; moral polarisation; nonclassical narrative mechanics; and spectacular effects'.[16]

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[13] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Minelli and Melodrama', in *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: BFI Publishing, 1987), 70–74.

[14] Christine Gledhill, 'Rethinking Genre', in *Reinventing Film Studies*, eds. Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000), 227. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (1976; Reprint New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xvi.

[15] Jon Burrows, '"Melodrama of the Dear Old Kind": Sentimentalising British Action Heroines in the 1910s', *Film History* 18, no. 2 (2006): 163–173. Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[16] Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 11.

In film melodrama, music has always been central to the excess attributed to the genre, as Caryl Flinn has noted.[17] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith goes a step further to argue that music does not just heighten the excessive emotion of the scene in melodrama, it can actually substitute for it, and this particular function has been a traditional part of melodrama's longer history on the stage.[18] Thus, music in film melodrama can have both an expressive and structural role, interjecting the action and providing an outlet for heightened feelings. This is an important feature to bear in mind in connection with Cocteau's first adaptation, since the plot of the play *L'Aigle* is packed with romantic and sensational events that might have suggested music would provide an affective outlet on the screen.

Film musicology has repeatedly returned to the issue of melodramatic techniques as forerunners of film music. The links between melodrama and film underscoring practices are useful here; for the purposes of my study, I shall focus on links between melodrama as a musical stage genre and film music. Claudia Gorbman traces a clear link between film underscore and the tradition of accompanying drama with music.

> Starting no doubt even before the Greeks, continuing through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and resurfacing to popularity in the late eighteenth-century French *mélodrame*, the tradition of accompanying drama with music simply passed along, into a variety of nineteenth-century forms of popular entertainment, and finally into the new cinematic medium.[19]

As Jacqueline Waeber notes, explorations of silent and sound film's melodramatic antecedents tend to present the melodramatic musical score and its 'conventional vocabulary' as the principal connection between melodrama and

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[17] Caryl Flinn, 'Music and the Melodramatic Past of New German Cinema', in *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, eds. Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, Christine Gledhill (London: BFI Publishing, 1994), 107.
[18] Nowell-Smith, 'Minelli and Melodrama', in *Home is Where the Heart Is*, 73.
[19] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 33.

film music.[20] However for her, a holistic discussion of melodrama's influence

on film would examine the interrelations of all of the soundscape's elements:

dialogue, voice-over, and music.[21] A broader reading of melodrama's heritage

in film supports an interpretation of Cocteau's hopes for the underscore music

and the decisions that he took in relation to both the music in *L'Aigle* and the

voice-over as melodramatic devices.

Melodramatic Features in *L'Aigle*'s Soundscape

In 1960, Cocteau employed musical rhetoric to describe the play's dramatic

nature:

> My play is written in the form of a fugue. It opens on the Queen's
> theme. In the second act, Stanislas's theme takes its place, and the two
> themes intertwine to become entangled and struggle together until the
> final chord of the double death.[22]

When Cocteau came to conceive of the sonic approach he would take in *L'Aigle*,

the hyper-dramatic plot of his play provided an ideal framework for a

melodramatic soundscape in the cinema. *L'Aigle* focuses on the life of a

widowed queen who has been in mourning for her husband Frédéric for a

decade. She is removed from her people who are gradually turning against her

due to the slanderous campaign of the Archduchess and Captain Foëhn, assisted

by the queen's reader, Edith. A young, high-minded anarchist, Stanislas

attempts to assassinate the queen and breaks into her room, injured, only to

collapse and be tended by her. He bears a resemblance to her dead husband and

is surprised to find that the beautiful queen has an anarchist's spirit. He remains

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[20] Jacqueline Waeber, 'The Voice-Over as 'Melodramatic Voice', in Hibberd, *Melodramatic Voices*, 218.

[21] *Ibid*., 220.

[22] 'Ma pièce est écrite en forme de fugue. Elle s'ouvre sur le thème de la Reine. Au second acte, le thème de Stanislas prend sa place, et les deux thèmes se révolvent pour s'enchevêtrer et lutter ensemble jusqu'à l'accord final de la double mort.' Cocteau, 'C'est pourquoi chaque soir…', in *Programme Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt* (1960) (boxes 40 and 41, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed September 2009).

at the palace and inevitably the two fall in love. He encourages her to take back

her power before the Archduchess ruins her. She agrees and plans a public trip

to her capital Wolmar, with the aid of her faithful supporter Félix, Duke of

Willenstein. Stanislas realises the impossibility of their love affair, and the

narrative's climax arrives on the day she is to lead her troops to Wolmar.

Stanislas takes poison to ensure that she will not renege on her royal duties out

of love for him. Heartbroken, the queen fools him into believing that she never

loved him, and he stabs her. Afterwards, she reassures him that she does indeed

love him, and they die together.

The soundscape for *L'Aigle* employs underscore music in a way that

captures the audience's attention and highlights key narrative points in a manner

similar to that described by David Neumeyer in his study of Hollywood

composer Max Steiner's appropriation of melodramatic techniques. Neumeyer

argues that Steiner drew on traditions of Viennese melodrama as they survived

in the Romantic operettas of Victor Herbert, Sigmund Romberg, and Rudolf

Friml. He proposes that through German melodramas such as Georg Benda's

Ariadne auf Naxos, a compositional link can be established between melodrama

and accompanied recitative, which was essential to the tradition from which

melodramatic underscore in film had its birth.[23] He notes that sentences and

phrases in German melodrama are punctuated by short musical commentaries;

for example, *Ariadne* includes a concentrated mixture of topical expression and

word painting and a lack of musical continuity, while the grave digging scene in

Beethoven's *Fidelio* (1803–1805) encompasses musical imitation of action,

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[23] David Neumeyer, 'Melodrama as a Compositional Resource in Early Hollywood Sound Cinema', *Current Musicology* 57 (1995): 66. Waeber tempers this argument by noting that there were also close connections between Rousseau's conceptions of melodrama and accompanied recitative. Waeber, 'The Voice-Over as 'Melodramatic Voice', footnote on 219.

major and minor key contrasts to create affective oppositions, musical

articulations to reinforce the narrative, and some leitmotif-like thematic

references.[24] Such melodramatic features are also typical of film underscore.

However, it is from Romberg and Friml that Steiner derived his melodramatic

techniques, Neumeyer argues. Neumeyer outlines the use of music as

melodramatic device in Romberg and Friml's musical plays to heighten the

dramatic effect of a scene and to function as a partly independent narrator.[25]

Steiner developed these techniques to compose music that was closely

synchronised with narrative action and character development. Use of

melodramatic techniques was just one of the strategies adopted by several

composers of classic Hollywood film scores and there are many instances of

Auric's underscore music operating in a similar manner in *L'Aigle*.

Studying Cocteau's preparatory sketchbook for the film, dated 4 March

1947 to 20 May 1947, it appears that the arrangement of diegetic music in the

film was one of his ongoing concerns and most of his comments relate to the

music in the ball scene.[26] There are few notes about nondiegetic music in the

sketchbook, and those that do appear are quite short. For example, Cocteau

noted for the scene where the Queen gives Willenstein his orders that: 'this is

accompanied by music, and very slow, very serious, like the Queen'.[27] The film

is framed by nondiegetic music at the beginning, the end, and at strategic points

throughout, and the narrative also offers opportunities for music making within

the diegesis. The most notable adaptation of the plot is the insertion of the ball

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[24] Neumeyer, 'Melodrama as a Compositional Resource in Early Hollywood Sound Cinema', 67, 69–72.

[25] *Ibid*., 79.

[26] Cocteau, *L'Aigle à deux têtes*, (preparatory manuscript, dated 4 March to 20 May 1947, Milly, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

[27] 'Ceci accompagné de musique, et très lent, très grave, comme la Reine'.

scene to parallel the queen's dinner: a focal point of the first part of the film, and

a scene in which music is almost ubiquitous. The opening credits are

accompanied by an overture that features several of the musical cues that will

appear later in the film. This instrumental 'overture' offers a foretaste of the

range of music and emotions packed into the film to come. It includes a

principal theme, as shown in ex. 6.1 in printed score, that recurs throughout the

film at moments of pomp and circumstance, such as the queen's arrival at her

castle, and during the final tragic tableau.

Example 6.1: main theme. Georges Auric, *L'Aigle à deux têtes*. © Paris:
Éditions Régia, 1948. Reproduced with permission of Régia – CPED Editions.

Focusing on the film alone, there are numerous such instances where character and event closely match musical cues throughout the film. When Edith tells Félix of the new reader who looks so like the dead King, the Duke wishes to see him for himself. He climbs the stairs tentatively and the music correspondingly builds in tension, introducing descending scales on trumpet. Cocteau's voice-over describing the action, too, leads up to 'brusquement il vit le roi' over a stinger chord on brass with string tremolos (00:38:22). This combination of voice-over with music at such an important moment is reminiscent of the emphasis music frequently adds to voice in melodrama.

Another obvious example of Cocteau's decision to provide musical reinforcement of heightened emotion occurs when the Queen and Stanislas argue about her selfish regal manner. She goads him to shoot her and picks up a revolver herself. The music mirrors this tête-à-tête as it becomes increasingly heated, climaxing with another stinger chord on brass at the moment the queen turns and shoots at a target rather than at Stanislas (00:45:31). The Queen even stages her own spectacle with melodramatic underscore at the end of the film, requesting a fanfare as a signal for her to inspect her troops. When this is heard, although already wounded by Stanislas, she slowly makes her way up the stairs to salute them. As she observes her troops, the main theme bursts forth, now diegetic and played by the musicians underneath her balcony (1:25:29). Its appearance at this point injects a sort of circularity to the film, as it was first heard over the opening credits as nondiegetic music and now returns for the last scene.

Music also provides an outlet for excessive emotion in the film, particularly when there is no dialogue used. For example, on the evening of the

ball, the Queen revisits the King's former bedroom. The camera gives us her point of view, as she gazes around the room at the objects that attract her attention. She picks up a portrait of Frédéric (00:15:04) and a sweeping melody on strings begins at a *forte* dynamic, as if reflecting the emotion she must feel, but does not communicate through words. In a theatrical gesture, the Queen leans back against the doorframe with an expression of agony on her face (00:16:02) (fig. 6.1). Here, the music reaches a second climax and dies out as she turns her back to the camera and walks away down the corridor.

Figure 6.1: *L'Aigle à deux têtes*: The queen leaves the king's room.

There is no voice-over or narrator in the play so Cocteau's use of voice-over in the film at particularly sensational moments pushes the work further towards melodrama. While it must be acknowledged that the narrator has a long history in both literature and early film, the combination of Cocteau's voice combined with, or followed by, underscore music seems particularly similar to

melodrama.[28] In *L'Aigle*, his voice-over describes the moment when Félix sees

Stanislas, explains the tableau of Stanislas with his head resting on the Queen's

lap after they acknowledge their mutual love, and comments on the final tableau.

His voice interprets the images on screen, furnishing insights that one could not

otherwise deduce. For example, at the very end of the film, as Captain Foëhn

and Willenstein arrive on the scene of the suicide and murder, Cocteau's voice

recounts the following: 'In the eyes of the police and of history, the Krantz

drama remains an enigma. But love is stronger than politics and everything

happened as I have told it.'[29] Not only do the words themselves place Cocteau

in the role of melodramatic narrator, they are followed by a final rendition of the

main theme on brass in a musical reinforcement of the sentiment and a sonic

'happy ending' that could not be understood from the images. The music's

function in these instances could be usefully summed up by Neumeyer's

description of the melodramatic cues that Steiner used in scoring films, which

operate like a narrator who comments on the action.

> Neither musically nor physically "real", the melodramatic cue is tied to
> narrative rather than to apparent physical space and generally does not
> draw attention to itself as a performance, but rather to its own
> "comments" as a narrator.[30]

While the emotional function of music in melodrama is present in

L'Aigle, it is also music's role in moving the drama forward that lends certain

scenes a particularly melodramatic quality. Organisation of the soundscape in

this way retains audience interest, particularly during some of the lengthier

monologues. One such scene is the ball, where waltzes are played: *Aimer, boire*

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[28] Waeber has highlighted Cocteau's prominent position in the tradition of the narrator in French cinema and she suggests a link between this tradition and the importance of speech and voice in French cinema. Waeber, 'The Voice-Over as 'Melodramatic Voice', 225.

[29] 'Aux yeux de la police et de l'histoire, le drame de Krantz demeure un énigme. Mais l'amour est plus fort que la politique et tout est arrivé comme je l'ai dit.'

[30] Neumeyer, 'Melodrama as a Compositional Resource in Early Hollywood Sound Cinema', 92.

et chanter, *Légende de la forêt viennoise*, and *Valse impériale*. Danielle Chaperon argues that the sole purpose of this scene is to represent visually the spreading of malicious gossip pertaining to the character of the Queen. For her, the scene could not have taken place in the theatre due to the difficulties in managing the image. In the cinema, the sequence works because of the manner in which the images are edited; for instance, focussing on elements of the scene such as Madame la Présidente's wet ankle would not have been possible on the stage.[31] It is hard to disagree. However, if one considers the sonic dimension, one could add that the ball and the parallel scene where the Queen dines alone, only to be interrupted by Stanislas, allowed Cocteau to use music in a more 'structural' fashion: the music drives the action forward and provides a conduit for the high emotion of the scene where the Queen fantasises that she is dining with her dead husband only to be presented with his double. Rolls of thunder, dogs barking, and the police brigade were carried over from the play script to the screenplay and film; the placement of a ball parallel to this scene allowed the sounds of waltzes and Auric's underscore music all to interrupt the Queen's monologue, and to ensure a dynamism and cinematic quality that prevents this scene from appearing static and 'wordy' in the cinema.

The 'Fantastical Gap' in *L'Aigle*

A close examination of the soundscape in the ball scene raises questions about the narrative function of music in *L'Aigle* and this is especially intriguing given the precision with which Cocteau noted in his sketchbook the placements of music in this scene. His notes about music suggest that he may have intended to create some ambiguity about music's role in constructing the narrative, in such a

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[31] Danielle Chaperon, '*Les Parents terribles* et *L'Aigle à deux têtes*: Fauves en cage et aigles en liberté', in *Les Adaptations*, ed. Serge Linares, vol. 5, *Cahiers Jean Cocteau* (Caen: Lettre Moderne Minard, 2008), 135.

way that generates points of contact with both film and melodrama. Thus, as so often, while the terms 'diegetic music' and 'nondiegetic music' are useful, they are not without their limitations for describing the narrative functions of music in this scene. Claudia Gorbman has defined diegesis as 'the narratively implied *spatiotemporal world of the action and characters*', and thus diegetic music is that which belongs to the narrative, while nondiegetic music is that which does not.[32] Applying Gorbman's terminology to the music in the ball scene sheds further light on the narrative function of one particular cue and elucidates the music's role in adapting the play for the cinema.

A slow Tzigane melody on the violin with keyboard accompaniment accompanies the scene of guests hurrying inside to the ball to avoid a thunderstorm (00:11:30). The butler has already mentioned that the Queen has employed two orchestras for the ball, one Tzigane and one for the Strauss waltzes, which suggests that the Tzigane melody is diegetic. There is a quick shot of musicians playing music in the corner of one of the pan shots inside the castle, which supports the point (fig. 6.2).

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[32] *Ibid.*, 21.

Figure 6.2: *L'Aigle à deux têtes*: Pan shots of the ballroom, musicians are visible on the right hand side.

Cocteau indicates in his sketchbook that the Tzigane orchestra should play softly to accompany the rumours that the queen will not attend the ball.[33] Thus, the cue appears to function nondiegetically in this scene, since it continuously underscores these long pan shots of the guests whispering. Also, there is no clear change in volume during the movement from the exterior to the interior of the castle, although the music does increase in volume towards the end of the tableau as Félix climbs upstairs. It also cadences exactly with the change of scene.

As Félix ascends the second flight of stairs to the Queen's living quarters, he is accompanied by a new nondiegetic theme (00:14:11). Félix is visibly moved by the Queen's sadness and the music fades out (00:16:59). Cocteau specifies that the thunder and rain should interrupt in this scene. There

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[33] Cocteau, *L'Aigle à deux têtes*, (preparatory manuscript, dated 4 March to 20 May 1947, Milly, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

is a cut to the scene downstairs accompanied by a diegetic waltz, the *Légende de la forêt viennoise*, (00:17:00). Edith calls Félix and the same Tzigane melody returns (00: 17:40). Its volume increases as she approaches Félix, and the musicians situated behind him suggest that the music is diegetic (fig. 6.3).

Figure 6.3: *L'Aigle à deux têtes*: A shocked Félix tells Edith he has seen the queen.

Félix recounts his sighting of the Queen to Edith (00:17:49). This time the melody is cut off 'unmusically' mid-phrase for the change of shot, reinforcing the impression that it is diegetic: the film is no longer showing this piece of actual music-making, so the music immediately stops, whether it is a musically grammatical point or not. Edith goes to receive the Queen's orders for the evening and the diegetic sound of another waltz, the *Valse impériale* floats upstairs (00:18:43).

Stanislas stumbles in the window in the following scene. In his sketchbook, Cocteau wrote across this sequence that the music stops (at the

ball), which again suggests that the music here is diegetic, even though throughout the scene its function is largely nondiegetic.[34]   Most of the scene is devoted to the Queen's own fantasy. The waltz melody fades to a low volume as she walks towards the painting of the king and starts to speak; music is constant throughout her monologue, which is also punctuated by thunder (00:20:54). As she starts a game of cards, the Tzigane melody returns and the recent memory of it emanating from the ball downstairs initially makes it appear to be diegetic, although it functions nondiegetically through the card game. The Queen is distracted by the sounds outside of thunder, dogs barking, and gunshots and the scene draws to a climax with the appearance of Stanislas in the window frame with a roll of thunder (fig. 6.4). She cries out, 'Frédéric!' and the music, which has been continuous until this moment, comes to an abrupt halt (00: 22:54).

Figure 6.4: *L'Aigle à deux têtes*: Stanislas bursts through the window.

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[34] 'La musique arrêté (en bal)'.

Later in the scene, the Queen speaks to a silent Stanislas, and the Strauss waltzes play faintly in the background. As she begins her lengthy monologue, after the phrase 'C'est ma mort que je sauve', the waltz dies out and the Tzigane melody returns again, under her speech, unequivocally nondiegetic in its narrative function (00:29:09). Again, this seems to follow Cocteau's directions that after the Queen begins her monologue, 'the waltz music takes up again. It alternates with the Tzigane music'.[35] The Queen tells Stanislas that he represents her destiny and goads him to speak (00:30:58). He pulls the tablecloth and dishes off the table with a crash over the music. She rings the bell for her servant and the music simultaneously cadences and falls silent until he arrives (00:32:23). After Stanislas leaves with her servant, the waltzes start again.

Based on the above outline, it is evident that the placements of the music in the scene result in some ambiguity about the Tzigane melody's function within the narrative. Such ambiguity begs the question of the music's function when it appears to occupy an in-between space, neither wholly part of the film's narrative world nor clearly underscore. This permeability of the divide between obviously on-screen music and obviously off-screen music is in fact quite typical. Despite delineating the two categories of diegetic and nondiegetic, Gorbman acknowledges the flexibility of film music and its ability to traverse the boundaries between the two.

> Once we understand the flexibility that music enjoys with respect to the film's diegesis, we begin to recognise how many different kinds of functions it can have: temporal, spatial, dramatic, structural, denotative, connotative – both in the diachronic flow of a film and at various interpretative levels simultaneously.[36]

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[35] 'La musique de valse reprend. Elle alterna aux tziganes'.
[36] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 22.

Crossing the boundary between diegetic and nondiegetic frequently occurs when music takes up part of a film's narration to offer access to a character's inner thoughts and Gorbman designates a 'metadiegetic' (again after Genette) category to describe this specific instance of music.[37] More recently, Robynn Stilwell has argued that the process of transgressing the border between music that is part of the film's narrative world and music that is not part of it always has meaning.

> The border region – the fantastical gap – is a transformative space, a superposition, a transition between stable states. […] When we are talking about movement through the gap between diegetic and nondiegetic, that trajectory takes on great narrative and experiential import. These movements do not take place randomly; they are important moments of revelation, of symbolism, and of emotional engagement within the film and without.[38]

The significance that Stilwell attributes to the crossing from the diegetic realm to the nondiegetic realm and vice versa goes some way towards explaining the effect of the unclear function of the Tzigane melody in the soundscape of *L'Aigle*. The melody seems to play on its ambiguity at the moment of the queen's card game and it is extrapolated in an extended fashion under the monologue in which she describes the tragic nature of her existence, and her understanding and expectations of Stanislas's role. Thus, the traversal of the boundary is certainly significant and flags up the life-changing consequences of the anarchist's arrival.

In interpreting the placement and function of the Tzigane melody in this scene, more recent theoretical models of film music's functions which accommodate the shifting of music from the diegetic to the nondiegetic realm

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[37] *Ibid*., 23.

[38] Robynn Stilwell, 'The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic', in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, eds. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer and Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 200.

prove useful.[39] David Neumeyer proposes an 'integrated soundtrack' model and notes that 'cinema music's tradition of stylistic variety and the often fluid movement between the diegetic and the nondiegetic registers tend to break down the status of the pair as the principal category for film music interpretation'. [40] His model recognises the ability of diegetic music to function nondiegetically and nondiegetic music to function diegetically.[41] Certainly, one could validly read the Tzigane melody either as diegetic music functioning nondiegetically, as the Queen plays cards, or as nondiegetic music functioning diegetically, given that it first appears to accompany the arrival of guests at the ball and the movement from exterior to interior scenes. Jeff Smith's suggestion that Stilwell's fantastical gap might be more saliently approached in combination with Gorbman's concept of metadiegetic music facilitates a reading of the cue as bound up with the character of the queen herself. Smith observes:

> Metadiegetic music more consistently straddles the boundary between diegetic and nondiegetic because imagined music, unlike source music, does not require a physical source to produce it as concrete, materialised sound. Because of this, it can be very difficult to discern whether a musical cue is a representation of what a character is thinking or whether it simply communicates that information nondiegetically as a tool of the film's narration.[42]

Bearing this in mind, it is possible that the Tzigane melody has multiple functions: it can be heard as music from the ball, it communicates the tragic nature of the Queen's situation as a type of secondary narrator, and it seems to operate metadiegetically towards the end of the scene. It is heard when the

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[39] Also, see David Neumeyer, 'Diegetic/Nondiegetic: A Theoretical Model', *Music and the Moving Image* 2, no. 1 (2009): 26–39. Jeff Smith, 'Bridging the Gap: Reconsidering the Border between Diegetic and Nondiegetic Music', *Music and the Moving Image* 2, no. 1 (2009): 1–25. Ben Winters, 'The Non-Diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space', *Music and Letters* 91, no. 2 (2010): 224–244.
[40] Neumeyer, 'Performances in early Hollywood sound films: Source music, Background Music, and the Integrated Sound Track', *Contemporary Music Review* 19, no.1 (2000): 44.
[41] *Ibid.*, 56.
[42] Smith, 'Bridging the Gap', 22–23.

guests whisper to each other that she is mysteriously absent, when Félix says he

has seen the Queen and describes her as 'une morte', when the Queen plays

cards with the dead king and recalls the day of his assassination, and finally,

when she explains to Stanislas that she leads a tragic life. The cue traces a series

of narrative events that draw progressively closer to the true state of the Queen's

feelings, in a movement from events that offer us insight into how she is viewed

by others to her own account of her position.

The very frequent repetition of this cue throughout a relatively short

scene encourages the spectator to read it as an indication of the emotional excess

felt by the queen on this symbolic evening. In fact, the ambiguity of the melody

appears as a further link between *L'Aigle* and melodrama, which also frequently

plays on the ambiguity between diegetic and nondiegetic music. Waeber has

discussed how melodrama usually engages in such play between the categories

during moments of fantasy or the supernatural.[43]   In the case of *L'Aigle*, the

fluid movement of the Tzigane melody throughout the ball scene is similar to the

function of music in stage melodrama, since the music reinforces the emotions

of the plot in a melodramatic style and seems to narrate on the queen's

hyperemotional state, offering insight into her inner thoughts.

Melodramatic techniques were ideal for Cocteau's adaptation of his play

and the creation of a theatrical film, which highlights the voice through

dialogue, voice-over, and music that intensifies the strong emotions and

punctuates the sensational events of the plot.[44] The arrangement of music in the

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[43] Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte* (Paris: Van Dieren Editeur, 2005), 132.
[44] Neumeyer has described the melodramatic techniques in *Casablanca* in 'scenes that
foreground dialogue and that use music to underline and intensify shifting emotions'. This
description could aptly apply to the music in *L'Aigle*. Neumeyer, 'The Resonances of
Wagnerian Opera and Nineteenth-Century Melodrama in the Film Scores of Max Steiner' in

film encourages interpretation of Cocteau's voice-over as a melodramatic

narrator and the musical cues as secondary narration. The music is always

closely synchronised with the action and the ability of melodies to occasionally

cross the divisions between diegetic and nondiegetic music signifies

developments in the characters' state of mind and suggests a further link to the

flexible and frequently fantastical use of music in melodrama.

Wagner and Cinema, ed. by Jeongwon Joe and Sander L. Gilman (Bloomington: Indiana
University Press, 2010), 125.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Monothematic Score of *Les Parents terribles*: A Solution to the

Challenge of 'Filmed Theatre'

Cocteau's approach to the screen adaptation of *Les Parents terribles* was very

different to that of *L'Aigle à deux têtes*, even though it was filmed directly

afterwards, in May and June 1948. The director's attempt to undertake a

fundamentally different approach to adaptation led to his use of one musical

theme as the basis for the film's soundscape.[1] This chapter situates Cocteau's

use of one melody throughout *Les Parents terribles* in relation to the history of

the monothematic score in film, which can be traced to practices of development

of musical themes during the silent era. However, the resurfacing of the

monothematic score in cinema during the mid-1940s meant that it was a distinct

part of the broad cultural context to *Parents*. I argue that Cocteau decided to

employ a monothematic score as the sound strategy for this particular film

because it enabled him to engage personally in arranging Auric's music. Being

involved in all aspects of adapting his pre-existing play into a distinctly

cinematic experience was not only a new way of approaching literary adaptation

further, it contributed considerably to the development of Cocteau's status as

film *auteur* – one whose role now extended to adapting musical material.

The critic André Bazin published a two-part essay 'Theatre and Cinema'

in the 1950s, engaging with the challenges of adapting a stage play for the

screen. While he attacked the films that were made simply by filming a stage

play, known as canned theatre, he mentioned *Parents* as a film which showed

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[1] References to timings are to *Les Parents terribles*, directed by Jean Cocteau (Paris: Films Ariane, 1990), VHS.

that cinema was a valid medium for a wide variety of dramatic works, and which

had given filmed theatre a new aesthetic lease of life.[2] Bazin wrote:

> There is not a sequence in it [*Parents*] that is not more effective than its
> stage counterpart, while there is not one that does not allude by
> implication to that indefinable pleasure that I would have had from the
> real thing. There is no better propaganda for the real theatre than well-
> filmed theatre.[3]

In contrast to Cocteau's work on *L'Aigle*, here the director wished to 'de-

theatricalise' this play. As he explained himself:

> While in *L'Aigle à deux têtes* I wanted to make a theatrical film, with
> speech, gestures and actions from the theatre, in *Les Parents terribles* I
> wanted to 'de-theatricalise' a play, to surprise it through the keyhole and
> vary the viewpoint to make a film.[4]

He wished to eradicate the hyper-theatrical gestures of *L'Aigle* while retaining

most of the text of his play, as the basis for the film dialogue. He outlined his

aims as follows:

> I was hoping for three things: firstly, to fix the performance of
> incomparable artists; secondly, to walk among them and look them
> directly in the face rather than seeing them on stage at a distance. To
> put, as I said to you, my eye to the keyhole and surprise them with the
> tele-photo lens.[5]

Cocteau wished to watch his performers through a keyhole, rather than from the

stalls, which is how he felt the film audience of *L'Aigle* was positioned. In

contrast to the former film, the whole work would be filmed in chronological

order, as a play would be performed. Through the shooting and editing, Cocteau

created an illusion of presence in the family home. Bazin noted that, although

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[2] André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (1967: Reprint Berkeley: University of California Press), 76 and 84.

[3] *Ibid.*, 120.

[4] Jean Cocteau, 'Yvonne de Bray on Screen', in *The Art of Cinema*, eds. André Bernard and Claude Gauteur, trans. Robin Buss (London: Marion Books, 2001), 153.

[5] 'Je souhaitais trois choses: premièrement, fixer le jeu d'artistes incomparables; deuxièmement, me promener parmi eux et les regarder en pleine figure au lieu de les voir à distance sur une scène. Mettre, comme je vous l'ai dit, mon oeil au trou de serrure et les surprendre avec le télé-objectif.' Cocteau, 'Treizième Entretien', *Entretiens/ Jean Cocteau André Fraigneau* (Monaco: Éditions de Rocher, 1988), 156.

Cocteau used a classic pattern of cutting, he gave it special significance by using the camera as a spectator and nothing more. Cocteau's camera respected the stage setting, never interfering with the characters of the play. Its role was to bring to life details that the stage would have left untreated, an approach that Bazin felt amounted to intensification of the play by the camera.[6] In contrast to the sumptuousness and hyper-theatricality of *L'Aigle*, here, the suffocating atmosphere of the stage play is conveyed in the film by the use of just two small sets, a lack of exterior shots, and the repeated use of close-up shots to suggest the characters' perspectives and emotions. It is this cinematic style that truly 'detheatricalises' the play.

Bazin was particularly impressed by Cocteau's solution to the challenge of editing this adaptation:

> The notion of the 'shot' is finally disposed of. There remains henceforth only the question of framing the fleeting crystallisation of a reality of whose envisioning presence one is ever aware. […] What is important here is for the spectator to have a feeling of being totally present at what is going on, not […] through depth of focus but by virtue of a diabolic speed of vision which seems for the first time to be wedded together to the pure rhythm of attention.[7]

The reduced use of locations and employment of this shooting and editing style did not hamper Cocteau's creativity in terms of how he edited the shots; if anything, it concentrated his work to create a greater intensity. Jean Marais, who played the principal role, regarded the final shot as particularly clever. When the scene was filmed, the dolly tracks were not firmly fixed to the floor, and so when they watched the rushes the following day they saw shaky images. Everyone assumed that they would have to shoot again, but instead, Cocteau decided to include a voice-over in which he would say 'and the gypsy caravan

[6] Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, 90–92.
[7] *Ibid.*, 91.

continued on its way', changing this technical problem into a poetic *trouvaille*.[8]

The cinema also offered Cocteau the opportunity to construct a soundscape that would further intensify the play. The employment of one simple musical theme and its variations throughout the entire film could not have been more different to *L'Aigle*'s soundscape. It has a pared back quality that fits perfectly with the simple approach to filming *Parents* and it also detheatricalises the play, since the presence of nondiegetic music at important moments is a frequently used device in the cinema and is far less common in the theatre. In addition, the way that Cocteau combined music with key narrative moments further detheatricalises the play, as I shall describe in the following sections.

Les Parents terribles: One Theme

The use of musical themes to accompany a film has a long history, one that is rooted in the very conception of film music. Rick Altman has noted the tendency of film music specialists to assume that the leitmotif fell naturally into use for the composition of Hollywood film scores, from their earliest stages.[9] However, during the silent era in the United States, the tendency to use compilation scores resulted in relatively widespread use of the cue sheet with several recurring themes in the years after 1915.[10] George Beynon, author of an early cinema music manual, notes that a theme:

> Has a definite and well-defined purpose and, if properly used, enhances the picture immeasurably. It should be selected carefully and with due consideration for the character, episode, heroine, villain or ingénue; the decision depending upon the desire to make the one character stand out prominently and impressively throughout the picture.[11]

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[8] Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1970), 475–476.
[9] Rick Altman, 'Early Film Themes: Roxy, Adorno, and the Problem of Cultural Capital', in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, eds. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard D. Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 205.
[10] *Ibid*., 210.
[11] George W. Beynon, *Musical Presentation of Motion Pictures* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1921), 62.

In his manual for accompanying silent film Beynon makes a number of suggestions about the types of melodies that could be used to accompany certain narrative events: 'Andantes will fit more with serious characters, while Andantinos, Lentos and Adagios are reserved for the dramatic roles.'[12] This use of recurring themes associated with characters or emotions, and generally unchanging in essentials, is not to be confused with the Wagnerian leitmotif technique, although this is exactly what has happened in film music history's tendency to discuss sound film music's silent era precursors.

The way in which the theme is developed in *Les Parents terribles* is similar to thematic development in early silent film. During the late 1910s and 1920s, thematic organisation of musical settings became popular as a means of establishing musical continuity and expressing character emotion. Two broad thematic practices emerged: one was associated with organ improvisation, and the other with orchestral renditions and cue sheets.[13] Cue sheets and musical settings tended to identify one or more selections as themes, often giving the main theme special treatment.[14] Themes tended to be varied in a simple manner such as changing the key, varying the rhythm, changing the dynamics or ornamentation. Edith Lang and George West's *Musical Accompaniment of Moving Pictures*, which is aimed largely at cinema organists, describes a number of these ways. For instance, playing the theme in the minor mode could suggest a character 'afflicted with sorrow' or playing the theme in a rhythmically quicker form could communicate anxiety or anticipation.[15] George Tootell's

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[12] *Ibid*., 65.

[13] Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 372.

[14] *Ibid*., 373.

[15] Edith Lang and George West, *Musical Accompaniment of Moving Pictures* (1920; Reprint New York: Arno Press, and New York Times, 1970), 8–9.

How to Play the Cinema Organ also outlines a method for thematic

development, which he calls 'metamorphosis of theme', in which the theme is

developed and presented in various forms and aspects, according to the scenes

portrayed on the screen.[16] He describes a process that can involve variation of

melody, harmony and decoration and includes useful illustrations of the practice.

For instance, ex. 7.1 shows a theme designed for the 'love-interest' in a film,

which could be varied, as shown in ex. 7.2, for 'light, playful scenes, and scenes

of childhood' with a quicker tempo and use of bouncy quaver rhythms and

staccato articulation.

Example 7.1: Metamorphoses of a Theme. George Tootell, *How to Play the Cinema Organ*. © London: W. Paxton and Co. Ltd.,1927, 93–94. Reproduced with permission of The Music Sales Group.

Example 7.2: Variant of Theme for light, playful scenes. George Tootell, *How to Play the Cinema Organ.* © London: W. Paxton and Co. Ltd.,1927, 93–94. Reproduced with permission of The Music Sales Group.

Regular repetition of sixteen-bar melodies became very common. The way in which these silent film themes were varied was generally quite different to thematic development of the Wagnerian kind, relying instead more on changing features of presentation of a theme, rather than any development as a leitmotif. Only in the most sophisticated of scores was thematic development used to express changing psychological situations.[17]

If Cocteau's monothematic score for *Parents* bears some relation to late silent film scores, it also bears a relation to the monothematic scores of classical Hollywood cinema, which became particularly prominent in the 1940s. Post-war France was flooded with American cinema and Cocteau, with his taste for Americana and the popular, would not have been immune to these arrivals. The paradigmatic example of a Hollywood monothematic score is Otto Preminger's *Laura*, which was released in 1944, only a few years before *Parents* was

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[17] Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 375–376.

filmed.[18] In 1949, *The Third Man* was released and it too employed a highly

memorable melody that would become inextricably bound up with the

marketing and reception of the film. During the 1950s, producers would favour

such monothematic scores in order to capitalise on the promotional value of a

marketable tune. Jeff Smith has argued that repetition of a theme for every

dramatic situation meant that audiences would more readily take notice and

would be more likely to purchase an associated record or sheet music.[19] As in

Hollywood, the principal mode of scoring in French cinema between 1940 and

1960 was neo-symphonic. There was a marked tendency to employ songs as

part of film scores, and the popularity of the song in French cinema was closely

connected to the French taste for the music hall.[20] Monothematicism also

became increasingly popular in French film in the years leading up to, and at the

start of, the French New Wave. Alain Lacombe's survey of 400 mainstream

French films in the 1955 to 1963 period, of which two hundred and sixty-three

could be classified as monothematic with a theme melody.[21]

Given the contrast between Cocteau's music for *Parents* and those for

his previous films, one wonders to what extent he was attempting simply to be

different, and why exactly he would decide to employ such a sound strategy for

this particular film. While monothematicism was undoubtedly a popular option

in both Hollywood and French cinema, Cocteau's strict use of one theme *alone*

repeated without any significant melodic or rhythmic variation throughout the

film was novel, and he marketed the film as the first in the history of cinema to

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[18] See for instance Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 17.
[19] *Ibid*., 77.
[20] Alain Lacombe and François Porcile, *Les Musiques du cinéma français* (Paris: Bordas, 1995), 101.
[21] *Ibid*., 116.

have a single musical motif for the entire soundtrack. In the manuscript

'Gratitude à Mes Collaborateurs', he stated that:

> This use of a single, very brief musical motif is completely new in the
> history of cinematography.[22]

While this claim that the approach was *completely* new was certainly something

of an exaggeration, it suggests that the novel use of one theme alone could

garner enhanced marketing success. One might speculate as to whether there

was a hint of pragmatism in the use of the device since the practicalities of

producing *L'Aigle* and *Parents* in quick succession, as well as depleted post-war

resources, may have encouraged Cocteau to reduce the musical requirements.

There is also Auric's career to take into account. Although *Parents* is not

analysed as part of Colin Roust's thesis on Auric, he notes that by the late 1940s,

the composer was working on multiple film scores simultaneously, to the extent

that he sometimes had to hire Tibor Hansányi to compose some of the cues for

him.[23] Regardless of whether this was a factor, the use of the single theme was

evidently something that Cocteau saw as particularly important to the character

of the film.

The distinctiveness of Cocteau's arrangement of the music is rooted in

the nature of the drama in question: *Les Parents terribles* is a family drama of a

bourgeois household in contemporary Paris. The play was one of Cocteau's

great popular successes, although it prompted controversy and was expelled

from the city-owned Théâtre des Ambassadeurs. It was completely stopped

during the Occupation, as it was not in line with the Vichy regime ideals. The

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[22] Cocteau, 'Gratitude à mes collaborateurs 1948' (autograph manuscript, box twenty-five, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010). This text is published in Cocteau, *The Art of Cinema*, 151-52.

[23] Colin Roust, 'Sounding French: The Film Music and Criticism of Georges Auric, 1919–45' (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2007), 64.

film, which sticks to the play very closely, was the result of another

collaboration between Cocteau, Auric and Christian Bérard. This time, Auric is

listed in the credits directly after Bérard, who follows Cocteau and the principal

actors. Jacqueline Sadoul and Raymond Leboursier edited the film.[24] The plot

revolves around the intense love of a mother (Yvonne de Bray) for her son

Michel (Jean Marais), and the trauma she feels when he grows up to fall in love

with a young woman, Madeleine (Josette Day). The twist in the narrative comes

when we discover that Madeleine is not only Michel's girlfriend, but also his

father George's (Marcel André) mistress. It takes all of Aunt Léo's (Gabrielle

Dorziat) ingenuity and cunning to unknot the situation to ensure a happy ending,

although this renders Michel's mother superfluous, and she effaces herself from

the scene by engineering her own death. There is also a subplot between the

three older characters; it transpires that Léo had a prior claim to George, but

gave him up for her younger sister, and so with Yvonne's eventual death at the

end, the natural order is in some ways restored.

The film's sound effects are rather conventional and emphasise narrative

events and themes. For example, the film's setting in an urban area is

established in the very first shot, with the sound of a passing ambulance. We

hear the upstairs neighbour pound on the floor, as Yvonne throws her tantrum

when she realises that Michel is in love. The sound of doors slamming is a

recurring sound effect throughout. In fact, in the opening directions, Cocteau

specifies that the stage set should be sturdy to allow repeated door slamming.

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[24] The sound system used was R.C.A. and Archambeau was the sound engineer. The 'Fonds
Crédit National' at the Bibliothèque du Film gives us some clue as to the relative importance and
effort required of these personnel. Cocteau received 5,200,000 francs as 'auteur' as well as
4,494,500 in production fees. The actors received 8,850,000 while Auric received 300,000
francs for his composition and arrangements of a theme. 'Cote: CN284-B191' (Fonds Crédit
National, BiFi, accessed November 2010).

This is indicative of the highly-strung characters and the disorder of the family, who are frequently in conflict with each other.

Most of the press reviews of the film focused on the 'challenge' of adapting a play for the cinema, and the very title of the review in *Le Figaro* was '*Les Parents terribles*: Ou l'art de faire du cinéma avec du théâtre.'[25] Pierre Casteux, writing for *Action* on 15 December 1948, stated that the film proposed a valuable solution to the famous problem of filmed theatre.[26] Press articles noted the close-up shots of the facial expressions and the wider montage as crucial to the successful adaptation of the play for the screen. Most of the contemporary critics omitted to explore the soundscape in Cocteau's transferral of the play from stage to screen, although the film includes elements that were not used in the theatre and transforms the work into something quite distinct from the play.

The Preparation and Effect of the Monothematic Score

The approach taken to the music of *Les Parents terribles* was quite different from that of any of Cocteau and Auric's previous collaborations. Cocteau was becoming increasingly confident in all aspects of filmmaking, and worked very independently on *Parents*. In a three-page text '*Les Parents terribles* à l'écran', conserved at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, he noted that:

> Theatre is the opposite of cinematography. At the theatre, the auteur answers to the actors. They make what they want of it. In cinematography, the actors answer to the writer-director. It is he who directs them and who declares whether the broken line that they must

[25] '*Les Parents terribles*: Ou l'art de faire du cinéma avec du théâtre', 6 December 1948, *Le Figaro*.

[26] 'Sa transposition à l'écran ait une gageure. Gageure que Cocteau a brillamment tenue puisque avec ce film, il nous donnait une des oeuvres les plus attachante de l'année et nous propose une solution valable au fameux problème de théâtre filmé.' Pierre Casteux, *Action*, 15 December 1948. Also note the reviews in *Le Figaro*, 6 December 1948; *La Bataille*, 10 December 1948; and *Le Canard enchaînée*, 16 November 1948 which all focus on the issue of adaptation of a play for the cinema.

follow forms the red thread which runs through the drama, in a straight line, from one end to the other.[27]

Cocteau asked Auric to compose short musical segments on narrative themes, without preoccupying himself with action or character, which would result in a sort of 'pure music'; he would then take control of the music and arrange it with the images.[28] Cocteau's gratitude to Auric is clear in 'Gratitude à mes collaborateurs':

> Auric emphasised the entrances of certain emotions for me, just as melodrama used to emphasise the entry of characters.[29]

While this might suggest that it was Auric who organised the placements of the music, testimony from the composer explicitly states that Cocteau undertook this role himself. Auric recalled:

> I had composed a series of quite short musical segments for *Les Parents terribles* and, when they had been recorded, Jean selected those to be placed at particular moments determined by him alone. It was not premeditated at all, he acted like someone who found himself in front of an ancient score, and who wanted to make musical placements to accompany a personal creation. And he succeeded so well in this work that when I listened to *Les Parents terribles*, I had the impression that I had composed for certain situations exactly the music that I would have written if I had planned it in advance.[30]

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[27] 'Le théâtre est à l'oppose du cinématographe. Au théâtre, l'auteur appartient aux intérprètes. Ils en font ce qu'ils veulent. Au cinématographe, les interprètes appartiennent à l'auteur-metteur en scène. C'est lui qui les dirige et qui constate si la ligne brisée qu'ils doivent suivre forme le fil rouge qui traverse, en ligne droite, le drame, de bout en bout.' Cocteau, '*Les Parents terribles* à l'écran' (typed and signed manuscript, box thirty-four, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

[28] 'Il demanda à son compositeur d'écrire des morceaux assez courts, sur des thèmes qu'il choisirait lui-même sans se préoccuper de l'action et des caractères, en un mot des morceaux de musique pure. Quand ils furent enregistrés, Cocteau les répartit comme il voulut, aux moments qu'il avait choisis lui-même. Il avait demandé à Auric d'agir comme les artistes du dix-huitième siècle qui composaient d'abord avec des airs et des cavatines, des romances et des cantilènes; on mettait ensuite les paroles qui convenaient, on les transportait d'un opéra à un autre, si besoin était'. Marcel Schneider, 'Le Groupe des Six: "un Bouquet dans l'Eau d'un Même Vase', *Avant Scène* 307–308 (1983): 117.

[29] 'Auric m'a souligné certains entrés de sentiments comme les mélodies soulignaient certains entrés de personnages. C'est l'emploi complètement neuf d'une seule motif musical fécond dans l'histoire du cinématographe. Merci!' Cocteau, 'Gratitude à mes collaborateurs 1948', 151-52.

[30] 'J'avais pour *Les Parents terribles* composé une série de petits morceaux assez courts et Jean, quand ils ont été enregistrés, c'est lui-même qui les a choisis pour les placer à des moments déterminés uniquement par lui. Ce n'était pas du tout prémédité, il a agi comme quelqu'un qui se trouvait devant une partition ancienne, et qu'il aurait envie de placer pour accompagner une création personnelle. Et il a fort bien fait ce travail puisque, quand j'ai entendu *Les Parents*

This testimony is suggestive of the closeness of their collaborations and the singularity of their artistic aims; the composer prepared short musical segments and Cocteau combined them with the images, as he saw fit.

Example 7.3: Theme for *Les Parents terribles.* Transcribed from Adriano, Sleevenotes to Georges Auric, *The Classic Film Music of Georges Auric*, vol. 2, with the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Adriano, © Marco Polo 8.225066, 1998, compact disc. Reproduced with permission of Naxos.

Cocteau seems to have been in favour of the use of one theme (ex. 7.3), and once he had it, he was certain to have total control of what happened with it. However, it is not possible to determine whether the idea to use one theme came from him first, or from Auric. Schneider indicates that the public's failure to detect the system used was surprising and, furthermore, it was noteworthy that Auric claimed that he would not have composed anything differently if he had been given advance notice of the scenes requiring music.[31] Auric made these comments in interview to André Fraigneau in 1976–1977 and they were published as part of a volume of the *Cahiers Jean Cocteau* devoted to Cocteau's

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terribles, j'ai eu l'impression que j'avais écrit devant certaines situations très exactement la musique que j'aurais pu écrire si j'avais prémédité ça à l'avance.' Georges Auric, 'Témoignages', *Avec les musiciens*, vol. 7 of *Cahiers Jean Cocteau*, ed. Léon Dile Milorad (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 70.

[31] Schneider, 'Le Groupe des Six', 117.

contacts with musicians. Given this context, it is possible that Auric might have

wished to flatter Cocteau in his comments.

The nature of the melody may have been influenced by Cocteau's

appreciation of the popular. In 1951 he claimed that *Parents* was 'constructed

on a vaudeville theme', and in the programme notes refers to the influence of the

popular on his work.[32] Cocteau's choice of orchestration may have been

inspired by popular genres of music. For example, the theme is heard on

combinations of the following instruments: three flutes, English horn, three

saxophones, bass clarinet, bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones,

tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and piano.[33] There was no technical reason to

restrict the number or nature of instruments to be recorded. The research for this

thesis has not located evidence as to who proposed these instruments, but I

would speculate that it was Cocteau, rather than Auric, for two reasons. Firstly,

while making the previous film *Belle*, Cocteau noted in his diary some of his

suggestions for orchestration for particular themes. It is thus evident that he was

happy to ask Auric for particular orchestral combinations. Secondly, Roust

notes that from 1946 through the 1950s Auric's film music tended to employ

neo-romantic cues, making it unlikely that he would have proposed the wind-

and brass-based orchestration of this film.[34] It also seems likely that in his

desire to transfer this play successfully from stage to screen, Cocteau may have

wished to employ an instrumentation that would convey a sense of popular

theatre, which would also have engendered the atmosphere of an enclosed

interior, rather than opening it out through use of a large orchestra. Arguably,

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[32] Cocteau, 'Douzième Entretien', *Entretiens/ Jean Cocteau André Fraigneau*, 141.
[33] Adriano Martinolli D'Arcy, Sleevenotes to Georges Auric, *The Classic Film Music of Georges Auric*, vol. 2, with the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Adriano, Marco Polo 8.225066, 1998, compact disc.
[34] Roust, 'Sounding French', 234.

the combination of a playful vaudeville musical style with such a dark narrative

turns what was a sinister stage plot into something grotesque on the screen. The

theme's style may also partly manifest Cocteau's preference for the popular as a

way of establishing a sense of French identity in his art. In his writings of this

period, Cocteau encouraged France to celebrate its own art, particularly in the

wake of the Second World War. It seems likely that, in discussing his musical

requirements with Auric, he may have had these concerns in mind.

Cocteau's use of one theme in carefully chosen variations throughout the

film contributed significantly to the recreation of the enclosed atmosphere of the

play, which was also signalled by theatrical cues, such as the opening shot of a

theatre curtain. There is less music in this film than in Cocteau's previous films

and its appearances are very discrete. Unfortunately, the score for the film is not

publicly available, and so the interpretative work in this thesis is based on

production sketchbooks, and testimonies, as well as close focus on the film

itself.[35] Rather than having a continuous underscore, the film includes fourteen

iterations of a theme in different guises. (I have included a full list of

appearances of the theme in the appendix.) This technique contrasts with the

Hollywood monothematic approach, since the latter generally involved

combining a recurring theme with other underscore melodies. Each appearance

of the theme is short and has a conclusive ending, usually a perfect cadence.

This creates an effect of stasis and seems to reflect the unchanging household.

The theme is heard during scenes in the family home or when the family is

discussed. It is entirely absent during scenes from which members of the

roulotte (the term used to refer to the family home; it literally refers to a horse-

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[35] Production sketchbooks for *Les Parents terribles* are held at the BHVP.

drawn caravan) are absent or are not discussed, and also from the scenes of conflict between George and Madeleine. The music is formally very orderly, while the roulotte that it accompanies is the essence of disorder.

Gorbman argues that the use of a musical theme can be extremely economical, as once a theme absorbs the diegetic associations of its first occurrence, it can recall these on its repetition.[36] This would seem to be the case in *Parents*: when Michel describes his family to Madeline (fig. 7.1), full of excitement about their impending meeting, a heavily embellished version of the theme is heard on the piano, in a major key and buoyant style. This is suggestive of the rose-tinted view that Michel has of his family, quite different from the true natures of his parents and aunt.

Figure 7.1: *Les Parents terribles*: Michel describes his family to Madeleine.

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[36] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 26.

The fact that the essentials of the theme (melody and rhythm) remain largely unchanged provides a unifying thread throughout the film, while simultaneously conveying the impression that, even with Madeleine's entrance into the family, nothing will really change in their ongoing struggle to organise their disorderly existence.

The role of the theme in adapting the play for the cinema can be better understood with a close focus on the editing of one of its appearances. In the scene when Michel tells his mother that he loves Madeleine, Cocteau succeeds in communicating the suffocating atmosphere through close-ups and careful editing of the musical theme (19:33–21:30). At the moment where Michel starts to tell his tale, a slow variation of the theme is introduced on quiet brass chords (19:33), accompanied by chords on the harp (fig. 7.2).

Figure 7.2: *Les Parents terribles*: 'Je suis très heureux'.

Michel explains that he is very happy with his new girlfriend and the music

stops as he recounts his first meeting with Madeleine at a shorthand class. He

explains to his mother that an older widower has supported Madeleine because

she reminds him of his deceased daughter. The camera moves in for a close-up

on Michel's face, and the theme proper begins on trumpet (20:41) as he

reassures his mother that Madeleine has stopped seeing the older man (fig. 7.3).

Michel would now like his family to visit Madeleine's apartment to meet with

her. The close-ups of Yvonne's and Michel's faces when the music is first heard

would not have been possible in the theatre, where the audience could only

observe a complete tableau of mother and son.

Figure 7.3: *Les Parents terribles*: 'C'est ce soir qu'elle va dire la vérité au vieux.'

As Michel continues, the camera pans slowly to Yvonne's eyes, keeping

Michel's mouth within the frame, so that it is possible to see her reaction to his

words while keeping close focus on his mouth (fig. 7.4). These close-up shots

and the slow panning from Michel's face to his mother's, in conjunction with

the music, directs the audience to focus on their very different emotions.

Figure 7.4: *Les Parents terribles*: 'Bien sûr, il ne peut pas être question de jalousie – c'est moins grave qu'une femme mariée – seulement, à cause de toi, à cause de la maison, à cause de nous, je ne pouvais pas admettre un partage et une situation louche.'

The camera pauses and focuses on both faces as Yvonne asks if Madeleine has

given Michel any money. Michel admits that she has, reaches the end of his

tale, and asks his mother if she is happy with his news. The music cadences and

the camera now focuses on Yvonne's face alone (fig. 7.5).

Figure 7.5: *Les Parents terribles*: 'Je suis heureux! Tu es heureuse?'

Thus, the music is closely synchronised with dialogue and camera movements, entering and cadencing with the changes of shots, and the separate parts of Michel's story. Cocteau has woven the theme into the fabric of the narrative and, in combination with the cinematography and editing, it transforms this scene into something highly cinematic.

Cocteau's shooting script for *Les Parents terribles* looks to have been a working document and, as such, it reveals much about the director's method.[37] He scribbled out dialogue, shot numbers etc., and made changes, musical additions, and even some amendments to the dialogue; he noted the dates on which various scenes were filmed; he marked out where each scene would begin and end, and so it is easy to see where he intended the music to be placed. Crucially, however, throughout the book, the indications for music or sounds are

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[37] '*Les Parents terribles* Screenplay Découpage', (box thirty-four, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010. 'Doudou' written on front cover of the book although the notes are in Cocteau's hand.

not always the same as those found in the film. For example, in the sketchbook of the découpage technique, there is an indication for music next to 'Leo: Tu le trompes bien, toi' in the early scene, where the family waits for Mic's arrival home. However, the film has no music at this point, which suggests that placement of the theme was neither arbitrary nor entirely predetermined, but was the result of careful consideration and ongoing reflection throughout the filming and editing stages. Cocteau appears to have designated letters of the alphabet, to different appearances of the theme. He also included notes regarding the orchestration to be used. We know that Auric had already composed the various segments, so these notes on orchestration seem likely to have been for Cocteau to identify each segment, rather than any kind of direction for something he wanted Auric to do. It appears to have been a highly personal system, and the process of matching music to image also seems initially to have been a solitary exercise. The system would have enabled him to work with the music in an efficient and musically non-technical manner, to ensure that the theme was placed at the desired points, and with the most suitable orchestration.[38]

A working method which treats sound and music as material in this way anticipates Godard's later treatment of music as material in films such as *Vivre sa vie* (1962) and *Pierrot le fou* (1965), and is one of the strongest points of contact between Cocteau and the New Wave director. In *Vivre sa vie*, all of the nondiegetic music is treated as raw material. Direct-recorded sound was used for the source music, and post-synchronisation for the underscore music.

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[38] The 'Fonds Pinoteau' at the Bibliothèque du Film holds another sketchbook of the shooting script (owned by Claude Pinoteau, the assistant on the film), which also includes some directions as to where music and sound effects should be placed. These do not form a comprehensive list of the sounds, nor are they nearly as detailed as their appearances in Cocteau's sketchbook, nor is there any information noted about which version of the theme was to be used or on which instruments – all of which supports the argument that it was Cocteau who was in charge of these creative decisions.

Godard commissioned Michel Legrand to compose a motive and eleven variations, to parallel the episodic structure of the film. Although Godard was pleased with Legrand's music, in the editing room he retained just a few bars from one variation, which he then repeated obsessively throughout the film.[39] There appears to be little narrative logic behind the arrangement of the music in most of its appearances. As Royal S. Brown argues, Godard's method seems to have been structural, involving the manipulation and juxtaposition of a theme with other elements in the film, rather than calling for cues to correspond to particular narrative moments. To prevent the music from imposing any structure on the film, all musical cadences were removed.[40] Godard also drew attention to the artifice of film by ensuring that music frequently does not come to a logical conclusion at moments the audience might expect it to, for instance, for a change of scene. Similarly, he experimented with cutting out all sound for no clear narrative reason in certain scenes. While Cocteau's work on *Parents* did involve him handling the music as a material, as well as the apparent development of a non-musical system, in order to arrange a musical theme with the images, his organisation of the theme in *Parents* is not as independent from the film's narrative as in Godard's films. Cocteau's theme in *Parents* is always edited in a 'musical' fashion, as was demonstrated in the careful editing of the theme to cadence with particular narrative moments in the example above. This contrasts with Godard's frequent treatment of musical extracts as pure material, to be manipulated and cut up, regardless of musical integrity or narrative function.

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[39] Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 190.
[40] *Ibid.*, 191 and 200.

The question now arises: what are the effects of the use of one theme in *Les Parents terribles*, and what might have motivated Cocteau to take this approach to begin with? A theme would certainly have been far easier for Cocteau to edit, in contrast to the challenges presented by a leitmotif. A leitmotif would, by its nature, be part of a web of allusions, reminiscences, and associations, rendering Cocteau's working method, as I interpret it from the sketchbooks, impossible. If he had wished to construct a web of leitmotifs, he would have had to sacrifice a degree of his input on this project. So, aside from the instrumentation and harmony, the melody and rhythm of the theme are unchanging and closed in most appearances. This means that the theme does not serve a strong narrative role in driving the story forward, or conveying a developing psychological state. However, its illustration of the unchanging nature of the family could be described as a narrative function in itself. The spectator is anchored by this recognisable theme, whose constant repetitions create an atmosphere of claustrophobia. The audience is trapped, in the same way that Michel is unknowingly trapped by his family, and is a puppet in the hands of his elders.

Cocteau's concern for control over the soundscape even extended to the way in which the sound was projected in different cinemas. When he was in Egypt he was horrified to discover that the sound was not clearly audible there. He actually raised this with the French Ambassador to Egypt, in the context of the reception of French film in that country, and determined to investigate the problem personally.[41] His increasingly involved approach in this film was

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[41] Cocteau, *Maalesh: Journée d'une tournée de théâtre* (Gallimard: 1949), 22.

detected in the press. In a review in a special issue of *Le Monde illustré théâtral et littéraire* devoted to *Les Parents terribles*, Lo Duca states:

> Unity is the word that illustrates *Les Parents terribles* to perfection. One could say that Michel Kelber's images, Christian Bérard's decors, [and] Georges Auric's music are the personal, measured and intimate work of a multiformed Jean Cocteau.[42]

This evocative image of 'a multiformed Jean Cocteau' is reflective of the director's personal engagement with the sound of his films, in a way that demonstrates his increasing confidence in designing his own film soundscapes. *Les Parents terribles* offered him another opportunity to be creative with film sound, to develop a unique solution to the challenge of successfully adapting a play from stage to screen, without falling into the abyss of filmed theatre. Cocteau's decision to 'detheatricalise' his pre-existing play rendered the choice of a monothematic score eminently suitable to communicate in a new medium some of the impact of the play that he was concerned might be lost in the adaptation process. It also situates *Parents* within a much broader history of monothematicism in film music, and represents a unique soundscape design within Cocteau's wider artistic output. The repetition of the musical theme at key narrative points is similar to a sonic refrain, reinforcing the static essentials of the relationship between Michel and his family and emphasising the suffocating milieu of the roulotte. The degree of care apportioned to the musical arrangements in *Parents*, and their impact on the spectator, means that it is possible to interpret them as both highly poetic and as a crucial part of the adaptation process.

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[42] 'Unité est le mot qui illustre à la perfection *Les Parents terribles*. On dirait que les images de Michel Kelber, que les décors de Christian Bérard, que la musique de Georges Auric sont l'oeuvre personnelle, mesurée et intime d'un Jean Cocteau multiforme.' Lo Duca, *Le Monde illustré théâtral et littéraire*, 32 (Undated press clipping, box thirty-four, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Collaboration on an Adaptation: *Les Enfants terribles*

The inclusion of *Les Enfants terribles* in a study of Cocteau's film soundscapes

might seem odd: he did not direct the work and, in spite of some conflicting

accounts, it appears that he was not responsible for the choice of music either.

Nevertheless, Cocteau's working relationship with the director Jean-Pierre

Melville reveals a great deal about his approach to film sound, including his

forceful presence and involvement with sonic issues, even when it was not

appreciated. Cocteau's difficulties in reconciling his approach with Melville's

artistic vision are the initial focus of my study of how he helped shape the film's

soundscape. His fraught relationship with Melville shines another light on his

approach to soundscape design, and how *Enfants* may have had lasting

ramifications for his subsequent approach to music in film. By many accounts,

it seems that Melville chose the music for the film, but Cocteau attempted to

appropriate the responsibility for the choice in the wake of the film's release,

which I would argue is symptomatic of the importance he attributed to film

sound and his desire to be seen to be personally involved in sonic matters.

Critics and the public have acknowledged that *Enfants* was

unequivocally successful. That success is partially due to music's role in

shaping the adaptation, music distinct from that used in Cocteau's previous

films, drawn almost entirely from Baroque repertoire.[1] This use of pre-existing

music in the adaptation of a pre-existing work achieves rather different effects to

those created in *L'Aigle à deux têtes* and *Les Parents terribles*, and brings the

significance of Baroque music in film to the fore. Following the film's release,

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[1] References to timings are to *Les Enfants terribles*, directed by Jean-Pierre Melville (London: BFI Releasing, 2004), DVD.

Cocteau implied that the music used communicates a sense of fatality; he described how the whole film was bathed 'in the music of J.S. Bach where fatality advances with its light and implacable walk'.[2] Interpreting the music as representative of destiny, Edward Baron Turk argues that the music 'functions as a supportive layer of the narrative'.[3] In addition to the underscore music, there is a substantial use of voice-overs throughout the film, which James S. Williams argues 'overcompensate for his (Cocteau's) loss of authority over the film and […] reflect its other formal extremes'.[4] I argue that the characteristics of the chosen Baroque music, and its placement in *Enfants*, enable it to reflect important narrative themes and to communicate additional narrative information in key scenes. Especially in combination with Cocteau's voice-over, it provides another facet of his personality in the film, similar to that of the authorial voice in the novel. Above all, it ensures that, sonically, we experience *Enfants* as a work indelibly linked to Cocteau. I also contrast the diegetic performance of a song in *Enfants* with the Baroque underscore to draw out how all the sonic aspects of this film contribute to the Coctelian poetry, reinforcing the tragedy of the text and rendering it highly cinematic.

A Difficult Collaboration

Cocteau's novel *Les Enfants terribles* was written in eighteen days during the author's rehabilitation for opium addiction at the Clinique Saint-Cloud and published in July 1929 to great critical and public acclaim. The film adheres to the novel very closely indeed, and again we see evidence of fascination with

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[2] 'Cette musique de J.S. Bach où la fatalité avance avec sa démarche légère et implacable'. Jean Cocteau, 'Le Film des *Enfants terribles*' (typed manuscript signed and copied in French and English, box thirty, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).
[3] Edward Baron Turk, 'The Film Adaptation of Jean Cocteau's *Les Enfants terribles*', *Cinema Journal* 19, no. 2 (1980): 29.
[4] James S. Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 88.

close family relationships. The narrative revolves around Élisabeth (Nicole Stéphane) and Paul (Edouard Dermit), siblings with an almost incestuous closeness who live in the enclosed world of a shared bedroom. Élisabeth is the dominant sibling, who both fiercely protects and quarrels with Paul. Initially, the only other member of their world is Gérard (Jacques Bernard) who is secretly in love with Élisabeth. From the very outset, Paul has an obsession with Dargelos (Renée Cosima), his co-pupil at the Lycée, and this fixation flares up again when Élisabeth gets a job as a model at a couturier's and brings home a friend, Agathe (Renée Cosima), who bears a striking resemblance to Dargelos. Élisabeth moves beyond the shared space to become engaged to a rich American called Michael. A sense of fate is never far away, however, and he is killed in a car crash on their wedding day, making her a wealthy widow. The four young people move in together and Paul becomes increasingly tormented by his love for Agathe and finally confides in Élisabeth. This is the catalyst that awakens in her a psychotic drive to rid their foursome of the other girl and regain all of Paul's attention. She fabricates a romance between Gérard and Agathe, tells Paul that their marriage is already decided, and convinces all three parties separately that this is the best way forward. Gérard and Agathe obediently get married and conveniently leave Paul and Élisabeth alone. A desperately unhappy Paul takes poison to commit suicide, writing to Agathe that it is her fault. She arrives at the house, learns the truth, and Élisabeth is revealed as the architect of their unhappiness. Élisabeth, wishing to be with Paul even in death, shoots herself and falls down, ridding the world of both of the *enfants terribles*.

Cocteau was very proud of *Enfants*, and the novel is seen as one of his greatest literary successes. Baron Turk argues that aspects of the novel already

seem filmic in places, including the slower tempo in some scenes suggestive of slow motion, or the 'pan shots' of Élisabeth surveying the gallery in Michael's home.[5] Nevertheless, Cocteau refused several offers to adapt the novel for the cinema until he encountered Melville twenty years after publication. It was inevitably a difficult collaboration due to Cocteau's protectiveness of his novel and desire to be involved in every aspect of the filmmaking. Only a few months before the filming of *Enfants*, he wrote *Lettre aux Américains* (1949), which demonstrates this and offers clues about his actual working arrangements. He attributes his approach both to the artisan nature of the French film industry and to his own temperament, arguing that the French would do better to admit their disorder and to be resourceful in their indiscipline rather than envying the ordered system of Hollywood. It would be impossible for him to express himself in the Hollywood system, he says, due to the strictness of the trade unionism that apportions their work. Cinematographic work hinges on the smallest detail and is true moment-by-moment work. Cocteau creates a striking image of himself at the helm, personally involved in his film productions:

> Here, in France, the disorder of which I speak allows me to be involved
> with everything in a film and to get around the obstacles. Furthermore, if
> something is from the realm of the impossible due to our old material, I
> show it to my workers. The least among them is tasked with rendering
> the impossible possible.[6]

His growing confidence with sound is hinted at in an article from the same period entitled 'In Praise of 16mm', published in *The New York Times* in 1948:

> It is vital that the camera should become a pen and that everyone should
> be able to express himself through this visual medium. It is vital for

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[5] Baron Turk, 'The Film Adaptation of Cocteau's *Les Enfants terribles*', 26.

[6] 'Ici, en France, le désordre dont je parle me permet de toucher à tout dans un film et de me glisser à travers les obstacles. En outre, si quelque chose est du domaine de l'impossible par la faute de notre vieux matériel, je l'expose à mes ouvriers. Le moindre d'entre eux tâche de rendre possible l'impossible.' Jean Cocteau, *Lettre aux Américains* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1949), 84-85.

everyone to learn editing, shooting, montage and sound, not to become specialised in one branch of this very difficult trade, in short, not to be a single cog in one of the machines in the factory, but a free body which can leap into the water and find out how to swim by itself.[7]

Such sentiments go a long way towards understanding the reasons behind the difficult collaboration with Melville.

Both Melville and Cocteau prepared the screenplay and dialogue adapted from the novel. Cocteau helped to choose the décor and settings and the film is full of imagery familiar from his previous work, such as the tableau of the children's snowball fight, the mirror in the bedroom, and the statue.[8] The film was shot on location in Paris, at the Studios Jenner, with scenes at the Théâtre Pigalle, at the office of the defunct collaborationist newspaper *Le Petit Parisien*; at Montmorency; and at Ermenonville between November 1949 and January 1950. It premiered at Nice on 22 March 1950 and in Paris on 29 March 1950. Cocteau had shied away from adapting the film himself, fearing that it would destroy the form of spiritual disorder in the novel and would render the unreal conveyed by the poetic language all too real when transferred to the cinema screen.[9] He felt that Melville was a suitable collaborator on this project because his freelance style seemed suitable to the improvised 16mm film style that he so admired.[10] It also appears that Cocteau's choice of Melville was partly due to the young director's inexperience: he had only one credit to his name prior to this (*Le Silence de la mer*, 1949). According to Melville in a 1971 interview, Cocteau wanted to use him as a springboard for launching the career of his

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[7] Cocteau, 'In Praise of 16mm', in *The Art of Cinema*, eds. André Bernard and Claude Gauteur, trans. Robin Buss (London: Marion Books, 2001), 66–67.

[8] Baron Turk, 'The Film Adaptation of Cocteau's *Les Enfants terribles*', 28.

[9] Cocteau, 'Cocteau Changed his Mind on Movie', *New York Herald Tribune*, 27 July 1952. Quoted in Baron Turk, 'The Film Adaptation of Cocteau's *Les Enfants terribles*', 26.

[10] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film: A Conversation with André Fraigneau*, trans. Vera Traill (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1954), 78.

adopted son Edouard Dermit, who was playing Paul.[11] When filming began,

Cocteau used to visit the set every day to ensure that Dermit was getting on well

and to keep an eye on progress. Melville did not appreciate being told how to do

his job and admitted that his relations with Cocteau occasionally disintegrated

into a power struggle. In interview, Melville mentioned an incident where

Cocteau shouted 'Cut!' in the middle of a shot, something that *only* the director

had the right to do. Apparently, the incident poisoned relations so badly that

Cocteau immediately left and did not return until Melville reassured him that

nobody was offended. The following statement perhaps best demonstrates the

bitterness of Melville's feelings towards Cocteau: 'from the moment the affair

had been set up and the advance received from the Gaumont Company, the one

thing Cocteau wanted was for me to die so that he could make the film

himself'.[12]

Cocteau presented a rather different recollection of events in his diary of

1952:

> Sept 15 1952
> Visit from a nineteen-year-old who seems quite serious and who is
> working (on a film) of *Thomas the Impostor*. I'd like to see such a
> miracle: a young man who makes a film on his own and who manages to
> translate me without my having anything to do with it. That is why I
> intend to make contact with his rushes. I had thought that Melville was
> not so much a young man as a free shooter whom it would be interesting
> to set in opposition to the old gang. I made a bad mistake there and had
> to do all the work myself. I was doing *Orpheus* by day, and *Les Enfants
> terribles* by night. Melville never set foot in the editing room. I should
> remember that little experience. But how can you throw up one more
> wall against this youth which everywhere runs into the same
> frustration.[13]

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[11] Jean-Pierre Melville, *Melville on Melville*, ed. Rui Nogueira (London: Secker and Warburg, in association with the BFI, 1971), 38.

[12] *Ibid*., 40.

[13] Cocteau, *Past Tense: The Cocteau Diaries*, trans. Richard Howard, vol. 1 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), 289.

Cocteau implies here that his close involvement with *Enfants* was absolutely

necessary, and noted in an undated text prepared for the release of the film in

America in 1952 that Melville agreed to follow him, not to change the work, and

to lead with him, hand in hand. Cocteau said that it was as a result of this state

of mind that

> I was able to get closely involved in the filming, to choose my actors and
> my décors, not to lose myself in the mistake that consists of believing
> that it is necessary to change a book entirely and to render it
> unrecognisable under the pretext of reaching the wider public.[14]

It is impossible to know the precise nature of the collaboration, and one

suspects that both Cocteau and Melville engaged in some revisionism in their

later accounts of the production process. François Truffaut advised against even

taking on the question of who was responsible for which aspects of the film:

> There is no need to carefully distinguish what is Melville's and what is
> Cocteau's in this four-handed concerto; the former's calm strength is
> well served by the latter's spirited writing. These two artists worked
> together like Bach and Vivaldi. Jean Cocteau's best novel became Jean-
> Pierre Melville's best film.[15]

In order to understand the place and influence of *Enfant*'s soundscape in

Cocteau's wider output, however, it remains crucial to explore why Cocteau

might have tried to claim responsibility for the film's soundscape and what

influence it might have had on his subsequent approach to pre-existing music in

film.

Cocteau's involvment in the creation of the soundscape was certainly

'hands on'. We know, for instance, that he got personally involved in creating

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[14] 'J'ai pu me mêler étroitement au tournage, choisir mes acteurs et mes décors, ne pas me perdre dans l'erreur qui consiste à croire qu'il importe de tout changer d'un livre et de le rendre méconnaissable sous prétexte d'atteindre le grand public.' Cocteau, 'Le Film des *Enfants terribles*' (typed manuscript signed and copied in French and English, box thirty, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

[15] François Truffaut, *The Films in my Life*, trans. Leonard Mayhew (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978).

some of the sonic elements in *Enfants*; it is his heart that we hear through the stethoscope that the doctor uses on Paul (this is reminiscent of the heartbeats in *Sang*), and his voice that is omnipresent in the frequent voice-overs.[16] On the basis of the material I have examined, it seems more likely that Melville chose the Bach-Vivaldi. Nevertheless, Cocteau apparently tried to persuade Melville to choose music like that found at *Le Boeuf sur le toit*. Melville recalled:

> As for the music, Cocteau wanted something in the style of Wiener and Doucet (a famous duo at the *Boeuf sur le toit* just after the First World War) because he had written the book during his stay at the clinic for disintoxication at la Celle Saint-Cloud [*sic*], while listening over and over again to the same record 'Make Believe'. He was very anxious to use that, played at the piano, but I finally chose the music without even telling him. He still tried to force my hand a little, just a little, but he had an instinct for the right thing. […] Once the music had been recorded, he left it rather up in the air in his interviews as to who had made the choice but since I went right on telling everybody it was I and I alone, he didn't insist.[17]

Indeed, Cocteau seems intentionally to have created ambiguity about who chose the music in the wake of the film's release. For the first time in a Cocteau film project, there is no music by Auric; instead the film makes significant use of Bach's Concerto for Four Harpsichords in A Minor BWV 1065 (an arrangement of Vivaldi's Concerto for Four Violins in B Minor, opus 3, no. 10 RV580) and Vivaldi's Concerto in A Minor, opus 3, no. 8 RV522, conducted by Paul Bonneau. According to James S. Williams, it was Melville who chose Bach and Vivaldi for the film, but the basis of this claim is unclear.[18] Cocteau was rather opaque on the matter in his 1951 interview with André Fraigneau in which he implied that he was responsible for the placement of the music cues, drawing a comparison with his discovery of the perfect alignment of Gluck's lament with the scene in which we first see Heurtebise and Eurydice together in *Orphée*:

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[16] Baron Turk, 'The Film Adaptation of Cocteau's *Les Enfants terribles*', 28.
[17] Melville, *Melville on Melville*, 42.
[18] Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau*, 89.

> Miracles of that kind are fairly common with people who calculate only by instinct. The same thing happened, for example, in *Les Enfants terribles*, where I found that Bach's *andante* coincided faultlessly with the scene of Paul in the nocturnal hall, from the moment he comes in up to the moment when he lies down.[19]

It is not clear whether he means that he found this out as part of the editing process himself, or afterwards, when watching the finished film. But the fact that he mentions this directly after discussing his innovations on the sound design in *Orphée*, and that he also draws an analogy with them, creates the impression that he was responsible for the musical choices. Similarly, the aforementioned document at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris for the 1952 American release also implies that Cocteau chose the Bach and Vivaldi, as he stated that:

> these are the reasons that I owe Melville my gratitude and which allowed me not to fear bathing the whole in the music of J.S. Bach where fatality advances with its light and implacable walk.[20]

Cocteau's apparent attempt to force Melville's hand can be attributed to his desire to be in control of sonic matters on this film, as had been the case in the adaptations where he had greater autonomy throughout the decision-making process.

Voice-over in *Enfants*

The novel *Enfants* had already been a considerable success for Cocteau, so the use of his instantly recognisable voice in the film strengthens his association with the adaptation and establishes a sense of his ownership of the soundscape in spite of Melville's directorial role. Voice-over is very heavily used in *Enfants*

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[19] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 73–74.

[20] 'Voilà, en substance, les raisons qui valent à Melville ma gratitude et qui m'ont autorisé à ne pas craindre de baigner l'ensemble dans cette musique de J.S. Bach où la fatalité avance avec sa démarche légère et implacable.' Cocteau, 'Le Film des *Enfants terribles*' (typed manuscript signed and copied in French and English, box thirty, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

and forms an important part of the film's soundscape; in fact, it could be argued that it constitutes a more arresting feature than the music due to voice-over's particular effect on a spectator's perception. As described by Chion:

> in every audio mix, the presence of the human voice instantly sets up a hierarchy of perception […] the presence of a human voice structures the sonic space that contains it.[21]

Thus, during moments of voice-over, one prioritises Cocteau's voice automatically, and the music becomes a secondary aspect of the soundscape. Chion also points out that voice-overs create distance from what is happening on the screen. In the case of *Enfants*, this means that Cocteau's position as narrator places the audience at a step remove from the games and machinations of the *enfants*.[22] Despite its relentless rhythms, Baroque music might even be considered the ideal counterpoint to voice-over since its constancy of pace and style does not overpower Cocteau's words, and it becomes an extension of his authorial voice. In contrast to the sparse use of voice-over in *Parents* and *L'Aigle*, *Enfants* has over thirty-four separate instances of voice-over, making it the most prominent feature of the soundscape from the audience's perspective. It acts as a sonic 'enabler' of the adaptation, something that retains the 'novelistic' characteristic of third person narration. In this respect, the voice-over might be construed as an uncinematic feature of the film, but it is nonetheless highly effective. Indeed, the mediation of the action by Cocteau's voice takes on an even greater impact in the film when heard in combination with the music.

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[21] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 5.

[22] Chion, *Film: A Sound Art*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 106–107.

A pattern emerges on close study of the way in which music and voice-over are combined in *Enfants*. The voice-overs during most of the middle section of the film are not accompanied by any music: they are, however, accompanied by music in the early sequences for the snowball fight and during the description of the unusual shared bedroom, and then return much later, once Paul realises that he loves Agathe and Élisabeth plots to dispatch Agathe and Gérard. Music disappears for the voice-overs in the scenes of Agathe and Gérard's lunch with Paul and Élisabeth. It is used just once more, as though for maximum effect, as Paul lies on his deathbed and, through conversation with Agathe, Élisabeth's frightful machinations are revealed. The combined forces of the voice-over and music at the moments that lead to the eventual undoing of the siblings ensure their appearance as Cocteau's doubly powerful authorial voice. It is *his* voice that comments on the actions of the children, and it is *his* narrative that is spun out in the film until the final scenes of death and destruction.

A Baroque Underscore for a 1950s film

The choice of Baroque music for this film's whole underscore was unusual for the time although Michel Chion observes that, in the 1950s, films began to borrow increasingly from classical repertoires and he cites *Enfants* as one of the most overt examples of this.[23] The motivations for using classical music in film can be multiple. On a practical level, a director might wish to employ classical music because it is cheaper than commissioning a new score. Later in Hollywood, the possibility of increased soundtrack sales and greater advertising impact through use of a compiled score was deemed commercially attractive, and this had particularly positive effects on the popular music market. Although

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[23] *Ibid.*, 8.

it does not seem that there was any such active marketing strategy for *Enfants*,

Cocteau fondly recalled that the music by Bach, 'whose funereal joy accords

sublimely with the plot', was sought after in record shops in the wake of the

film's release and became synonymous with it:

> Shall I tell you a nice story? After the film came out, if anybody went to
> a gramophone shop to ask for a record of that concerto for four pianos,
> the shop assistant said: 'you mean the music of *Les Enfants terribles*?'[24]

Regardless of the nature of the pre-existing music used, it elicits a different

response from the audience than an originally composed score. Anahid

Kassabian describes how perceivers bring external associations into their

engagement with films and argues that compiled scores offer 'affiliating

identifications' whose 'ties depend on histories forged outside the film score'.[25]

The additional associations that listeners might have with pre-existing music

means that such music might also bring extra narrative weight to a film.[26] This

extra narrative weight can be attributed to the extra set of codes of meaning to be

interpreted when music that is bound up with a certain social context is inserted

into the codes of meaning of a film.[27]

It can be notoriously difficult to try to limit the meanings of Baroque

music in film, partially due to its perceived 'abstract' qualities.[28] Kassabian has

enumerated a few of the potential connotations of Baroque music as used in

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[24] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 79.

[25] Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (London: Routledge, 2001), 2.

[26] As Roger Hillmann puts it: 'The residue it brings to film in terms of context, historical or ideological associations, and pre-established emotional appeal makes it likely to carry more narrative weight than conventional film music.' *Unsettling Scores: German Film, Music, and Ideology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 10.

[27] Mike Cormack, 'The Pleasures of Ambiguity: Using Classical Music in Film', in *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, eds. Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 21.

[28] On the use of Bach's music in more recent films, see Carlo Cenciarelli, 'Bach and Film in the Later Twentieth Century: Listening to the *Goldberg Variations*' (PhD diss., King's College London, 2011).

films, including: 'intricacy, excess, ornamentation, restraint, calculation, lack of emotion'.[29] In his focus on classical music in film in his history of film music, Mervyn Cooke argues that Bach's music is:

> the most inherently abstract in conception of any classical style to have featured prominently in the movies, and thus perhaps the most susceptible to contrasting interpretations.[30]

Perceptions of Baroque music as having somehow abstract qualities flow from the very fabric of its composition; the Baroque compositional technique *par excellence*, the fugue, is developed according to very strict rules of repetition and transposition of a fixed theme. Yet, in her study of the meaning of classical music in film, Kassabian argues that even a Bach fugue can carry ideological markings.[31] Even though the pure musical codes of a fugue can sum up a sense of abstraction and calculation, the film at hand necessarily shapes any interpretation of Baroque music in film. Focusing on the choice of Baroque music for this particular film is interesting within the broader theme of adaptation, as one of the concertos used is itself an adaptation on multiple levels. It is *Bach*'s arrangement of Vivaldi's Concerto for Four Violins in B Minor for keyboards and, in a further adaptation, the arrangement heard in the film is played on pianos rather than harpsichords.[32]

The success of the Baroque music in conveying the film's drama might be attributed to its particular qualities. While the abstract quality of the concertos might suggest a limited ability to contribute to the narrative, in practice their overall impact complements the high drama of the film very well.

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[29] Kassabian, *Hearing Film*, 70.
[30] Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 448.
[31] Kassabian, *Hearing Film*, 28.
[32] The recording in question was conducted by Paul Bonneau and featured Jacqueline Bonneau, Andrée Collard, Geneviève Joy, and Elaine Richepin on pianos.

Vivaldi's concertos exemplify virtuosity as well as the highly energetic

moments alternating with lyrical moments that were central to the Baroque style.

Arguably, features of the Bach-Vivaldi concertos could be read as bringing the

key narrative tropes in *Enfants* under the spotlight, in the way that the authorial

voice does in the novel. Consider, for instance, the opening scenes of the film.

For a snowball fight outside Paul's school, the energy of the *Allegro* first

movement of Bach's Concerto in A Minor interweaves with the hectic action on

screen to create a sense of high adrenalin (fig. 8.1). In a manner similar to the

combination of music and image for the snowball fight in *Le Sang d'un poète*,

the music and the fight only halt when Paul is injured by a snowball and falls to

the ground.

Figure 8.1: *Les Enfants terribles*: The frenetic snowball fight at the Lycée.

The *Andante* second movement of Bach's Concerto in A Minor becomes

associated with steady movement: ex. 8.1 shows the dramatic opening chords of

the *Andante*, which accompany Paul's first sleepwalking scene (fig. 8.2), while

ex. 8.2 shows the second half of the piece with its continuous quaver rhythms, which accompanies both Paul's walk through the gallery in Michael's mansion and his second sleepwalking scene (fig. 8.3).

Figure 8.2: *Les Enfants terribles*: Pauls sleepwalks out of the shared bedroom.

Figure 8.3: *Les Enfants terribles*: Paul wanders through the gallery.

Example 8.1: Opening chords of *Andante*. Johann Sebastian Bach, Concerto in A Minor for Four Cembali and String Orchestra (London: Ernst Eulenberg, 1931). © SCHOTT MUSIC, Mainz - Germany. Reproduced by permission. All rights reserved.

Example 8.2: Arpeggios in the second half of the *Andante*. Johann Sebastian Bach, Concerto in A Minor for Four Cembali and String Orchestra (London: Ernst Eulenberg, 1931). © SCHOTT MUSIC, Mainz - Germany. Reproduced by permission. All rights reserved.

As a whole, the plot revolves around the complex relationships of the children

and is driven to its climax by Élisabeth's calculating and clinical response to

what she perceives to be the threat of Paul and Agathe's mutual affection. She

wastes no time reflecting on how to deal with the situation once their love has

been revealed. She simply acts with all of the drive and power that can be found in the Baroque music that accompanies her actions.

Baron Turk has perceived structural similarities between the intertwining and increasingly complex interrelationships of the characters and the polyphonic music.[33] Their relationships are worked out in a manner similar to that of a fugue and reach a final unified apotheosis in double death. He argues that the music acts as the voice of the abstract metaphysical force in the film, which determines their actions and fantasy. Baron Turk's recourse to a musical metaphor here brings to mind the early silent filmmakers's tendency to draw analogies between the operation of film and the operation of music. I would argue that the music can be interpreted in a more agential role as another facet of Cocteau's authorial voice in the film. Even though it seems that Melville chose the Baroque music, it appears that one of the roles played by music in the film is to communicate additional aspects of the narrative carried by Cocteau's authorial voice in the novel. The power of the music to communicate additional narrative information is clearest in the scenes where Élisabeth plots to eradicate the threat that Agathe might take Paul away.

Élisabeth confronts Agathe about her melancholy and learns that she loves Paul. Stunned, she promises to speak to Paul and leaves the room. Bach's *Allegro* first movement of the Concerto in A Minor begins, and Cocteau's voice-over outlines her feelings as she resolves to deal with the crisis (1:17:48). The music fades out when Élisabeth arrives to speak to Paul, who explains that he loves Agathe, and has written her a letter explaining how he feels (1:18:57). The *Andante* second movement of the concerto and voice-over begin again as

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[33] Baron Turk, 'The Film Adaptation of Cocteau's *Les Enfants terribles*', 29–30.

Élisabeth goes to find the letter and destroys it (1:21:16). Once again, the music

fades out when Élisabeth returns to Paul and lies to him about a romance

between Agathe and Gérard. She leaves Paul to complete her task, and the

second half of the *Andante* and voice-over return as she goes to see Gérard and

Agathe (1:25:14). She speaks to both of them without any musical or voice-over

accompaniment. The second half of the *Andante* re-enters with voice-over as

Élisabeth leaves, relieved (1:28:24). She witnesses Paul sleepwalking and goes

to wash her hands. It is worth contrasting this passage in the film with the

equivalent section in the novel to see how music enables the adaptation. At the

section where Agathe confesses her love for Paul to Élisabeth, the novel

contains the following account from the moment that Élisabeth leaves her friend

and walks down the stairs (fig. 8.4):

> Elisabeth went down one flight of stairs. She was wearing a bathrobe
> fastened around the waist by a necktie. It was too long and got in her
> way. But she was walking, not of her own volition but as if
> mechanically controlled, impelled to turn left, turn right, to open doors
> and close them with precision, without getting the hem of her bathrobe
> caught in her moving sandals. She felt that she had become a robot,
> wound up to go through certain gestures; unless it went on going through
> its paces it would fall to pieces. *Her heart thudded, heavy, dull, against
> her ribs, like an axe falling upon wood; there was a singing in her ears;
> her brain gave back no echo of her brisk forward march.* Dreams
> resound sometimes with footsteps, mindless, purposeful, like hers;
> dreams lend us a gait lighter than winged flight, a step able to combine
> the statue's weight of inorganic marble with the subaqueous freedom of a
> deep-sea diver.
>
> Hollow, leaden, buoyant, Elisabeth advanced along the corridor,
> her white wrap, billowing round her ankles, seeming to float her onward
> like a cloud: one of those foamy cloud-cushions devised by primitive
> painters to bear some Being of the angelic order. Only a faint humming
> persisted in her head; and in her breast nothing anymore but an axe
> thudding out its mortal strokes.
>
> *From this time onward she was never to look back. The genius of
> the Room informed her utterly. She was possessed by it, as men of action
> – sea-captains, say, or financiers – in moments of supreme emergency
> may suddenly become possessed, and know by inspiration what act, what
> word, what gesture will save their ships and fortunes from the rocks; or*

as a criminal, in a blinding flash of intuition, lights on the one, the
foolproof alibi certain to save him from the gallows.[34] [my emphasis]

Figure 8.4: *Les Enfants terribles*: Élisabeth walks mechanically downstairs.

The italicised phrases appear as voice-over in the film; however, the phrases that

do not appear in the film might be heard, as it were, in the Baroque music, which

seems to communicate that additional information about Élisabeth's mental state

and her resulting movements. She is described as driven forward, as if her

movements and direction were mechanically controlled. She feels like a robot

with a task to accomplish. The descriptions of her deliberate, light, mobile

movement down the hallways with a blank mind seem aptly communicated in

the film by the drive of the Baroque music. If her heart is beating like the

regular blows of an axe, then it is the regular and mechanical rhythms of the

Baroque music that help to communicate something of this to us. Later in the

scene, another voice-over, also taken directly from the novel, could be

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[34] Cocteau, *Les Enfants terribles*, trans. Rosamond Lehmann (London: Vintage, 2003), 98–99.

describing the music underscoring the action (fig. 8.5). Élisabeth has just left a distraught Paul to convince Gérard to marry Agathe, when Cocteau's voice-over tells us:

> There was work to be done. The killer's instinct told her to strike blow on blow and never stop to think. Night-spinning spider, dextrous, deliberate, she went on her way, drawing the thread relentlessly behind her, hanging it to the four corners of the night.[35]

Figure 8.5: *Les Enfants terribles*: Élisabeth weaves her web of lies.

In light of the voice-over, one might even extend this reading to hear the intricate development of the Baroque fugue as bearing a similarity to this description of Élisabeth spinning her poisonous web, and the abstract way that she carries out her actions.

The meanings and effect of the Baroque score are clearest when it is contrasted with the only non-Baroque music in the film: Michael's piano

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[35] *Ibid*., 106.

rendition of 'Were You Smiling at Me' by Melvyn Martin.[36] Here lyrics rather than musical structure add another degree of meaning to the film. It is possible that this popular-style song was a concession to Cocteau's desire for the inclusion of *Showboat*'s 'Make Believe' on piano. Michael provides the only diegetic music in the film when he sits down at the piano to sing and play a major key popular-style song to Élisabeth. In contrast to the mind games of the *enfants*, which operate through suppression of information, and are paralleled by the Baroque music they cannot hear, Michael's song spells out the whole situation in its lyrics:

Am I wrong? Can it be?
Was that last tender look meant for me?
I hold tight, am I right?
Were you smiling at me?
All aglow my face beams.
All my prayers, all my wishes, my dreams.
They are you, but is it true?
Were you smiling at me?
I'm to blame. I'm to shame.
For things that went wrong in the past.
Give romance one more chance,
and I know this time it will last.
There you go. There's that look.
Now you pass me by and close the book.
The chapter ends, the night ends too.
My world is gone and so are you.
I guess that all the time I really could see,
you were smiling at him and laughing at me.

It is unclear whether Michael is aware of the extent of the bond between Élisabeth and Paul, and he certainly couldn't be aware at this stage of the intensity of Élisabeth's affection for her brother. Michael's focus throughout the performance is on his fiancée; he even turns around to look at her as he sings 'Were you smiling at me?' for the second time and 'There's that look' (fig. 8.6).

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[36] In Claude Pinoteau's notebook for the film, held at the 'Fonds Pinoteau' at the Bibliothèque du Film, there is an indication for a Charleston for Élisabeth to dance, but this never made it into the final film.

Fig 8.6: *Les Enfants terribles*: Michael serenades Élisabeth: 'Were you smiling at me?'

Michael sings the lyrics clearly and deliberately while looking at Élisabeth, as though he intends Élisabeth to reflect on the significance of the words. The placement of the song, however, undermines reading Michael's performance as pointing to anything more than his affection for Élisabeth: he sings it immediately after asking Paul if he would like to live with them and, as the song concludes, he tells Élisabeth that he will cover Paul's expenses! It is never made clear whether Élisabeth understands the English lyrics, although she moves from watching him play to apparent reflection on his words and, in this, the music could be heard as functioning metadiegetically, offering access to her inner subjectivity and even communicating the truth of the situation, without the need for any words. The camera reinforces this impression as it moves steadily closer to Michael and Élisabeth as the song progresses, reaching its closest point to the characters on the words: 'I guess that all the time I really could see, you were

smiling at him and laughing at me.' It is impossible to assert any reading of this

scene with certainty; one can only say for sure that the lyrics carry extra

significance as a truthful commentary for the audience. In spite of Michael's

desire to marry Élisabeth, the song betrays the fact that he will always come

second to Paul in her affections. Michael's impending death could almost be

predicted by his association with a musical style so removed from the sonic

world of the *enfants*.

Returning to the question of why Cocteau might have tried to claim

responsibility of the film's soundscape, the success of the Baroque music in the

film is one likely answer. Cocteau came to admire the effect of the Bach-

Vivaldi, stating that the combination of Stéphane's acting and this music

elevated the tragedy beyond that of the book.[37] Had Cocteau's initial choice of

the song 'Make Believe' been honoured, it might even have had a detrimental

effect on the film. The song is based on the theme of fantasy and pretence

which certainly fits in with the theme of the film and the children's games of

make believe, but it has none of the gravitas of the Bach-Vivaldi music. The

music finally chosen for the film became such a central part of *Les Enfants*

terribles that the soundscape was an integral factor in the film's later influence

on the New Wave film-makers, and may also have encouraged Cocteau to create

a soundscape heavily made up of pre-existing classical music for his final film.

The New Wave film-makers frequently mentioned *Enfants* favourably and

Melville proudly recorded how Truffaut stated that he had seen the film twenty-

five times and knew not only the visuals very well, but also their accompanying

music. Claude Chabrol, too, admired the film so much that he asked Henri

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[37] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 133.

Decaë to repeat it in his work on the film *Les Cousins*.[38] Cocteau drew on

Baroque music once more in his film career, in *Le Testament d'Orphée*, and his

collaboration with Melville can be interpreted as a formative experience in

demonstrating the potential impact of pre-existing music in film, particularly

that of the classical canon.

The adaptation of *Enfants* may have proved more difficult for Cocteau

than *L'Aigle* and *Parents*, but the final result – particularly the soundscape – was

no poorer for this fact. Cocteau's characteristic experimental attitude became

more in evidence as he gained greater experience and familiarity with the

resources available, and this ultimately led to some disputes when he was

required to share the production processes with another director. Regardless of

whether or not the Baroque music was solely Melville's choice, its use in

Enfants, particularly in combination with Cocteau's voice-overs, imbues this

adaptation with a tragedy and monumentality beyond that of the text, and

sonically situates the film as a work of Coctelian poetry.

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[38] Melville, *Melville on Melville*, 47.

PART FOUR

Cocteau and Orpheus

CHAPTER NINE

Cocteau and Orpheus: Self-Reflection Through Sound

Cocteau always had a fascination with Greek mythology and pursued something of a mission to revitalise the status of these ancient tales from a school-day topic to living works of art. Antigone, Elektra, Oedipus and Orpheus all recur in his work, though none appears more frequently than the last. The character of Orpheus was an important presence in his poetics, while his films *Orphée* (1950) and *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960) represent very personal engagements with classical myth. The choice of the Orpheus theme for these films establishes Cocteau's work within a wider network of associations and demonstrates a continued preoccupation with themes that were present from his very first film. Indeed, François Truffaut recognised *Testament* as another remake of *Le Sang d'un poète*: it was 'the very same essay on poetic creation looked at afresh and revised'.[1] Although spanning three decades, many film historians group *Sang*, *Orphée*, and *Testament* together to form the Orphic trilogy. Thematically, this makes sense and, in writing about his development as a film-maker, Cocteau employed musical metaphors to link *Sang* and *Orphée*, describing the latter as:

> an orchestration made twenty years later, of the theme which in *Le Sang d'un poète* was clumsily played with one finger.[2]

More relevant for this thesis, Cocteau's poetic engagement with sound led him to link the films of his Orphic trilogy sonically. In this chapter, I explore sonic connections between the films, and by engaging with existing interpretations of Orpheus in the story of cinema and opera, I argue that it provided Cocteau with an ideal vehicle to link his most autobiographical films thematically and

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[1] François Truffaut, *The Films in my Life*, trans. Leonard Mayhew (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978), 205.

[2] Jean Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film: A Conversation with André Fraigneau*, trans. Vera Traill (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1954), 36.

sonically. Given that the myth centres on the gap between sight and sound, which is intrinsic to cinema, I approach Cocteau's use of the Orpheus theme and the resulting arrangement of the soundscape as a reflection upon the relationship between image and sound in film. Furthermore, Cocteau's confidence in handling a wide range of sonic materials is very clear in these films; *Testament* includes almost every possibility for combining images with sounds that was known to him by then, for instance. His creativity with music and sound suggests points of contact with the New Wave and *musique concrète* practices outlined in chapter one, while his very personal efforts in designing the complete sonic environments of these self-reflexive soundscapes reflect those of a proto-sound designer.

"Toujours cet Orphée!" (Cocteau, *Le Testament d'Orphée*)

Cocteau's decision to base his final films on the character of Orpheus reflects the intertwining of poetry and music in his aesthetics of poetry. Indeed, given Cocteau's insistence that all of his artistic endeavours amounted to a species of poetry, he must have found the closeness with which music and poetry were allied in Greek mythology very appealing. The Orpheus myth was first widely transmitted through the work of Ovid and Virgil, and its popularity in art has fluctuated throughout history. The Renaissance included a massive revival of ancient learning and, in later years, Orpheus would inspire poets such as John Dryden and John Milton. The modern revival of Orpheus began with the Romantics, was carried on by the Symbolists, and attained increased popularity with the work of Rainer Maria Rilke in the early twentieth century. This is

when Cocteau's career was really gathering momentum.[3] Music has been

particularly receptive to the myth and the story of Orpheus is as old as music

itself in the collective imagination. As Harrison Birtwistle has stated, 'there is

something absolutely fundamental about Orpheus – the subject matter is music,

it's about the birth of music'.[4] Numerous scholars have reflected upon the

nature of meaning in music with reference to the Orpheus story and the history

of music is saturated with compositions inspired by or staging the myth.[5]

Orpheus is the son of the muse of epic poetry Calliope and either Apollo

or King Oiagros of Thrace.[6] Apollo teaches him the art of lyre playing, and as a

musician Orpheus becomes famous throughout the ancient world for his power

to enchant anyone or anything that hears him play. He marries Eurydice, who

dies from a snakebite while fleeing from the advances of Aristaios. Orpheus

descends into the underworld to rescue her and entrances its inhabitants,

Cerberus, Charon, Pluto, Persephone, and the three judges of the dead, so that

they grant him permission to lead his wife back to the world of the living

provided that he does not look at her until they leave Hades. Orpheus does not

keep this condition, turns around, and Eurydice immediately vanishes forever.

An infuriated mob of Thracian women tear Orpheus to pieces. His head floats

down the river Hebros into the sea and on to Lesbos, where it is buried and

becomes the centre of an oracular cult.

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[3] See Walter A. Strauss, 'Jean Cocteau: The Difficulty of Being Orpheus', in *Bucknell Review: Reviewing Orpheus: Essays on the Cinema and Art of Jean Cocteau*, ed. Cornelia A. Tsakiridou (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1997), 27–41.
[4] Quoted in Jonathan Cross, *The Mask of Orpheus* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 3.
[5] Cross lists some of the composers who were inspired by the story, including Monteverdi, Charpentier, Lully, Gluck, Haydn, Offenbach, Milhaud among others. *Ibid*., 8.
[6] I have drawn on *Orphée: Jean Cocteau: The Play and the Film*, ed. Edward Freeman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1976), xix–xx.

Cocteau first engaged with representation of this myth in his play *Orphée*, which was performed at the Théâtre des Arts on 17 June 1926. The play calls for little music although in the *Notes de mise en scène*, he gives the following directions for the scene where Orpheus is attacked:

> Three musicians are sufficient for the arrival of the Bacchantes. One man: drum and cymbal. Another: jazz drum. A third: timpani. The rhythm should arouse anxiety, resembling the savages' tam-tam. After the third: Mesdames! from Orpheus, the drums make a terrible noise. One hears the broken windows, something heavy that falls and a chair falls over.[7]

The specification of drums might have been motivated by the original myth in which the Bacchantes succeed in killing Orpheus because their drums and flutes drown out the sound of his voice.[8] However, there are other indications for sound effects within the text; most of them include the drum roll to indicate a feeling of impending doom. For example, at the end of Scene V, when Eurydice realises she has been poisoned, there is an indication for 'muted drum rolls and syncopations that accompany the entirety of the following scene'.[9] Orpheus repeatedly comments on the sound of the approaching drums in the last scene where he is alive, until the drums drown out the sound of all voices. The percussion instruments thus draw attention to the power of Orpheus's voice and increase a sense of tension by highlighting the risk when it is covered up, which accords with the importance of sound in the original myth.

Cocteau's requirement for percussion instruments to drown out Orpheus's voice was repeated in the film *Orphée* where the arrival of the

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[7] 'Trois musiciens suffisent pour l'arrivée des Bacchantes. Un homme: tambour et cymbale. Un autre: caisse de jazz. Un troisième: timbales. Le rythme doivent angoisser, ressembler un tam-tam des sauvages. Après le troisième: *Mesdames!* D'Orphée, les tambours font un bruit terrible. On entend des vitres brisées, une chose lourde qui tombe et une chaise qui se renverse'. 'Notes de Mise en Scène', in *Ibid*., 8.

[8] Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 2.

[9] 'Roulements et syncopes de tambour qui accompagne en sourdine toute la scène suivante'. 'Notes de Mise en Scène', in *Orphée*, ed. Freeman, 8.

Bacchantes is signalled to Orpheus by drumming. The film was able to exploit sonic possibilities that were unfeasible in the theatre, and this encouraged greater creativity in developing the soundscape. Cocteau's *Orphée* is a modern retelling of the ancient tale with twists based on his personal poetics. His company, Les Films du Palais-Royal, made the film between September and November 1949 at the Studio Francoeur, the Vallée de Chevreuse and the ruins of the Saint-Cyr military academy near Paris. The narrative follows the jaded poet Orpheus (Jean Marais), disliked by the younger generation who are crazy about the work of another poet, Cégeste (Edouard Dermit). The Princess (Maria Casarès), an emissary of Death, falls in love with Orpheus and takes him on a journey after he witnesses the death of Cégeste. After he has been returned home to his wife Eurydice (Marie Déa) by the chauffeur Heurtebise (François Périer), the Princess plots to have Eurydice killed. Heurtebise, who has fallen in love with Eurydice, breaks the bad news to Orpheus and explains that they may be able to rescue her if they journey into the underworld. Using a mirror as a portal, they travel through the Zone and arrive at a trial, where the Princess is held to account. The judges rule that Eurydice may be allowed to return home provided that Orpheus does not look at her. The situation soon becomes unliveable and Eurydice is returned to the underworld when Orpheus glimpses her in the car's rear-view mirror. He rushes outside to be greeted by Aglaonice (Juliette Gréco) and the Bacchantes who hold him responsible for the death of Cégeste. In the ensuing tussle he is killed, and is thus reunited with the Princess. She realises that she and Heurtebise must sacrifice themselves to return Orpheus and Eurydice to their happy marriage. This comes to pass and the couple are

returned home, unaware of their contact with the underworld, while the Princess and Heurtebise are led away to be punished by unknown forces.

Cocteau engaged with Orpheus again in *Testament*, although this time the narrative was of his own making. He summed up his aim in making the film in the introductory voice over:

> The privilege of the cinematograph is that it allows a large number of people to dream together the same dream and to show, in addition, with the rigour of realism, the fantasies of unreality. In short it's an admirable vehicle for poetry. My film is nothing other than a screening of a striptease consisting of removing my body little by little and revealing my totally naked soul. For there exists a considerable public in the shadow avid for that which is more real than real which will be one day a sign of our era. Here is the legacy of a poet to the successive generations of young people who have always supported him.[10]

Despite his fame, Cocteau found it difficult to obtain financial support for *Testament* and the low budget necessitated meticulous planning in advance of the filming. Shooting was rapid and took place between September and October 1959 at the Studios de la Victorine in Nice and Franstudio in Paris, with exterior shots filmed at the Villa Santo-Sospir, Villefranche and Baux-de-Provence.[11] In *Testament* the poet (played by Cocteau as himself) is trapped in space-time and trying to break free. His fate is intertwined with that of a professor (Henri Crémieux) who discovers the means by which he can escape from this limbo. Once freed, the poet wanders through space-time, encountering his friends, characters, and works of art: his tapestry of Judith and Holofernes, his friend Francine Weisweiller, and the horseman from the play *Orphée*, for instance.

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[10] 'Le privilège du cinématographe c'est qu'il permet à un grand nombre de personnes de rêver ensemble le même rêve et de montrer, en outre, avec la rigueur du réalisme, les phantasmes de l'irréalité. Bref c'est un admirable véhicule de poésie. Mon film n'est pas autre chose qu'une séance de striptease consistant à ôter peu à peu mon corps et à montrer mon âme toute nue. Car il existe un considérable public de l'ombre pas famer de ce plus vrai de la vrai qui sera un jour le signe de notre époque. Voici le lègue d'une poète aux jeunesses successives ils l'ont toujours soutenue.'

[11] James S. Williams, *French Film Directors: Jean Cocteau* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 93.

Cégeste from *Orphée* reappears in *Testament* to guide him to the goddess Minerva, and he is identified as the poet's adopted son in real life. The Princess and Heurtebise also reappear in the film to judge the poet in a mock trial. Cégeste brings the film to a close when he declares that the poet is not of this world and they disappear. The final shots include young people in a speeding Cadillac blaring out jazz and being pursued by the police.[12] *Testament* is a highly self-reflexive film and since it begins with the closing shots of *Orphée* in a silent film style, the entire film might be viewed as a bridge between cinema at the start of Cocteau's career and the new directions that were being developed during his later years.

Cocteau's concern for the soundscapes of these Orphic films is bound up with the importance he attributed to the myth in representing his poetic ideals. As noted in part two, the cycle of death and rebirth as a prerequisite for poetic glory was central to Cocteau's aesthetics, making the Orpheus myth an ideal vehicle for his concerns. Secondly, the ability of the poetic voice to continue after death is a strong motif in both films. Cocteau's Orpheus is a character who charms through the aural sense and his voice continues in spite of his murder, as does the poetic voice after physical death. The plot also makes it clear that one's own poetic voice is always best; Orpheus is murdered because he steals another poet's verses, and this is unsustainable. Thirdly, Cocteau made no secret of his theory that an artist will always produce a work of art reflective of himself or herself. This is made explicit in *Testament* when Cégeste challenges the poet to paint a portrait and he reproduces a picture of himself. As described by James S.

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[12] James S. Williams observes that these final scenes can be interpreted as a nod of approval to the young directors of New Wave cinema (it is worth noting that Truffaut donated the international profits to the production of Cocteau's film). *Ibid*., 106–107.

Williams, *Testament* is 'a portrait of the artist as Orpheus'.[13] The extent to

which *Orphée* reflected Cocteau's personal poetics is outlined in Cocteau's

letter to his translator Mary Hoeck. He explained:

> It is much less a film than it is myself - a kind of projection of the things that are important to me.[14]

Editing Sound, Constructing Orpheus: The Soundscapes of *Orphée* and *Le Testament d'Orphée*

Given Cocteau's use of the Orpheus myth to present his personal poetics, it is

unsurprising that his arrangement of the film soundscapes was a very personal

effort. It was noted in chapter one that his approach to arranging music and

sound in *Orphée* anticipated the work of New Wave directors.[15] Cocteau

heavily edited the sonic materials in *Orphée* in an approach that seems almost

Godardian, and later recalled:

> I took the most irreverent liberties with the composer. I recorded Auric's music without the images (to a chronometer) and for example put the scherzo he had composed for the comic homecoming scene into the chase through the deserted house. Or, even better, I recorded Eurydice's lament, by Gluck, meaning to use it only for the wireless in the cottage. But when I cut into Auric's music at the first shot of Heurtebise's entrance, I noticed that the first and last note of Gluck's music fitted exactly with the first and last images of the scene, and I shamelessly took advantage of that little miracle.[16]

In fact, Cocteau declared that the success of the film was due to a combination

of factors:

> its implacable action, its nobility, its comic and tragic phrases, because of a simple and human language, because of the splendour of Nicholas Hayer's images, the music of Georges Auric and Gluck.[17]

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[13] *Ibid*., 94.

[14] Quoted in Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1970), 479.

[15] Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 316–317

[16] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 73–74.

[17] 'Son action implacable, de sa noblesse, de ses phrases tragiques et comiques, à cause d'une langue simple et humaine, à cause de la splendeur des images de Nicolas Hayer, de la musique de Georges Auric et de Gluck.' Cocteau (autograph manuscript no. six, unsigned and undated, box twenty-eight, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

He also ascribed much of the film's success to the editing and used the analogy of the fugue again to describe this.[18] The editing of music and images together, including the cutting of Auric's music to accommodate the borrowings from Gluck, was apparently Cocteau's work. Auric's score is arranged for a symphony orchestra with three extra saxophones (soprano, alto, tenor), cor anglais, contrabassoon, celesta, vibraphone, glockenspiel, xylophone, two harps, and a large percussion section.[19] The conductor Adriano Martinolli D'Arcy reassembled the cues as comprehensively as possible; based on an examination of Auric's manuscripts, he states that the film contains about one third less music than Auric composed for it. He suggests that the relationship between director and composer was similar to that of *Les Parents terribles*, where Auric composed music for unspecified sequences, leaving the choice to Cocteau in the editing room.[20] Francis Steegmuller observes that Cocteau changed the position of the themes from Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* 'that Auric had inserted' in the score, as they produced what Cocteau termed 'syncopation'.[21] Although it was initially Auric's idea to draw on Gluck, Cocteau's subsequent editing determined how and where the excerpts should be used. My reading of his autograph découpage (shooting script) supports this interpretation, as the appearances of Gluck's music seem to have been part of the planning process for

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[18] 'La plus parfaite réussite de cette œuvre exceptionnelle me paraît consister en cette juxtaposition de plans différents, cette façon dont les scènes sont conçues et jouées, à la fois, si l'on peut dire, au propre et au figuré, dans le concret et l'abstrait, le visible et l'invisible, l'exotérique et l'ésotérique, chaque plan demeurant pourtant, clair et accessible, comme les voix d'une fugue qui, sous les mains d'un maître-musicien, évoluent indépendamment, formant chacune un tout parfait, cependant qu'elles se rejoignant en accords d'une admirable plénitude.' Cocteau, *Orphée* (typed manuscript, April 1950, box twenty-eight, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

[19] Adriano Martinolli D'Arcy, Sleevenotes to Georges Auric, *The Classic Film Music of Georges Auric*, vol. 2, with the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Adriano, Marco Polo 8.225066, 1998, compact disc.

[20] *Ibid*.

[21] Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 481.

the film.[22] Scenes that required music were flagged up from the outset, such as

the household scenes between Eurydice and Heurtebise, music for the Zone, the

bedroom scene between Death and Orpheus, the second scene between Eurydice

and Heurtebise, the arrival of the Bacchantes, and the second trip to the Zone.[23]

Cocteau involved himself in technically demanding preparation in

handling sound for *Orphée*. He used a drumming solo by Gene Krupa for

scenes with the Bacchantes but switched to the drums from Katherine Dunham's

dance troupe for the scenes after Orpheus has been killed. Cocteau made a

record of Dunham's ensemble and superimposed it on the final orchestral music

of *Orphée*, occasionally cutting the orchestra to leave percussion alone.[24] He

altered sound to heighten the impact of key moments, such as the traversing of

the mirror into the zone. He explained that they used the entire range of the

actual sound, but without the initial shock, keeping only the prolongation of the

waves.[25] He was not averse to manipulating the dialogue to achieve a desired

effect. He filmed the scene where the dead Cégeste stands up in front of the

Princess in reverse and slow motion, once with a close-up on Casarès and then

again with one on Dermit. He preferred Dermit's voice in the Casarès shots and

so put the dialogue of these with the close-up of his face, making them

synchronise with his lip movements. Silence too remained an important aspect

of the soundscape although it was always constructed, as had been the case in

Belle.

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[22] Cocteau, *Orphée* 'Découpage de Scènes' (autograph manuscript, box twenty-eight, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

[23] *Orphée* 'Typed Découpage' (typed with manuscript corrections, undated, the cover page has Cocteau, *Orphée* Film, Photographies de Roger Corbeau and quotes 'Vous cherchez trop à comprendre ce qui se passé, cher monsieur. C'est un grave défaut.' (Box twenty-eight, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

[24] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 74.

[25] *Ibid.*, 110.

A cut in the sound would make a hole that is not silence. What you *heard* was real silence, and I insist on the word 'heard' because an attentive ear can detect the thousand and one imperceptible sounds of which silence is composed.[26]

Despite close thematic connections, there are key differences between *Orphée* and *Testament*'s soundscapes, most obviously that the former employs an especially composed score while the latter is largely made up of pre-existing music. Cocteau wished to organise the music alone in *Testament* and continued to experiment with sound editing; as mentioned in chapter one, he recorded Cégeste's speech backwards for a scene where the images had also been recorded backwards. Here, Cégeste tries to force Cocteau to visit Minerva and the result is that all significance is removed from the words: we hear Cégeste's voice as pure sound. Cocteau also employed the real world sound of an aeroplane with the shot of Minerva killing the poet (fig. 9.1).

Figure 9.1: *Le Testament d'Orphée*: Minerva launches her spear

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[26] *Ibid*., 108.

Truffaut cited this combination as a stroke of genius:

> the great moment of joy for the director took place, I'd think, in the editing room, when Cocteau was able to see the flying spear accompanied by the screech of the jet. The quality of this joining of sound and image should have set to rest any doubts he had about the emotional power of the scene.[27]

If one views these manipulations of sound as akin to *musique concrète* practices, it is interesting to note that Schaeffer in turn was influenced by cinema in his composition and actually invoked Cocteau's *Orphée* when he prepared a *musique concrète* opera on the Orpheus theme in 1951. He claimed that his inspiration for *Orphée 51* (which became *Orphée 53*) was cinematic:

> 7 April 1951. First ideas. Or in the language of cinema, gags: the tearing of Orpheus's veil, an excessively slow tearing from which is born a noise that constitutes the principal component of one of the sequences. I first place it at the beginning and then reserve it for the end.[28]

Schaeffer aimed to mix the sounds of a traditional orchestra with concrete sounds, and he worked with a number of fragments that provided raw material for further transformations.[29] He mentioned Cocteau's handling of the gaze moment in his film, and described its framing as an accident that surprises Orpheus himself; this ties in with Schaeffer's own interpretation of the myth, a belief that the metaphysical intrigue implies a fatal accident or the malice of the gods.[30] He also praised Maria Casarès who played Death in Cocteau's *Orphée* as an ideal actress to cast opposite a contralto Orpheus in an operatic production.[31] All this implies a respect for Cocteau's film even though *Orphée 53* is quite a different representation of the myth. Schaeffer's purely sonic work

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[27] Truffaut, *The Films in my Life*, 208.
[28] 'D'abord des idées. Ou, en langage de cinéma, des gags: le déchirement du voile d'Orphée, déchirement excessivement lent d'où naît un bruit qui constitue la composante principale d'une des séquences. Je le situe d'abord au début, puis le réserve pour la fin.' 7 April 1951, Pierre Schaeffer, *À la recherché d'une musique concrète* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil,1952), 89.
[29] 19 April 1951, *Ibid*, 94.
[30] 15 May 1951, *Ibid*., 105.
[31] 4 April 1951, *Ibid*., 89.

mixes traditional elements of French opera, such as airs, trios and ballet, with an *orchestre concret*.[32]

The Orpheus narrative may have influenced some of Cocteau's editing as he designed the soundscape to set the images in relief using music, rather than maintaining music as an unobtrusive subordinate to the image. His primary concern in the film was to prevent the images from flowing, to oppose them to each other, and to join them without destroying their 'relief'. By relief, he meant the effect achieved by the cinematic syntax when images stand out from each other, instead of seamlessly flowing from one to the next. As Francis Ramirez and Christian Rolot note, the sound was able to shift the image forward and intensify its edges.[33] Arguably, sound also creates relief in the Orpheus myth as it is Orpheus's voice that charms the creatures of the Underworld; the sonic momentarily overcomes the visual, and elevates Orpheus, setting him apart, if only for a brief period of time. This desire to set images in relief resonates with that of later sound designers. Walter Murch summarises the role of the desired tension between sound and image:

> If you produce a sound that has no creative tension, which simply reproduces what we are looking at, it adds something, but it doesn't add very much because you are not soliciting the imagination of the viewer.[34]

He explains that the result of creating a tension between sound and image is that it elicits an image or sensation from the audience that is not on the screen. Such an attitude accords with Cocteau's desire for the spectator to create his/her own meanings out of the films with which they are presented. For instance, in the scene in which the Princess takes Orpheus to her chalet, at the point where they

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[32] *Ibid*., 110.

[33] Francis Ramirez and Christian Rolot, *Jean Cocteau: L'Oeil architecte* (Paris: ACR Éditions Internationale, 2000), 181.

[34] Gustavo Constantini, *Walter Murch Interviewed by Gustavo Constantini*, *The Soundtrack* 3, no. 1 (2010): 36.

arrive at the railway tracks that must be crossed to enter the Underworld, the shrill whistle of a steam train is heard and, once the train passes, the road ahead is seen in negative. There is a humming noise accompanied by the detuned radio sound, which sets the images in an entirely different context. The car is no longer on a quiet French country road but has traversed into the supernatural realm, where the humming and white noise of the radio suggest clairvoyant activity.

Cocteau was by now very confident in his ability to manipulate sounds, music, and silence in the creation of his soundscapes and his work was moving closer to the experimental and rather free New Wave treatment of sound in this respect. This is abundantly clear if one contrasts the sound editing work for *Orphée* with that for *Sang*. Although Cocteau suggested in interview with Fraigneau in 1951 that he had been practising accidental synchronisation since *Sang*, his experimental editing of *Orphée* has a rather different effect to the accidental synchronisation in *Sang*.[35] By contrast, as Mervyn Cooke notes, features such as the recapitulation of the Zone music at the appropriate narrative moment weakens any sense of accidental synchronisation in operation in *Orphée*.[36] In interview with Fraigneau, Cocteau admitted that he was aware that Auric might have been displeased that his music was tampered with in *Orphée* but that he later heard the composer say on radio that he approved of what had been done, recognising that the director's cuts added force and presence to his music.[37]

In the case of *Testament*, Cocteau incorporated almost every possible option for the accompaniment of sound with images that was known to him:

[35] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 73.
[36] Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 317.
[37] Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 74.

silent montage, voice-over, diegetic music, nondiegetic music, classical

borrowings, popular music borrowings, self-borrowings of music from his

previous films, and music composed especially for the film. The high

proportion of pre-existing music used in *Testament* enabled Cocteau to organise

and edit the sound himself as much as possible. Cocteau developed ideas about

how music might be used before he contacted Auric, and seems to have been

unsure whether the composer would even want to be involved given the fixity of

his ideas and his initial decision not to credit his collaborators.

> 21 September 1959
>
> I must tell you why I have not, as I usually do, called on your friendly
> genius. The film, although it resembles *Sang*, is of a totally different
> type. It demands silence, sound effects, famous allusions (for example to
> Yseult) "Tristan's horn" etc…
>
> The opening titles will be without doubt on the final images of *Orphée*.
> There, it would be agreed perhaps, instead of using the music from the
> end of the film, to replace it with an overture of trumpets and drums. But
> the film will be produced without the names of actors and collaborators,
> and I do not dare to offer you an uncredited participation (of the sort
> taken by Yul, Jeannot, Picasso etc…) Each one appears for a minute.
> Tell me what you think. In case you accept, it would be necessary to
> compose a sort of overture theme which would remain in the ears like the
> work's sign.[38]

Auric did agree to collaborate but his decision did not cause Cocteau to cease his

reflections on the choice and arrangement of musical excerpts in the soundscape.

He wrote again.

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[38] 'Il faut que je te dise pourquoi je n'ai pas, comme de coutume, fait appel à ton génie amical. Le film, bien qu'il s'apparente au *Sang* est d'un tout autre ordre. Il exige du silence, des bruits, des allusions célèbres (par exemple à Yseult) ' le cor de Tristan'… La générique sera sans doute sur les dernières images d'Orphée. Là, il conviendrait peut-être, au lieu d'employer la musique de la fin du film, de la remplacer par une ouverture de trompettes et de caisses. Mais le film passera sans noms d'acteurs et de collaborateurs [Cocteau renoncera finalement à cette idée. La collaboration de l'ami musicien figure ainsi au générique: "Indicatif musical et trompettes de Georges Auric".], et je n'ose t'offrir une participation ingrate (du genre il est vrai de celles de Yul, de Jeannot, de Picasso, etc…). Chacun apparaît une minute. Dis-moi ce que tu penses. Au cas où tu accepterais, il faudrait inventer une sorte de thème d'ouverture qui resterait dans les oreilles comme le signe de l'oeuvre.' Pierre Caizergues, *Georges Auric: Correspondance: Jean Cocteau* (Montpellier: Centre d'Étude du XXe Siècle, Université Paul Valéry, 1999), 138.

December 1959

> My Georges
> I have finished the placement of the music. As this film does what it pleases, I was lucky with an obligatory cut of *Orphée*'s soundtrack, to stumble exactly upon the two great phrases of *Le Sang d'un poète*. […] I found the trumpets too beautiful not to use in the body of the film. I put them on Minerva and on the tapestry. I believe that all in all it is beautiful and you will be satisfied.[39]

The correspondence elucidates the degree to which Cocteau respected Auric's contribution to the film but also the fact that he himself was ultimately responsible for the placement of the music in the soundscape. I would argue that his desire to have such a high degree of control over sonic matters was closely connected with the extent to which *Testament* was a chance for him to present himself as he would like to be remembered.

Cocteau Sonically Situates Himself in the Canon

Cocteau was no stranger to the classical canon, but in *Testament* one of the striking aspects of the soundscape is the fact that, amidst its highly creative exploration of all possible sonic techniques available, he relies significantly on classical music borrowings. Indeed, this sets *Testament* apart from the rest of his oeuvre. I would argue that this reliance was due to two factors: firstly, he could work with relative autonomy on pre-existing music, without requiring a composer to prepare a special score; secondly, he may have wished to situate his last work, his testament, as part of the canon of art, making canonical music the obvious choice. There is some biographical evidence to support the second

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[39] 'Déc 1959
Mon Georges,
J'ai terminé l'emplacement des musiques. Comme ce film n'en fait qu'à sa tête, j'ai eu la chance avec une coupe obligatoire de la bande *Orphée*, de tomber juste sur les deux grandes phrases du *Sang d'un Poète*. […]
J'ai trouvé les trompettes trop belles pour ne pas les employer dans le corps du film. Je les ai mises sur Minerve et sur la tapisserie. Je crois que dans l'ensemble c'est beau et que tu sera content.' *Ibid.*, 140.

hypothesis. In the decade between *Orphée* (1950) and *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960), Cocteau received numerous official honours, including acceptance into the Académie Française in 1954, a significant mark of reception into the French literary canon and the Chair of French language and literature at the Belgian Royal Academy in 1955.[40] Williams has noted that Cocteau actively campaigned to join the Académie Française and that there was a striking paradox in his acceptance speech on his induction in late October 1955, since he accepted the honour on behalf of all *poètes maudits,* despite the definite placement of poets such as Charles Baudelaire and André Gide outside the academy (Baudelaire withdrew his interest and Gide never applied in the first place). Even though Cocteau apparently told Auric at the reception that he only made such a statement to make the composer laugh, he was eager to be made an Academician.[41] The following year he also accepted an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Oxford University. Cocteau seems to have been pleased to be situated as part of the French canon and it is possible that this desire shaped his sonic choices in his films of this period. The personal desire to be situated in the canon of art can be nuanced further with *Testament*'s plot in mind. The poet is lost in space-time, just as the canon of great artists and works are suspended in cultural and artistic history. Cocteau's choices of classical music, mostly quite canonical music, and his attempt to situate himself among the canonical greats, who are also suspended in space and time, prove apt parallels with the narrative theme of this semi-autobiographical, overtly 'testament' film.

Canons are socially constructed and exert great social power, as Marcia Citron argues. She observes that the concept of canon is characterised by ideas

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[40] James S. Williams, *Jean Cocteau* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 220.
[41] *Ibid*., 222.

of quality, timelessness and exclusivity.[42] Furthermore, canons create 'a

narrative of the past and a template for the future'.[43] In choosing a range of

repertoire from the classical canon and in giving such prominence to Gluck's

Orphée et Euridice in his soundscapes to both *Orphée* and *Testament*, Cocteau

could sonically support the situation of his films in the canon. *Testament*

employs a range of excerpts from canonical composers including Gluck's

Orphée et Eurydice as found in *Orphée*, the horn solo from Act III of Wagner's

Tristan, Handel, and the Menuet and Badinerie from Bach's Orchestral Suite

No. 2 in B minor, BWV 1067 arranged by Jacques Métehen. Cocteau reflected

on the role of music in the film from the early planning stages, as is evident in a

spiral notebook, dated 31 January 1958, in which he noted his ideas on the

developing film.[44] On the last page he compiled the following list of music,

including several references to canonical composers:

Musiques du film:

Rossini: Ouverture du Cendrillon
          Le Boutique Fantastique
          Tarantelle

Boccherini: Quintet in C majeur: for strings
                      et
              Pastorale opus 37

Beethoven: Concerto No. 1 en ut majeur

J.S. Bach: Menuet et Badinerie
          Suite No. 2 en B mineur

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[42] Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 9 and 15.
[43] *Ibid*., 1.
[44] Cocteau, sketchbook for *Le Testament d'Orphée* (spiral notebook, dated 31 May 1958, box thirty-one, Fonds Jean Cocteau, BHVP, accessed November 2010).

To one side of the list he wrote 'Mozart ?', 'et jazz tambour', and 'Flamenco des Gitanes'. These musical choices appear again at the back of the 1958–59 typed screenplay, with directions about sound effects and percussion ('ordre de bruitage et des tambours') and Signor Bruscino ('Génerique') at the top of the list. Throughout the various versions of the découpage (shooting script), the repertoire on this list recurs, but the placement of the music varies. For example, in one typed version, at the moment the poet pretends to be dead there is an indication for *chants et musiques du flamenco*; in other versions this is replaced by *tambours ou le Procisio de Seville*. Furthermore, the point at which Bach's Suite no. 2 in B Minor gives way to the gypsy music is not always clear. There is no Handel mentioned in the repertoire list even though the first movement of his Concerto Grosso in A Minor, opus 6 no. 4 recurs throughout the film, and Rossini did not make the final cut at all. This mixture of repertoire neatly parallels the mixture of narrative themes in the film. As noted, the plot focuses on Cocteau leading the audience through a mixture of his works and scenes that convey his core artistic preoccupations and the music reflects this variety. As seems to have been the case with several of his earlier films, he appears to have decided on the repertoire for the film rather early on and later made modifications to it; the repetition of this repertoire throughout the production papers suggests that Cocteau's reflection on the film's music was an ongoing process as the film developed.

If we analyse the final cut of the film for where Cocteau finally placed his chosen classical music excerpts, we notice that most of the scenes are spotted with music according to narrative thematic matching. Thus, the horn solo from *Tristan* is used for the scene in the film where the poet and Cégeste encounter

Isolde. In another scene from the film, Bach's Minuet and Badinerie, *musique savante* of the most elevated kind, accompanies the poet, dressed in his Oxford gown, attempting to painstakingly reconstruct a decimated hibiscus (fig. 9.2).

Figure 9.2: *Le Testament d'Orphée*: Cocteau prepares to reconstruct the hibiscus flower.

Boccherini accompanies two men pretending to be a dog, racing through the garden of Weisweiller, who plays a woman 'out of time'. This dog is reminiscent of the Egyptian God Anubis and its accompaniment by music disconnected from the 1960s further reinforces that the Countess, and indeed the poet and Cégeste, are all wandering lost in space-time throughout the film. Following the trial by the Princess and Heurtebise from *Orphée*, the *Complainte Eurydice* is heard, in an explicit reference to both the opera and the earlier film, as Heurtebise explains that Orpheus's survival at the end of *Orphée* was simply an illusion and Eurydice went back to hell. This sonic connection with *Orphée*

emphasises the narrative connection between the characters who appear in both films and the association between these characters and classical music.

In contrast, the use of popular music in *Orphée* and *Testament* is associated with twentieth-century youth culture. The young poets and musicians at the Café des poètes in *Orphée* are accompanied by guitar strumming and piano music (ragtime and boogie woogie). The intellectual lovers in *Testament* as well as the joy riders are accompanied by bursts of piano jazz by Martial Solal.[45] By the late 1950s, jazz would come to be associated with juvenile delinquency in both Hollywood and European cinema, for example in films such as Laslo Benedek's *The Wild One* (1953) and Godard's *À bout de souffle* (1959).[46] Within French culture, young engaged writers certainly aligned themselves with jazz and blues.

Figure 9.3: *Orphée*: Aglaonice arrives at the Café des Poètes.

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[45] Martial Solal also composed the score for Godard's *À bout de souffle*, and another musical link can thus be perceived between *Testament* and the New Wave film directors.
[46] Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 73.

It is notable that the music changes from guitar strumming to a boogie-woogie melody on piano when Aglaonice first appears onscreen (fig. 9.3). Gréco, who played Aglaonice, was one of the biggest stars of post World War Two French youth culture. She does not sing in the film (as she was later to do so in Otto Preminger's *Bonjour tristesse* (1958)) but her status as a singer would have been a clear association for most audience members. This can also be interpreted as an echo of the overarching theme of Orpheus as a poet who is poetically mute until he meets the Princess. The gypsies in *Testament* are characterised by their folk music, and Roger Pillaudin's memoir of the filming process noted that in spite of the changing numbers of gypsies on set, a man who could play the guitar was always part of the personnel arrangements.[47] Cocteau's inclusion of musicians as part of the filming experience as well as in the diegesis presents another instance of the blurred boundaries between fantasy and reality in *Testament*.

In contrast, classical music is used for every reference to Cocteau or his work and Orpheus and Eurydice are also linked to the Western musical canon through the references to Gluck. In *Testament*, too, the association of the poet with Bach and Handel situates him in relation to these canonical greats, also sonically suspended in space-time, just as he is in the narrative. As director, Cocteau is not just setting up Aglaonice as the antithesis of Orpheus and his work, but musically, her jazzy youthful style is juxtaposed against Auric's art-music theme and the Gluck associated with Orpheus. By extension, Cocteau is presenting himself as part of the established canon of art through his choices of music to match particular scenes or characters. At one of the key moments of

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[47] Roger Pillaudin, *Jean Cocteau tourne son dernier film: Journal du Testament d'Orphée* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1960), 41–42.

the film, where he outlines his aims, his voice-over is accompanied by Gluck's 'Dance of the Blessed Spirits', while the images comprise a line drawing of Orpheus as well as the image of a bursting bubble. The simplicity of the images in these opening moments places all the focus on Cocteau's voice and Gluck's music. The high proportion of musical selections from the Western musical canon imbues Cocteau's final artistic testament with a layer of gravitas usually associated with the classical repertoire. Choosing repertoire from the canon was appropriate for his film testament for *all* time. Cocteau presents himself sonically as he would like to be perceived by posterity: an enduring poet and modern-day Orpheus.

Regarding the specific borrowings from Gluck's opera *Orphée et Eurydice* (a revision as *tragédie en musique* of his 1762 *Orfeo et Euridice*), the A section of 'The Dance of the Blessed Spirits' is used in its entirety in the film and Auric also arranged the B section of the same movement as the *Complainte d'Eurydice*. These melodies recur throughout the film, appearing at moments of tenderness between Eurydice and Heurtebise. As Orpheus has been the subject of so many compositions throughout history, one might ask what attracted Cocteau to Gluck specifically. Three possible reasons seem plausible. Because Gluck attempted to reform French opera and his work is entrenched in the French classical canon, an association with him might have seemed very suitable to Cocteau if he was attempting to situate himself in the canon. Both Auric and Cocteau always advocated embracing French art. Perhaps in the wake of the Second World War, a return to such an established classic opera within the fabric of Cocteau's most personal films seemed an attractive idea and a good way to put some of the war's political difficulties behind him. Second, Gluck

had used Greek myths in his *tragédies en musique* and Cocteau may have felt an

affiliation between that and his own attempt to contemporise Greek myths,

making them relevant to the mid-twentieth century. He also elaborated on the

choice of the myth in some of the publicity for the film, and appears to have had

an affinity with the precise way in which Gluck approached the myth in his

opera, choosing to develop a myth that had already been treated by a canonical

French composer:

> No one would believe in a famous poet whose name has been invented
> by an author. What I needed was a singer, the singer of singers. He of
> Thrace. And his adventure is so beautiful that it would be foolish to seek
> another. It is the fabric on which I embroider.[48]

Cocteau as Orpheus: Self-Reflection Through Sound

Perhaps one of the key attractions of the Orpheus myth for Cocteau for this

particular film project is its fundamental concern with the relationship between

sight and sound. The Orpheus myth's foundations in the tension between sight

and sound made it a perfect choice for Cocteau to comment on the

cinematograph, and also to reflect on his personal concerns with the medium

through creative engagement with image and sound. In fact, the myth's inherent

tension between sight and sound has led musicologists to argue that it can be

interpreted as reflective of the audiovisual nature of opera and cinema. Daniel

Chua describes how the gaze moment in the myth, where the visual and the

sonic clash, is representative of the gap that is inherent to the nature of opera.

As he puts it: 'monocular and monodic, opera is the singular affair of the

sovereign eye/I and passionate voice.'[49] He explores Monteverdi's setting of

this moment in *L'Orfeo* (1607), arguing that the gap in the music creates a

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[48] Quoted in Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 483.
[49] Daniel K.L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 48.

'moment of absence' as Eurydice disappears and monody fails to overcome loss in the moment of vision, as 'no music can articulate this juncture of irredeemable loss'.[50]   This seminal moment highlights the fissure in opera itself.

Others have dwelt on the implications of the ending of the myth, an ending that has been reworked from its first operatic versions. Karol Berger describes how the first performance of Monteverdi's opera, based on a text by Striggio, had a libretto that suggested that Orpheus escaped the Bacchantes. The ending of the 1609 published score saw Apollo descend from the heavens to bestow immortality on Orpheus and they ascended to heaven together, with the promise of Eurydice's likeness in the cosmos.[51] Charles Segal connects this ending and the ending of Gluck's opera with the triumph of music over sorrow and death.[52] By extension, it is understood as the triumph of music over the visual elements of opera. Berger, noting the number of scholars 'dazzled by the final apotheosis', questions the extent to which this triumph of music is believable, given the high price paid by Orpheus who has lost his wife and is no longer able to live on earth.[53] Berger's solution to this apparent incongruity is to focus on Orpheus the poet-musician and the inevitable slippage in creating a work of art, thus placing Eurydice in the role of artistic vision and allowing a reconciliation with the Monteverdian 'happy ending'.[54] Regardless of whether one agrees that Orpheus's destruction makes a more convincing ending or whether one prefers the happy ending and thus a 'triumph of music' reading, the

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[50] *Ibid*., 49.
[51] Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 23–25.
[52] Charles Segal, *Orpheus: The Myth of the Poet* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press 1989), 165–166.
[53] Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow*, 28–29.
[54] *Ibid*., 29.

tension between life and death and the relationship between music and

looking/image are common to all presentations of the myth.

It is possible to interpret Cocteau's soundscapes for the Orpheus films as

comments on cinema through the filter of opera. Scholarship concerning the

relationship between the myth and cinematic audio-vision has tended to travel

via opera. Voice is central to Michal Grover-Friedlander's understanding of

opera, and her description of beautiful moments of song as ephemeral objects of

desire and anticipation is also connected with a consciousness of mortality.[55]

She argues that operatic deaths replay the medium's primal "Orphic death". By

this, she means that singing in the myth offers a temporary passage between

worlds. Orpheus's grief at Eurydice's death is transformed into enchanting

music, his own death cry, in his attempt to overcome death. Orpheus's lament

gains him access to the other world, and his plea to revive Eurydice is granted.

This provides an understanding of the power of operatic song, which arises from

the suffering attendant upon human mortality and also manifests itself as the

capacity to infuse death with life.[56] And yet if song may revive the dead, the

gaze of Orpheus at his wife may also equally cause him to lose her forever.[57]

Orpheus's inability to sustain the power of his voice and save his wife leads

Grover-Friedlander to argue that the visual has the power to bring about the

collapse of whatever has been achieved by the vocal, a fact that is crucial to the

consideration of cinema and opera.[58] However, the frailty of the operatic voice

and opera's endless repetitions of Orpheus's revival of his wife through the

[55] Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 4.
[56] *Ibid.*, 30.
[57] *Ibid.*, 6.
[58] *Ibid.*, 7.

structure of singing and dying demonstrates the operatic voice's will to go

beyond the human and reverse death.[59]

The nature of the myth that Cocteau presents us with is particularly

important to interpreting the function of music in his film. As with many of his

projects, there is a contradiction in the way the films operate and his own telling

of the myth. He recounts the essentials of the Orpheus narrative in a voice-over:

> We all know the legend of Orpheus. In Greek mythology, Orpheus was
> the orator of Thrace. He even charmed the beasts. His songs distracted
> him from his wife, Eurydice. Death took her from him. He descended
> into the Underworld, charmed its inhabitants, and was granted
> permission to return with her under the condition to never look at her.
> But he did look and was destroyed by the Bacchantes. Where does our
> story take place and in which era? It is the privilege of legends to be
> without age. As you like it.[60]

However, Cocteau's account of the myth does not correpond to the way that the

narrative actually plays out in the film since Orpheus is reinstated with Eurydice

in a saccharine happy ending. The arrangement of the music with the images

also undermines the structure of the ancient tale and raises questions about the

relationship of these Orphic films to the sonic and visual dimensions of opera, in

this case Gluck's *Orphée*, and also in Cocteau's overall cinematic output.

Auric's music links *Orphée* to *Sang* and *Belle* and the later *Testament* and sets

up a precedent for the strongest possible 'Cocteau as Orpheus' link across his

Orphic trilogy. The other major borrowings in *Orphée* and *Testament* reinforce

the connection between Cocteau's treatment of the Orpheus myth and Gluck's

opera of the same name. It is as though the self-borrowings solidify the

connection of Cocteau as Orpheus across his films, while the borrowings from

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[59] *Ibid*., 8.

[60] 'On connait la légende d'Orphée. Dans la mythologie grec, Orphée était le chantre de Thrace.
Il charmait même les bêtes. Ces chants le distrayait de sa femme, Eurydice. La mort la lui
enleva. Il descendit aux enfers, les charma, et obtint de revenir avec elle sous condition de ne
jamais la regarder. Mais il l'a regarda et fut déchiré par les Bacchantes. Où se passa notre
histoire et à quelle époque? C'est le privilège de legends d'être sans âge. Comme il vous plaira.'

Gluck strongly connect these last two films to the wider cultural significance of the Orpheus myth.

The opening presentation of the main theme in *Orphée* is fanfare-like and contains heavy drones on the brass. As ex. 9.1 shows, it is in fact the same theme that was used as the love theme for Belle and Avenant in *Belle*.[61]
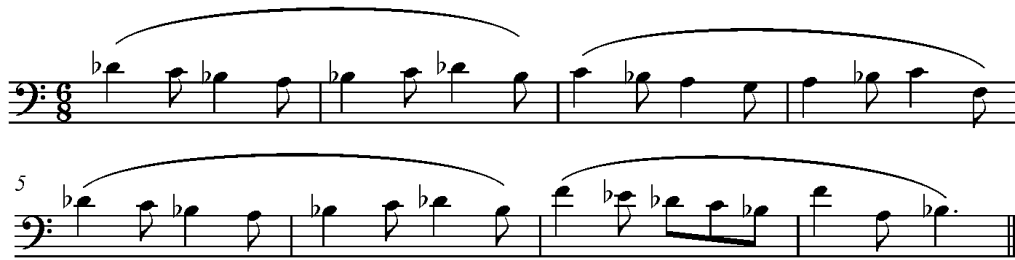
Example 9.1: The love theme in *Belle* and the opening theme in *Orphée*. Transcribed from Adriano, Sleevenotes to Georges Auric, *The Classic Film Music of Georges Auric*, vol. 2, with the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Adriano, © Marco Polo 8.225066, 1998, compact disc. Reproduced with permission of Naxos.

Adriano Martinolli D'Arcy designates the theme as 'La Belle et Avenant' and argues that it could be understood as the 'Cocteau-Marais' theme since Marais is the common factor across the films. Ex. 9.2 shows a second theme that connects *Sang*, *Orphée*, and *Testament*. It is first heard on the bassoon in *Sang* as the poet moves down the corridor in the Hotel des Folies Dramatiques and is heard again at the very opening of *Testament*, where the closing thirty seconds of *Orphée* are presented as silent cinema with the theme played over the images.

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[61] The use of this theme again in the later film was highlighted by the conductor Adriano in the sleeve notes to his recording of Auric's film music.

Example 9.2: The 'Cocteau as Orpheus' theme.

The above melody creates the strongest musical link across the three films and suggests that it could be labelled as the 'Cocteau as Orpheus' theme for the purposes of my interpretation. Adriano suggests that the reuse of the love theme from *Belle* in *Orphée* might be read as a musical tribute by Auric to Cocteau and Marais's relationship. However, without downplaying the importance of Marais, when one hears these recurring themes in conjunction with the 'Cocteau as Orpheus' theme, one might better understand them as Coctelian musical tropes, which Auric composed and Cocteau endeavoured to arrange according to the recurring narrative themes. These inter-textual musical themes are reinforced by the similarities between the 'Cocteau as Orpheus' theme and the music for the Zone that accompanies Orpheus and Heurtebise's journey to the Underworld. The recurring 'Cocteau as Orpheus' theme across the Orphic films might be heard as an Orphic song, which permits the passage from death to life, an interpretation that is supported by correspondence between Cocteau and Auric. As I have already noted, in December 1959 Cocteau wrote to Auric that he had happened on 'exactly the two great phrases of *Le Sang d'un poète*' and that his editing of the music had led to the cross filmic sonic connection. [62] Apart from the self-borrowing constituted by the recurrence of the 'Cocteau as

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[62] Caizergues, *Georges Auric: Correspondance: Jean Cocteau*, 140.

Orpheus' theme, the issue of borrowing music is the common denominator for the music in *Orphée* and *Testament* and is one that strengthens the links across Cocteau's films and generates associations with the wider musical canon, particularly opera. Furthermore, the use of the melody to accompany images in a silent film style at the opening of *Orphée* also generates associations with the wider history of film.

Cocteau's apparent subversion of the original myth's unhappy ending, as outlined in his voice-over to *Orphée*, might be read via Gluck's opera, particularly the latter's handling of the gaze moment. Gluck's opera starts after Eurydice has been lost to the underworld and the entire plot revolves around Orpheus's attempts to bring her back to life. The principal characters of the opera include Orpheus, Eurydice, Amor and a host of shepherds, shepherdesses, nymphs, blessed spirits, and gods and furies of the underworld. The climax of the opera comes in the third act, where Orpheus tries to lead his wife back to the world of the living, without explaining to her why he cannot look at her. Gluck divided these events into recitatives and airs, and interwove them with two duets in which the characters' phrases only coalesce on the words concerning the torment that they find themselves in, as Eurydice systematically and musically rejects Orpheus's entreaties. Gluck's music compounds the tension between Eurydice's pleas for her husband to reassure her with a glance, and his refusal to look at her, with tremolos under her recitative which leads to the air 'Fortune Ennemie, quelle barbarie', with its muted continuo pedal notes. This air is broken by the second duet, in which the chasm between the couple becomes increasingly evident, and is followed by a strident reprise of Eurydice's hysterical air. In the opera, Gluck's Eurydice believes that Orpheus no longer

loves her and in resigning herself to despair melts Orpheus's resolve, as shown

in ex. 9.3.

Example 9.3: Act III, scene one. Christoph Williband Gluck, *Orphée et Euridice (1774)*. © Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1967, 209-210. Reproduced with permission of Bärenreiter-Verlag.

His recitative leading to this moment is interjected with brief descending dotted semiquaver rhythms. On the words, 'O ma chère Eurydice', his action is

described as follows: 'Il fait un mouvement pour se retourner, et tout à coup se retient'. She responds 'Orphée ô ciel! Je meurs' over the last three syllables of his exclamation and the *fortissimo* chord on strings, followed by two pizzicatos, fades away to complete silence. In this silent moment Eurydice sinks onto a rock and Orpheus's vocal lines are reduced to short phrases as he realises what has happened. At the moment of her death, the instrumental accompaniment disappears and his voice alone is left, accompanied by a continuo pedal and *allegro* violins. His voice is not enough to sustain her and she expires into silence, neither seen nor heard. This failure of the voice to overcome the gaze in the moment of Eurydice's death dramatises the supreme power of the visual. However, what follows next suggests music's ultimate triumph as Amor intervenes and restores Eurydice to life, ending the opera with triumphant choral rejoicing.

In Cocteau's handling of the same moment, something similar happens. Here, Orpheus inadvertently sends Eurydice back to the Underworld when he catches a glimpse of her in the rear view mirror of Heurtebise's car and immediately looks away, only to find that the damage has already been done (fig. 9.4). While there is no underscore, the dialogue prior to the fatal moment is accompanied by the car radio's Morse code signals. At the moment when Orpheus catches sight of his wife, there is no accompaniment: a shot of her face reflected in the mirror is shown in complete silence (fig. 9.5).

Figure 9.4: *Orphée*: Orphée glances at Eurydice in the car's rear view mirror.

Figure 9.5: *Orphée*: The moment Eurydice disappears.

Orpheus cries out her name and, as Heurtebise confirms that the glance was

fatal, the drumming that accompanies the approaching Bacchantes floods the

scene. As with the traditional myth and Gluck's opera, the visual momentarily

cancels out all sound. However, the second return of Eurydice to earth is now

interpreted as a result of the will of the Princess to turn back time, and this return

erases all trace of the loss and the contact with the Underworld. The loss

suffered by Orpheus is negated and the film ends with Auric's triumphant theme

heard in the full orchestra and the sounds of drumming continue after the screen

has faded to complete blackness. Thus, Gluck's opera might be read as offering

a latent background to Cocteau's film by virtue of his inclusion of musical

excerpts from it. It must be acknowledged that the triumph which closes

Cocteau's film is somewhat tempered by the association between the drums and

the Bacchantes. Yet, despite stating that Orpheus is destroyed in the opening

voice-over to his film, by the end, the sonic continues to hold sway, rather like

the triumphant singing at the end of Gluck's opera.

This arrangement and the borrowings from the opera, act with the

recurring 'Cocteau as Orpheus' theme to create musical connections across the

Orphic films, echoing with the idea of an Orphic song capable of bridging death

and life. It is as if the 'Cocteau as Orpheus' theme allows the Poet to repeatedly

overcome death, transcending the power of the image. Its appearance across

three films allows it to escape restriction to any one film; it becomes a musical

trope linking each film to the wider Cocteau poetic web. The theme borrowed

from *Belle* fulfils a similar function and the borrowings from Gluck reinforce the

connections to the wider musical canon. Such use of music presents a

commentary on the relationship between the visual and sonic elements, and

Cocteau overcomes the visual by means of his use of recurring musical themes

across his Orphic films. This is because the theme is associated with

Cocteau/Orpheus, not with any one actor or event. Thus, if one is aware of Cocteau's other works it is possible to experience this theme as a Coctelian sonic trope with a web of associations across his output, as well as simply the music for a particular filmic moment.

The Enduring Poetic Voice

Recognition of these sonic connections across Cocteau's films supports one final analogy between Cocteau's poetic voice and Orpheus's voice. Like Orpheus, the power of the superhuman voice to entrance his/her listeners is a characteristic shared by Cocteau's ambitions for the poetic voice that permits the poet to overcome death. In *Orphée*, Orpheus passes to the underworld with the help of Heurtebise, and after his murder by the Bacchantes he returns to life through the intervention of the Princess. In *Testament*, Cocteau is killed by Minerva's spear and is mourned on his deathbed by a group of gypsies. However, when we hear Cocteau speak in voice-over – 'Pretend to cry my friends since poets only pretend to be dead' – he springs to life again.[63] The power of the poetic voice in Cocteau's poetics is similar to Michel Poizat's description of the voice driven to a moment of pure vocality in opera, a moment that turns to a cry or silence.[64] Poizat thematically connects this model of the operatic voice with the Orpheus myth, particularly Monteverdi's opera, arguing that the human cry is prefigured in Eurydice's plaintive 'Ahi', which occurs when Orpheus's gaze sends her back to the dead.[65] This inherent mortality in the operatic voice is similar to the inherent mortality in Cocteau's poetic voice. In fact, the repeated deaths and rebirths in Cocteau's Orphic films are similar to

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[63] 'Faites semblance de pleurer mes amis puisque *les poètes* ne font que semblance d'être mort.'
[64] Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 103.
[65] *Ibid.*, 52.

the repeated deaths in opera, and yet the endurance of the poetic voice is also like the continuous singing of Orpheus after his dismemberment. Thus, the attempt of the poetic voice to yearn for death itself at its furthest stage, is similar to Orpheus's cry of desperation on Eurydice's death and his ability to pass from life to death and vice versa.

The Orpheus myth provided Cocteau with an ideal means of expression for his most personal poetic concerns and encouraged him to create soundscapes that would present him on screen as he wished to be perceived. *Testament* represents the culmination of his artistic career as well as the stage at which he was most confident in handling almost every aspect of the soundscape design. There has been a notable shift in creative influence from his early films, where the poet was a newcomer to soundscape development for film, to *Testament*, where Cocteau was comfortable with the selection and arrangement of the sonic elements to the extent that his regular collaborator Auric became almost dispensable. Nevertheless, their enduring friendship and Auric's willing support further enriched the final film and Cocteau created two highly self-reflexive films through the arrangement of the composer's music with musical borrowings. Both *Orphée* and *Testament* can be read on multiple levels due to their cross-filmic sonic connections and links to the musical canon, which render them sonic testaments to Cocteau's rich appreciation and employment of film sound. Emerging technologies and parallel developments in art music and film can be heard to have had an influence on his creative practices and in turn he undoubtedly made an impact on the work of other directors and artists who were concerned with the poetry of sound.

Appendix: Appearances of the theme in *Les Parents terribles*

1. Opening credits over a theatre curtain. There is an introductory melody in a majestic style, slow and stately on brass and woodwind, with fanfares on the trumpets and clashes on the cymbals. This is followed by the theme on piano (1:12). The piano fades out and the action begins.
2. As Michel tells Yvonne that he loves Madeleine, the focus becomes softer, and the lighting dimmer. Chords on the horns, accompanied by chords on the harp, introduce a variation of the theme. There is a close-up shot of Yvonne and Michel's faces, and the theme plays quietly on trumpets (20:41).
3. A shocked Yvonne embraces George and the theme is heard on the piano, heavily embellished by scalar figures (27:58).
4. Theme on trombones with chordal accompaniment and a regular beat on the timpani, as George explains that his mistress and Michel's girlfriend are the same person (30:39).
5. Theme on saxophones with light chordal accompaniment, ornamentation on brass and woodwind, and a regular beat on the timpani, as Léo and Georges convince Yvonne to visit Madeleine the following day (36:27).
6. Theme on piano accompanied by scalar figures, as the family gathers to tell Michel the good news (38:11).
7. At Madeleine's apartment, the theme plays on the piano in a heavily ornamented style with numerous flourishes, scalar runs, and grace notes, as Michel describes his family's disorder (41:36). It is repeated in the same style, later in the same scene, as he explains the insular nature of their existence (43:41).
8. Theme on piano with high pitched minor chords, injecting a sense of foreboding, as Léo and Michel wait for Madeleine to come downstairs (46:23). Léo explains that George would like to speak to Madeleine without Yvonne's interference. The theme is repeated in this style, but with inflections on woodwind, as Yvonne and George arrive at the apartment (48:31).
9. Theme on oboe accompanied by chords on woodwind and brass, as Michel and Yvonne leave the apartment; its conclusion is accompanied by a beat on the timpani (1:04:31).
10. Léo tells George to convince Yvonne and the theme is played on bass clarinet with woodwind accompaniment (1:11:49).
11. He succeeds, and as he comforts Yvonne, the theme is played at a slow pace on the piano and accompanied by guitar chords (1:18:21).
12. Heavy theme on horns accompanied by harp chords, as Yvonne describes Michel's wretched state; it is played in the same style as the first variation in appearance two on this list (1:21:20).
13. Yvonne predicts her overdose and the same variation heard in appearances two and twelve, above, plays slowly on brass with harp chords. Then the theme proper is played on trumpets and, this time, the theme fades away as Michel runs from his mother's side to Madeleine's (1:28:04).
14. Brass, woodwind, and piano rendition of the theme with percussion and closed by a perfect cadence, as the family tableau disappears from view (1:35:37).

Filmography

Cocteau, Jean. *Le Sang d'un poète* **(1930)**

References to timings are to *Le Sang d'un poète* (1930). Directed by Jean Cocteau. Paris: Studio Canal, Optimum World Releasing Ltd., 2007, DVD.

Director, Screenplay, Editing: Jean Cocteau
Producer: Funded by Le Viscomte Charles de Noailles
Technical Direction: Michel J. Arnaud
Assistant: Louis Page
Cinematography: Georges Périnal, assisted by Preben Engberg

Set Design: Jean Gabriel d'Eaubonne
Accessoires: Maison Berthelin and models by Plastikos

Music: Georges Auric
Flament Orchestra conducted by Edouard Flament
Sound Engineer: Henri Labrély (RCA Photophone system)

Cast:
The Poet: Enrico Rivero
Statue: Lee Miller
Poet's Friend: Jean Desbordes
Guardian Angel: Féral Benga
Young Girl's Teacher: Pauline Carton
Spectators in Episode Four: Odette Talezac, Fernand Dischamps, Lucien Jager, Barbette

Period of filming: April – September 1930
Date of release: 20 January 1932

Cocteau, Jean. *La Belle et la bête* **(1946)**

References to timings are to *La Belle et la bête* (1946). Directed by Jean Cocteau. London: BFI Releasing, 2001, DVD.

Director, Screenplay, Mise-en-scène: Jean Cocteau after the tale by Mme Leprince de Beaumont
Producer: André Paulvé
Director of Production: Émile Darbon
Artistic Direction: Christian Bérard
Cinematography: Henri Alekan
Technical Consultant: René Clément

Set Design: René Moulaert and Carré
Costumes: Escoffier and Castillo, House of Paquin
Make-up: Arakelian

Cameramen: Henri Tiquet, Foucard, Letouzey
Photographer: Aldo
Script: Lucile Costa
General Manager: Roger Rogelys

Music: Georges Auric
Orchestra conducted by Roger Désormières
Sound Engineers: Jacques Lebreton and Jacques Carrère, assisted by H. Girbal and P. Gaboriau
Sound Effects: Rouzenat (uncredited)

Editor: Claude Ibéria

Cast:
The Beast, Avenant, Prince: Jean Marais
Beauty: Josette Day
Merchant: Marcel André
Ludovic: Michel Auclair
Adélaïde: Nane Germon
Félicie: Mila Parély
The Userer: Raoul Marco

Period of filming: August 1945 – January 1946
Date of release: 29 October 1946

Cocteau, Jean. *L'Aigle à deux têtes* **(1948)**

References to timings are to *L'Aigle à Deux Têtes* (1948). Directed by Jean Cocteau. Paris: Films Ariane, 1990, VHS.

Director, Screenplay, Mise-en-scène: Jean Cocteau
Producer: Ariane Films Sirius (Georges Danciger and Alexandre Mnouchkine)
Artistic Direction: Christian Bérard
Cinematography: Christian Matras
Technical Assistant: Hervé Bromberger

Set design: Georges Wakhévitch
Assistant (sets): H. Morin
Costumes: Marcel Escoffier, Jean Zay, Bataille
Make- up: Carmen Brel
Set Decoration: P. Charon

Cameraman: Alain Douarinou
Photographer: Raymond Voinquel
Script: M.T. Gabon
General Manager: Maurice Hartwig

Music: Georges Auric
Orchestra conducted by Jacques Météhen. Score published by Éditions Régia
Sound Engineer: René Longuet

Editor: Claude Ibéria

Cast
The Queen: Edwige Feuillère
Stanislas: Jean Marais
Édith de Berg: Sylvia Monfort
Félix de Willenstein: Jean Debucourt
Comte de Foëhn: Jacques Varennes
Adams: Edward Sterling
Mme la Président: Yvonne de Bray (uncredited)
Toni: Ahmed Abdallah
Rudy: Gilles Quéant
Gentz: Maurice Nasil
Officer: Edouard Dermit (uncredited)
Lady at Ball: Martine de Breteuil
Watson
Voice of Jean Cocteau

Period of filming: October 1947
Date of release: 22 September 1948

Cocteau, Jean. *Les Parents terribles* **(1948)**

References to timings are to *Les Parents terribles* (1948). Directed by Jean Cocteau. Paris: Films Ariane, 1990, VHS.

Director, Screenplay, Mise-en-scène: Jean Cocteau
Production: Ariane (Alexandre Mnouchkine and Francis Cosne)
Artistic Direction: Christian Bérard
Cinematography: Michel Kelber
Assistant Director: Raymond Leboursier
Technical Assistant: Morin

Set Design: Guy de Gastyne
Make up: Marcus, De Fast
Set Decoration: P. Charron

Cameraman: Henri Tiquet
Photographer: Roger Corbeau
Script: R. Jegou
General Manager: H. Cello

Music: Georges Auric
Sound: Antoine Archimbaud (Archambeau)

Editor: Jacqueline Sadoul

Cast:
Michel: Jean Marais
Madeleine: Josette Day
Yvonne (Sophie): Yvonne de Bray
Léo: Gabrielle Dorziat
Georges: Marcel André

Period of filming: May – June 1948
Date of release: 1 December 1948

Cocteau, Jean. *Orphée* **(1950)**

References to timings are to *Orphée* (1950). Directed by Jean Cocteau. London: BFI Releasing, 2008, DVD.

Director, Screenplay, Mise-en-scène: Jean Cocteau
Producer: André Paulvé and Les Films du Palais Royal
Director of Production: Émile Darbon
Cinematography: Nicolas Hayer
Technical Assistant: Claude Pinoteau

Set design: Jean d'Eaubonne, assisted by Marpeaux with models by Bérard
Costumes: Marcel Escoffier
Set Decoration: A. Volper
Make-up: A. Marcus

Cameraman: N. Martin
Photographer: Roger Corbeau
Script: C. Vériat
General Manager: J. Loutrel

Music: Georges Auric
Orchestra conducted by Jacques Météhen
Sound Engineer: Pierre Calvet

Editor: Jacques Sadoul
Assistant Editor: H. Baste

Cast
Orpheus: Jean Marais
Eurydice: Marie Déa
The Princess/Death: Maria Casarès
Heurtebise: François Périer
Cégeste: Edouard Dermit
The Editor: Henri Crémieux
Aglaonice: Juliette Gréco
The Poet: Roger Blin
Police Superintendent: Pierre Bertin
Judges: Maurice Carnège, Jacques Varennes, René Worms
Hotel Manager: Jean-Pierre Melville

Period of filming: August – November 1949
Date of release: 1 March 1950

Cocteau, Jean. *Le Testament d'Orphée* **(1960)**

References to timings are to *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960). Directed by Jean Cocteau. London: Optimum Releasing, 2007, DVD.

Director, Screenplay, Mise-en-scène: Jean Cocteau
Producer: Jean Thuillier for Les Éditions Cinégraphiques. François Truffaut also funded the film.
Cinematography: Roland Pontoizeau
Technical Assistant: Claude Pinoteau

Set Design: Pierre Guffroy
Costumes and Sculptures: Janine Janet
Make-up: Alexandre Marcus
Accessories: Jacques Martin
Dress for Francine Weisweiller: Crisobal Balenciaga
Masks: Bebko

First Assistant: Francis Caillaud
Cameraman: Henri Raichi
Assistant Cameraman: Robert Alliel
Special Effects: Pierre Durin
Photographer: Yves Mirkine
Photographer: Lucien Clergue
Script: Lucille Costa
General Manager: Michel Mombailly

Musical theme and trumpets: Georges Auric
Music recorded under the direction of Jacques Météhen
Music Supervisors: J. Lastry et F.B. Baschet
Piano-Jazz: Martial Solal
Sound Engineers: Pierre Bertrand and René Sarazin

Editor: Marie-Joseph Yoyotte, assisted by Raymonde Guyot

Cast (uncredited)
The Poet: Jean Cocteau
Cégeste: Edouard Dermit
The Princess: Maria Casarès
Heurtebise: François Périer
Professor: Henri Crémieux
Intern: Daniel Gélin
Student: Jean-Pierre Léaud
Horse-Men: Philippe Juzau et Daniel Moosmann
Gypsies: Alice Sapritch et Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte
Presenter of Quiz: Henri Torrès
Little Girl: Michèle Comte
Woman Out of Time: Francine Weisweiller
Gustave: Philippe
Men Playing Dogs: Guy Dute et Jean-Claude Petit

Iseult: Alice Heyliger
Young Mother: Nicole Courcel
Nurse: Françoise Christophe
Minerva: Claudine Auger
Orpheus: Jean Marais
Antigone: Brigitte Morissan
Usher: Yul Brynner
Spectators at the Poet's Deathbed: Charles Aznavour, Lucia Bose, Luis-Miguel Dominguin, Serge Lifar, Pablo Picasso, Jacqueline Roque-Picasso.

Period of filming: September – October 1959
Date of release: 10 February 1960

Delannoy, Jean. *L'Éternel Retour* (1943). Screenplay and dialogues by Jean Cocteau who is also sometimes credited as co-director.

References to timings are to *L'Eternel Retour* (1943). Directed by Jean Delannoy. France: SNC Releasing, 2008, DVD.

Director: Jean Delannoy
Dialogue and Screenplay: Jean Cocteau
Producer: André Paulvé
Director of Production: Émile Darbon
Cinematography: Roger Hubert

Set Design: Georges Wakhévitch
Assistant Metteur en scène: Roger Callon
Costumes: Annenkoff

Cameraman: Marc Fossard
Photographer: Aldo
Script: Jacqueline Chevillote
General Manager: Theron
Administrator: Gaston Goudard

Music: Georges Auric
Sound Engineers: Monchablon and Carrère

Editor: Suzette Fauvel

Cast
Patrice: Jean Marais
Nathalie the Blonde: Madeleine Sologne
Uncle Marc: Jean Murat
Nathalie the Brunette: Junie Astor
Lionel: Roland Toutain
Achille: Piéral
Gertrude: Yvonne de Bray
Amédée: Jean d'Yd
Anne: Jeanne Marken
The Dog Moulou
Morholt: Alexandre Rignault

Period of filming: April 1943 – June 1943
Date of release: 12 October 1943

Melville, Jean-Pierre. *Les Enfants terribles* **(1949). Scenario, dialogues and adaptation from Cocteau's novel.**

References to timings are to *Les Enfants terribles* (1949), directed by Jean-Pierre Melville (London: BFI Releasing, 2004), DVD.

Director: Jean-Pierre Melville
Producer: Jean-Pierre Melville Productions
Scenario, Dialogues and Adaptation: Jean Cocteau
Directors of Production: J.P. Melville, J. Braley
Cinematography: Henri Decae
Assistant Director: C. Pinoteau

Set Design: Émile Mathys
Costumes: Dresses for Nicole Stéphane and Renée Cosima by Christian Dior
Make-up: Arakelian

Cameraman: J. Thibaudier
Stageman: M. Dagonneau
Photographer: A. Dino
Second Assistant Director: J. Guymont
General Manager: P. Schwob

Music: Bach's Concerto for Four Harpsichords in A Minor BWV 1065 (an arrangement of Vivaldi's Concerto for Four Violins in B Minor, opus 3, no. 10 RV580) and Vivaldi's Concerto in A Minor, opus 3, no. 8 RV522.
Music conducted by Paul Bonneau
Four Pianos: Jacqueline Bonneau, Andrée Collard, Geneviève Joy, Éliane Richepin
Words and Music of "Were You Smiling at Me": Melvyn Martin
Sound Engineer: Jacques Gallois
Mixer: Jacques Carrère
Recorder: R. Durand

Editor: M. Bonnot, assisted by C. Charbonneau and C. Durand

Cast
Élizabeth: Nicole Stéphane
Paul: Edouard Dermit
Agathe/ Dargelos: Renée Cosima
Gérard: Jacques Bernard
Michael: Melvyn Martin
Mariette: Adeline Aucoc
Mother: Maria Cyliakus
Doctor: Maurice Revel
Headmaster: Jean-Marie Robain
Gérard's Uncle: Roger Gaillard

Period of Filming: December 1949
Date of release: 29 March 1950

Other films that Cocteau was involved with:

———. *La Comédie du bonheur* (1940). Directed by Marcel L'Herbier. Additional dialogues.

———. *Le Baron fantôme* (1943). Directed by Serge de Poligny. Adaptation and dialogues. Cocteau also played the part of Baron Carol.

———. *Les Dames de Bois de Boulogne* (1945). Directed by André Bresson. Dialogues and co-adaptor with Bresson, from a story by Diderot.

———. *Ruy Blas* (1947). Directed by Pierre Billon. Dialogues and adaptation from the play by Victor Hugo.

———. *Noces de sable* (1948). Directed by André Zwoboda. Commentary. The film is a version of Tristan and Isolde set in Morocco.

———. *La Princesse de Clèves* (1960). Directed by Jean Delannoy. Dialogues and adaptation from the novel by Mme de La Fayette.

———. *Thomas l'imposteur* (1965) Directed by Georges Franju. Dialogues and adaptation from Cocteau's novel.

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———. 'Gratitude à mes collaborateurs 1948'. Autograph manuscript, box twenty-five, Fonds Jean Cocteau, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, accessed November 2010.

———. *L'Aigle à deux têtes*. Preparatory manuscript, dated 4 March to 20 May 1947, Milly, Fonds Jean Cocteau, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, accessed November 2010.

———. 'C'est pourquoi chaque soir…' Programme Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt (1960), boxes 40 and 41, Fonds Jean Cocteau, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, accessed September 2009).

———. *Les Parents terribles*. Undated press clipping, box thirty-four, Fonds Jean Cocteau, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, accessed November 2010.

———. *Les Parents terribles*. Screenplay découpage, box thirty-four, Fonds Jean Cocteau, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, accessed November 2010.

———. '*Les Parents terribles* à l'écran'. Typed and signed manuscript, box thirty-four, Fonds Jean Cocteau, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, accessed November 2010.

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