IMAGINARY CO-SIGNATURES:
COLLABORATION, AUTHORSHIP, AND STAR PERSONAE
IN FILMS BY MARCEL CARNÉ WITH ARLETTY
AND
BY JEAN COCTEAU WITH JEAN MARAIS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

David Aldstadt, B.S., M.A.

*****

The Ohio State University
2002

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Judith Mayne, Adviser
Dr. Charles D. Minahen
Dr. Karlis Racevskis

Approved by

Dr. Judith Mayne, Adviser

Department of French and Italian
ABSTRACT

Cinematic authorship has become, over the past half-century, more and more of a paradoxical notion within French film studies. On the one hand, critics like André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc helped institute a mode of criticism that tends to consider a film's director as its sole auteur. On the other hand, given a necessarily collaborative medium like film, criticism also constantly recognizes the roles of writers, technicians, and performers. Often directors with the strongest auteurist reputations also, over the course of their careers, tend to collaborate with the same crews and casts on many different projects. In light of this paradox of authorship, this study considers films from two such collaborations—specifically between famous, auteurist directors and their respective acteurs fétiches—through textual readings of three films directed by Marcel Carné and starring Arletty, *Hôtel du Nord* (1938), *Le Jour se lève* (1939), and *Les Enfants du paradis* (1945), alongside three films by Jean Cocteau starring Jean Marais, *La Belle et la Bête* (1946), *Les Parents terribles* (1948), and *Orphée*
(1949). Moreover, since these films date from the tumultuous decade surrounding World War II, the political meaning of collaboration contributes to an intriguing historical backdrop for aspects of the (star) personae of the personalities in question.

After reviewing the somewhat inconsistent theoretical and critical treatments of collaborative authorship in traditional approaches to cinema studies, i.e. textual, psychoanalytical, empirical, and star theory, the discussions of the two sets of films follow similar patterns by tracing the inception, elaboration, and pinnacle of each famous partnership from their early films to their respective master works. Moreover, as this study contends, these interdependent filmic articulations of authorship and star personae engage with classic tropes of the cinema in a self-referential manner through visual and historical allusions to the collaborations themselves. The study concludes by defining the imaginary co-signatures, or contributions to a film, here, by both auteurist director and star actor, with reference to Christian Metz’s *signifiant imaginaire* and to accepted notions of the signature as a discursive marker of persona.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my adviser, Professor Judith Mayne, for the intellectual support, encouragement, and enthusiasm that made this dissertation possible. Her scholarship has been a great inspiration to me. And, her assistance and feedback with composition and editing have been invaluable.

I also wish to thank the Faculty members of the Department of French and Italian for their guidance and support.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their encouragement, patience, and assistance throughout this project.
VITA

September 17, 1968...... Born - Barberton, OH, USA

1990...................... B.S., Summa cum Laude, French and Spanish Education
Laureate, The Ohio State University

1991-1992............ Assistant d’anglais,
Lycée Bréquigny, Rennes, France

1995....................... M.A. French,
The Ohio State University

1998 and 1999.......... English Teacher,
Lucent Technologies,
Rouen, France

1990-present.......... Graduate Teaching Associate,
Peer Supervisor and Course
Coordinator,
Department of French and Italian,
The Ohio State University

PUBLICATIONS

Aldstadt, David. “Arletty, Star Image, and the Return of the
Caze: Gazing Back from Marcel Carné’s Les Enfants du
paradis.” West Virginia University Philological Papers

Aldstadt, David, Linda L. Harlow, and Judith A. Muyskens.
Bravo! Computerized Test Bank. 4th Ed. CD-ROM. Boston:
Heinle & Heinle, 2002.


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: French and Italian

Minor Fields: French Cinema, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century French Literature, Critical Theory and Gender Studies, Language Pedagogy and Technology
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Acknowledgments</strong></td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Vita</strong></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Cinematic Authorship, Star Personae, and Collaboration</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>The “Atmosphère” of Hôtel du Nord: Articulating Narrative Space and Star Space</strong></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><strong>The Characterization of Clara: Poetic Realism and Sexuality in Le Jour se lève.</strong></td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><strong>Looking at Garance Looking-At: Star Persona and Authorship in Les Enfants du paradis.</strong></td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><strong>Les Parents terribles: Figuring A Coctelian Star</strong></td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td><strong>Crossing Boundaries in La Belle et la Bête.</strong></td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td><strong>The Self-Reflective Mirror in Orphée</strong></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td><strong>Conclusions: Imaginary Co-signatures</strong></td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Bibliography</strong></td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vii
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Cinematic authorship has become, over the past half-century, more and more of a paradoxical notion within French film studies. On the one hand, critics such as André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc, in the forties and fifties, helped institute a mode of criticism that tends to consider a film's director as the sole auteur, responsible for virtually every aspect, from mise-en-scène to photography to editing, of the finished product. The director, much like a poet in relation to a poem, or the painter in relation to a painting, becomes the ultimate authority over his or her artistic expression. Consequently, auteurist criticism then reduces the role of a film's cast and production crew to a function of the director's orders, decisions, blocking, and so forth. On the other hand, given a necessarily collaborative medium like film, due to its complicated production and distribution methods, criticism also constantly recognizes the roles of writers, actors, and
technicians. For example, in her analysis of Jean Vigo’s L’Atalante (1934), Marina Warner notes that this film, in order to reach completion, required more than just the director’s artistic vision.

Vigo is an auteur filmmaker, on the evidence of his idiosyncratic work, its original humour and fantasy and concerns; but his oeuvre also illuminates the importance of teamwork even in a film as suggestively individual as L’Atalante.

Warner’s citation points to one further irony; often directors with the strongest auteurist reputations also, over the course of their careers, tend to collaborate with the same actors, writers, etc., on many different film projects.

This study examines films from two such collaborations—specifically between famous, auteurist directors and their respective, well-known acteurs fétiches—in light of the above paradox of authorship. When famous people with well-established celebrity, either as film auteurs or as movie stars and cinematic icons, collaborate to produce a work, how does that interaction as well as the interaction of their personae affect readings and reception of the final
product? In order to address this question, this dissertation will consider three films directed by Marcel Carné and starring Arletty, Hôtel du Nord (1938), Le Jour se lève (1939) and Les Enfants du paradis (1945), alongside three films by Jean Cocteau starring Jean Marais, La Belle et la Bête (1946), Les Parents terribles (1948) and Orphée (1949). Plus, since these films date from the tumultuous decade of France’s drôle de guerre, Occupation, Liberation, and épuration, the secondary meaning of collaboration, i.e. cooperation with the occupying forces, contributes to an intriguing historical backdrop for this study and for aspects of the (star) personae of the personalities in question.

Marcel Carné (1906-1996) began his career as a film critic and then, starting in 1928, as assistant director to Jacques Feyder. After convincing his boss’s famous wife, actor Françoise Rosay, to star in a film of his own, Carné made his debut feature-length production, Jenny (1936). Through the 1930’s, Carné developed his trademark poetic realist style. Carné’s films dealt with real-life, working-class themes, often underscored by loneliness and pessimism, in a visual style that defamiliarized the very reality his works purportedly expressed. Thanks to elaborate and
extremely expensive studio reconstructions, by set designer Alexandre Trauner, of actual hotels, metro stations, and neighborhoods, Carné’s films often convey a hyper-real sense of constructedness in a closed-in world where characters have few options of escape from their surroundings\(^1\). In fact, Carné’s critics even accused him of contributing, through supposedly pessimistic and negative depictions of the French, to France’s defeat in the war.

During the Occupation, Carné stayed in France, continued to work, and eventually made his chef-d’oeuvre, the super-production Les Enfants du paradis. The filmmaker purposely held up the post-production of this masterpiece to ensure its place as the first major premiere after the liberation (Carné 191, Chazal 45). Hailed as France’s response to the successful American epic Gone with the Wind (1939), Les Enfants du paradis consistently ranks among the best films of all time according to critics. After the war, Carné’s popularity waned despite his consistent production

\(^1\) Most descriptions of poetic realism, as a cinematic style, point to its preoccupation with portraying a popular, urban social experience, taking place on foggy, dimly lit streets and photographed in a straightforward manner. Poetic realism also privileges more pessimistic themes, like regret, poverty, and crime. Further, Dudley Andrew exposes the politics of poetic realism’s “drive towards realism” and its “impulse to essentialize reality” (Mists 108). In other words, the supposed realistic depiction of the working classes, of their struggles, and of proletarian neighborhoods actually amounts to a highly stylized, i.e. poetic, vision of that milieu by sympathetic directors and screenwriters often from more comfortable backgrounds.
of new films; the New Wave had brought about Carné’s inclusion in the maligned category of cinéma de papa. Nevertheless, Carné still received numerous awards, including the Légion d’honneur, through the end of his career as well as a namesake library, in Boston, and a public square in Saint-Michel-sur-Orge, a Parisian suburb.

Carné first worked with Arletty (1898-1992), née Léonie Bathiat, on Feyder’s Pension Mimosas (1934). By that time, Arletty had a well-established reputation as a model and bawdy music-hall singer. Her notable parigot accent and rather unrefined gait gained her the role of Madame Raymonde, a kind-hearted prostitute, in Hôtel du Nord. Although playing a minor character in a subplot, Arletty’s memorable performance of the “Atmosphère! Atmosphère!” line, among others, made her the film’s de facto star. Next, Arletty starred in movies with various directors up to and throughout the war; with Carné, she made Le Jour se lève, Les Visiteurs du soir (1942), and Les Enfants du paradis. For Les Enfants du paradis, filmed during the hardships of the Occupation, Arletty, who had by then attained stardom, earned one of the highest salaries ever, for a man or a woman, in the history of French cinema. At
the pinnacle of her career, she held the leading role in Carné’s masterwork.

Unfortunately, though, Arletty missed the film’s premiere. Because of her amorous relationship, starting from 1940, with Luftwaffe officer Hans Jürgen Soehring—not to mention her longstanding, public friendship with writer Céline—the apolitical, and not anti-Semitic, Arletty received a sentence of eighteen months of imprisonment, at the rather luxurious country estate of an acquaintance (Demonpion 286), at the Liberation. In the, often misogynist, gender politics of the Occupation, many decried Arletty’s affair with Soehring as a symbolic emasculation of the country; the iconic, Marianne figure of French cinema literally embodied France’s capitulation to foreign hands. In one response to such charges, Arletty, in line with her star persona as independent and sexually liberated, declared, “mon cœur est français mais mon cul est international” (Demonpion 321). After the war, Arletty continued working in films and plays; but she never reached the same level of popularity as during the war. Moreover, the stigma of her wartime relationships followed her. When starring in the French-language version of Tennessee
Williams’s play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Arletty asked dialogist Jean Cocteau to change a famous line.

"J’ai toujours été à la merci d’étrangers."

Redoutant que des spectateurs s’en saisissent pour la chahuter, elle suggère de la remplacer par:

"J’ai toujours été à la merci d’inconnus."

Cocteau accepte. (352)

This citation suggests how Arletty’s star persona could inflect even a line as famous as Williams’s. Had the audience jeered, they would have been jeering at Arletty and not Blanche Dubois. Further, it provides an example of the influence of collaboration despite a script whose French adaptation posits Cocteau, and not Arletty, as author.

Although Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) did, at times, work with both Arletty and Carné, his filmic collaboration with Marais remains the primary focus here. But even before Cocteau began his first film, *Le Sang d’un poète* (1930), or knew Marais, the artist already enjoyed a well-established reputation as poet, novelist, playwright, and socialite. Unlike Carné, who developed his directorial persona from within the cinematic institution, Cocteau’s filmmaking represented an extension of the poet’s overall artistic expression. And, Cocteau’s cinema, often adaptations of his
own earlier written work, bears the mark of Cocteau the artist. He incorporates his own drawings in the titles or credits, as in Orphée, or set designs, like in Le Sang d’un poète. Further, Cocteau tends to sign his films by including prologues in his own distinctive voice or (hand-) writing.

In addition to his other projects, Cocteau directed and wrote films through the end of his life. In fact, he even starred as himself in the last movie he directed, Le Testament d’Orphée (1960). This film stages a cinematic, autobiographical review of the whole of Cocteau’s artistic production. As such, the filmmaker underscores the entirety of his (cinematic) œuvre as autobiographical. In interviews, Cocteau stresses this point: “tout grand artiste, même s’il peint des volets ou des pivoines, trace toujours son propre portrait” (Cocteau, Eadc 7-8). Cocteau then, as a poet-filmmaker, exemplifies, perhaps more so than Carné who “simply” directed, an extreme case of the above paradox of authorship. Coctelian cine-poems constantly remind the viewer of the director’s presence through marked examples of Cocteau’s unique, visual style. Using techniques like running the film backwards, characters surrealistcally reconstruct flowers from loose petals or
spring up from a fall. Characters float eerily between disconnected narrative spaces, passing through mirrors and other portals. Moreover, just as Cocteau’s artistic style informs readings of such technical elements in his films, so does his style mark the actors who star in them. For example, Marais’s iconographic image as Orpheus, with his face against the reflective puddle of mercury, matches similar drawings of the Orpheus character by Cocteau. In such an image, Marais’s own good looks certainly appeal to the viewer, but they do so in the context of Cocteau’s famous figuring of him in that pose.

Even one autobiography by Jean Marais (1913-1998), *Histoires de ma vie*, opens with a drawing of the actor by Cocteau and closes with poems about Marais by Cocteau. Marais openly admits that, as a struggling actor, he actively sought the companionship of the older poet partly as a career move. Next, as one of Marais’s fans summarizes, Cocteau became his surrogate father, and he was Cocteau’s surrogate son. For the next twenty-five years, love and hard work created an indissoluble bond between these two men for whom the theater was life itself. Cocteau had high expectations for his protégé, and he was not disappointed. For
full half a century, ever since Cocteau gave him
his first chance, Jean Marais was one of France's
best-known actors, a star on stage, screen, and
television. (“Jean Marais Website”)

As this citation indicates, because of both their on- and
off-screen relationship, the star personae of the two men
often operate in tandem. And although his relationship with
Cocteau did arguably allow for his ascension to stardom,
Marais worked on many projects separately from his older
mentor.

After Cocteau cast him in several plays, Marais worked
in film for a few years before earning one of his first
major roles, in Jean Delannoy’s L’Éternel retour (with
screenplay and dialog by Cocteau, 1943), a filmic version of
the famous French story Tristan et Iseult. While this role
helped launch his career, Marais’s (dyed) blond hair—along
with a similar hairdo on the part of the film’s female lead,
and Marais’s love interest, Madeleine Sologne—in the film
evokes a Germanic, even Aryan, sense of beauty. As such,
and as will be discussed later in this dissertation, his
appearance, in both senses of the word, in the film remains
somewhat problematic, especially within the cultural context
of the film’s production.
Transitioning from actor to star, Marais held leading roles in several very successful works by Cocteau, including La Belle et la Bête, and also by others during the late forties. Once Cocteau cast him in Orphée, perhaps the artist’s cinematic masterpiece and Marais’s most famous role, the two men, still close friends, no longer lived together as lovers. Incidentally, for this film, Cocteau cast his new, younger protégé, Édouard Dermit, alongside the older Marais. Nevertheless, by this time, Marais had a firmly established persona as handsome, athletic, and virile leading man despite the open secret of his relationship with Cocteau.

The sexual charge of the Cocteau/Marais collaboration provides for a point of comparison with the Carné/Arletty partnership. Filming his own lover, Cocteau often figures Marais as an object of desire. Such a depiction of a male star by a male director may seem unconventional in comparison to the way heterosexual male directors would tend to figure male stars. Carné, homosexual as well, depicts not his lover but, rather, Arletty, a close female friend whose sexuality had, albeit in a different manner (see below), lead to controversy as well. Carné’s figuring of Arletty also seems unconventional since, unlike the typical
case with male directors and their female acteurs fétiches—e.g. Josef von Sternberg and Marlene Dietrich or Jean-Luc Godard and Anna Karina—(hetero-)sexual desire for the female actor likely did not inform the direction.

Moreover, Carné, Arletty, Cocteau, and Marais, while canonical icons of French (cinematic) culture, all dealt with some form of ill treatment, either homophobic or misogynist, which has affected readings of their work and/or personae. Arletty served a prison sentence, as mentioned earlier. Carné responded to a series of homophobic insults, throughout his career, by critics and younger directors, most notably, and most viciously, by François Truffaut. Cocteau endured disparaging remarks, especially within the intensely politicized mood of the Occupation, because of his lifestyle, opium use, and friendships with figures like German artist Arno Brecker and others. Marais became the victim of some sarcasm, which sought to undermine his masculine persona, by the resistance movement. The actor recounts, to his horror, how after the war he learned "la B.B.C. disait à la radio de Londres, 'Patience, Jean Marais, nous serons là bientôt’" (Marais, Hdmv 165).

This last citation exposes a link between the exploitation of the public’s homophobia and its misogyny
such as, for example, Arletty experienced. By figuring France as a passive, feminine entity and conquest of the enemy, the resistance movement posits itself as an active, masculine force, which will fight to reassert its dominant position over the country. In order to drive the point home, and engage the thickest of listeners, the radio address above places Marais, a gay man, in the marginalized feminine position in a reference to the public’s secret knowledge of the actor’s homosexuality. So, as the above remarks show for each of the artists here, a combination of their celebrity, knowledge of their sexuality, and the wartime Zeitgeist seems to have marginalized, to varying degrees, four people responsible, ironically, for the production of some of France’s most well-known and revered war-time cultural, cinematic symbols.

Sexual politics aside, other reasons exist for comparing these two collaborations in this study. For instance, both sets of films mediate ordinary existence and artistic expression poetically, either towards the realistic with Carné or towards the surrealistic with Cocteau. Regardless of the individual bent, these two directors create texts where, in theory at least and just like in a poem, no part of the composition, or mise-en-scène, is left
to chance. Plus, when comparing these filmmakers with poets—especially given that Cocteau was also a poet and considering that poet Jacques Prévert wrote the screenplays for many of Carné’s films—features of the traditional poetic narrative voice reinforce the hegemony of the cinematic auteur. First, as Gretchen Schultz has shown with regard to lyric poetry, there is conflation between the historical person, the writing subject—metaphorically for film with the caméra-stylo (see next chapter)—and the (first person) narrator; and, second, that poetic voice is male. Schultz reiterates, “the figure of the poet permits this slippage and, consequently, reserves the position of speaking subject and poet for male voices” (Schultz 6). Schultz theorizes that a “pretense of transparency” operates in poetic texts; this notion equally applies to auteurist films. When in direct contact with the poetic/auteurist (filmic) text, readers/viewers supposedly engage clearly and unproblematically with the (male) speaking subject and with his poetic/cinematic vision. In other words, readers see exactly what the poet/director, as (male) authority figure, describes.

With cinema, though, the image of the actor or star—both the reputation in real life and the projection of light
on the screen—comes between the reader/viewer and any poetic vision from the writer/director. As they watch actors, viewers know that the person on the screen only reads lines and pretends to take part in actions and stories originating in the mind of the director or writer. The reconciliation, necessary for the film to operate, of the director’s “vision” and of the star’s “image” remains the viewer’s burden. The task, paradoxically, can be both difficult, demanding an a priori suspension of reality, and effortless, relying on the Metzian imaginary (see discussion in the next chapter) to induce dreamy identifications within the narrative. Subtending this dialectic lies a complex interrelatedness of authorial influence and actor celebrity.

In order to explore such dynamic interaction, this dissertation will first briefly examine the treatment of authorial collaboration within classical approaches to French film studies as well as in literary studies. This criticism reveals varying degrees of attention to the subject, though few consistently generalized theories. Next, this study will briefly examine some anecdotal relationships between the personalities here and the political definition of collaboration as it concerns the four artists’ work during the Occupation. While historians
of French cinema do not generally define these artists solely with relation to their wartime activities, these activities merit mention here in that they contribute to the personae of the people involved.

With the above discussions of collaboration, in relationship to authorship and star persona as well as to political contexts, as a backdrop, this study will then turn to close readings of key shots and sequences from the films. This analysis will serve as a starting point in an attempt to characterize filmic collaboration in textual terms. The chapter on Hôtel du Nord examines the language of Carné’s poetic realism as articulated with and through Arletty. Her famous reply “Atmosphère! Atmosphère!” not only brought her stardom, but also highlighted the working class background of the actor, especially as representative of the film’s proletarian milieu. The line of dialogue became so famous that Arletty refused to pronounce “le mot” for the rest of her life. Yet, the word resonates whenever Arletty uses words ending in that distinctive “-ère” sound. And as poetic realism often highlights the problems of the working class and valorizes their struggles, so this sound can serve to remind viewers that Arletty overcame her own humble background to become one of the most successful actors of
French cinema. An important question as to the origin of the “Atmosphère!” phenomenon then arises; any viewer’s reaction to this classic scene demands a negotiation of the influences on the line from the writer’s pen, the director’s staging, and Arletty’s delivery.

For *Le Jour se lève*, this study will consider the erotic charge of the Carné/Arletty collaboration within the context of this archetypal example of Carné’s filmic style. Arletty plays a kind-hearted mistress, Clara, who vies with a younger woman for the attentions of Jean Gabin. The ensuing love triangle underscores two aspects of Arletty’s personae as figured by Carné: object of male characters’ desire and maternal figure. In this film, Arletty has a rather groundbreaking (although subsequently censored [see Turk 167]) nude scene emerging from the shower in front of Gabin. Yet, far from reduced to a physical object by such a scene, Arletty, with her persona of liberated sexuality and independence of thought, contributes to a depth of characterization lending wholeness to Clara’s personality. Sexualized, but not without human emotion, she even consents to comforting her younger rival in response to Gabin’s looming suicide in the film. Such a sympathetic depiction of Clara, a working-class concubine depending on men for her
situation, definitely falls within the scope of poetic realism. Moreover, the shot of Clara consoling her female rival in the absence of the man conveys homosocial overtones in its portrayal of the female-female bonds within the gender asymmetry of the love triangle (see Sedgwick 21-25). Based on scenes such as this, and especially in light of Edward Baron Turk’s overall reading of them as “androgy nous,” this study will take into account Carné’s depiction of gender and sexuality within the framework of poetic realism.

Then, for Les Enfants du paradis, the focus will turn to stargazing: by Carné, by spectators, and both by and at Arletty. At the filming of this masterpiece, both Carné and Arletty had reached the pinnacle of their respective careers. As such, their status as cinematic and cultural icons certainly affected readings of their work. While critics eventually praised both for helping French cinema’s rebirth during the Occupation, they also criticized them for working at all at a time when many of the industry’s elite remained overseas in protest against, and certainly also out of fear of, German rule. During this period, Arletty’s rather public relationship with Soehring created another paradox. Off-screen, her affair symbolized, on an
interpersonal level at least, acceptance of the presence of
the Germans on French soil, while her onscreen status as a
cinematic Marianne image signaled one further reminder that
France, even under foreign domination, could still produce
great cultural symbols. This situation lends nuance to
Arletty’s, and, to a certain extent, to her close and
supportive (homosexual) friend Carné’s, persona(e); on the
one hand lies a demonstration of the much-valued French
sense of independence but, on the other, lurks a symbolic
emasculating of the country.

The discussions of the Cocteau/Marais films will follow
a similar structure. For Les Parents terribles—which, as a
play, predates La Belle et la Bête—the overlap of
collaboration and poetic inspiration both serve in the
construction of Marais’s star persona. After Marais, with
hopes of stardom, sought out Cocteau, the older artist then
seemingly used aspects of the actor’s past, such as Marais’s
relationship with his mother, when the poet/filmmaker wrote
Les Parents terribles. Even though Cocteau claims the
family in the film does not resemble any family in real
life, some similarities do exist with respect to Marais’s
family.
Moreover, another intersection of real-life and poetic inspiration assist in the construction of Marais's star persona by Cocteau in both Les Parents terribles and La Belle et la Bête. Within the overall Coctelian opus, Marais (and later others such as Édouard Dermit) occupies a privileged "Dargelos"-like position. Based on Cocteau's famous classmate at the Lycée Condorcet and fictionalized in Cocteau's novel Les Enfants terribles (1929), Dargelos represents an unattainable object, characterized by beauty and virility, of male-male desire. In such a role, Marais, on screen, remains out of reach of the spectators given his star status; further, he seems somewhat out of the reach of the female protagonists in both films given his own homosexuality.

In La Belle et la Bête, sexuality and desire, again originating within the Cocteau/Marais collaboration, inform readings of the two very different roles Marais played in the film. As the Prince, Marais demonstrates his virile good looks and athletic abilities as a cascadeur. Often, in interviews about the film, Cocteau highlights the fact that Marais performed the majority of his own stunts. However, within the hyper-Coctelian ambiance of the Bête's castle, Marais plays a hideous, mythological creature living on the
margins of society, accessible only via fairy-tale spells, secret passages, and mirrors. As such, this fantastic universe calls into question notions of boundaries and borders, the constructions of which surely evoke, to some degree, Marais's public persona as leading man and also his other persona as Cocteau's lover and protégé.

Finally, for Orphée, the image of the "man-in-the-mirror," looking back at himself, serves as a backdrop for a consideration of different active/passive roles in collaborations. As with Carné/Arletty above, the notion of stargazing gains importance in this Cocteau/Marais masterpiece appearing at the pinnacle of both Cocteau's and Marais's careers. Cocteau's famous shot of Marais's face reflected in the mercurial puddle—one of the most recognized images from French cinema—highlights Marais's status, especially given the film's mythological subject matter, as one who gazes and one who is gazed-at. As a leading male actor in the French film industry of the period, Marais, while on screen, should theoretically (be portrayed to) gaze at women. Yet, Cocteau—in this highly autobiographical film—frames Marais/Orpheus narcissistically gazing at himself in the water/mirror. Moreover, in Cocteau's films, (self-) reflective surfaces also serve as gateways to other
domains and realities. The film then uses these symbolic mirrors and doorways, along with other devices, to create a self-portrait of Cocteau in the image of Marais.

The last chapter of this study, by juxtaposing the Metzian *imaginaire* with accepted critical notions and implications of the signature, in general, will read the multiple authorship, in the above films, as imaginary co-signatures, or as a genre-specific, uniquely filmic manner of marking authorship by both director and star. With films from collaborative relationships—texts simultaneously the sum and gestalt of, in this case specifically, both directorial and star auteurism—a constant interplay of attribution and combination of influence(s) leads to a reconsideration of cinematic authorship, in French film studies, as well as to a greater appreciation of the filmic text as a sight for shared artistic expression.

In conclusion, this study proposes to trace similarities and differences between the Carné/Arletty and the Cocteau/Marais collaborations in areas such as the construction of star status and directorial style, gender ambiguity and gazing, and star persona and cinematic authorship. By considering these issues within the framework of established theories of collaboration, from for
example literary contexts, some general conclusions about the genre-specificities of filmic collaboration can emerge. Hopefully, the results of this study can serve discussions of other types of partnerships, for instance female director-male star, or director-actor (non-star), or director-producer relationships, and of other loci within the overall apparatus of the film industry, like independent or marginal(ized) films and other national cinemas.
CHAPTER 2

CINEMATIC AUTHORSHIP, STAR PERSONAE, AND COLLABORATION

Before looking briefly at the political definition of collaboration, i.e. as cooperation with an enemy, this chapter will first examine the treatment of multiple authorship in traditional modes of French film criticism. These diverse critical modes are, schematically and for ease of reference, as follows: auteurist criticism, institutional theories, empirical studies, and star theory. This chapter will also consider theories of dual authorship from literary studies.

The first critical mode, French auteurist criticism, built on efforts begun by filmmaker/critics like Louis Delluc and Germaine Dulac in the early part of the twentieth century, helped establish and secure modern film criticism's place in scholarship. Springing initially from André Bazin's writings in the forties and fifties, this approach sought to expose the language of filmic expression through analysis of the mise-en-scène, or the composition of the
image, and of editing and montage, or the chronological juxtaposition of images. In 1948, Alexandre Astruc, another important founder of this mode of criticism, proposed that filmmakers express the language of cinema with the caméra-stylo, the instrument with which the director "breaks free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and concrete demands of the narrative" (Astruc 18). The metaphor of the camera/pen represents more than just a mere figure of speech. For Astruc,

[d]irection is no longer a means of illustrating or presenting a scene, but a true act of writing. The filmmaker/author writes with his camera as a writer writes with his pen. In an art in which a length of film and a sound-track is put in motion and proceeds, by means of a certain form and a certain story (there can even be no story at all - it matters little), to evolve a philosophy of life, how can one possibly distinguish between the man who conceives the work and the man who writes it? (22)

This concept inherently demands the director's involvement in, or commandeering of, the processes of creation with
respect to every aspect of the film, from script to cinematography to editing. For Astruc and Bazin, this directorial control allows the filmmaker to articulate degrees of subtlety as well as any literary writer. As an example, Bazin cites Orson Welles’s influence on the editing of *Citizen Kane* (1941).

Le montage accéléré trichait avec le temps et l’espace, celui de Welles ne cherche pas à nous tromper, au contraire, il se propose par contraste comme un condensé temporel, l’équivalent par exemple de l’imparfait français ou du fréquentatif anglais. (Bazin, QC? 144)

But, the following citation also suggests some limits of the effectiveness of the auteurist point of view. Bazin consistently acknowledged that, in spite of the director’s control over so many elements, other people (obviously) always remained active on the set.

The contribution of the cameraman varies with the film, and therefore the director cannot always be the sole creator. Cinema is an art of teamwork. Each film requires that the critic make an individual judgment as to its auteurs. It is
therefore important to note at least the role of the scenarist and the dialogist. (FCOR 33)

Bazin’s remark belies a techno-centrism. The camera operator’s role, for example, in the film appears evident by the fact that the images exist on celluloid. One need only remove the film from the projector to verify; Bazin readily recognizes the role of those whose contribution to the final product is “real” (or “reel”). By extension, Bazin often reviews a film favorably when the director depicts events as people could supposedly experience them in daily life.

Si décisif que soit l’art d’un Carné, par exemple dans la mise en valeur des scénarios du Quai des brumes [1938] ou du Jour se lève, son découpage demeure au niveau de la réalité qu’il analyse, il n’est qu’une façon de la bien voir. (QC? 140)

Yet, for all this generosity vis-à-vis the efforts of the technical staff, Bazin at times projected a less charitable attitude towards the actors.

The critic has stated, in defense of the seriousness of his work, “[o]ne would think that, like the intangible shadows on the screen, this unusual art has no past, leaves no traces, has no depth. It is more than time to invent a criticism in relief” (FCOR 59). Ironically, the one
“intangible shadow” on the screen that leaves the most discernable trace may in fact remain the actor. However, Bazin often views them rather as objects chosen as needed and moved about at will within the frame: of Carné’s Le Jour se lève he says “the choice of Jules Berry and Marie Déa proved to be an awkward one” (47); and of William Wyler’s The Best Years of Our Lives (1946) Bazin notes that “Wyler manœuvre ses acteurs avec une habileté consommée pour dégager peu à peu de leur masse les deux protagonistes” (QC? 168). Of course, actors do prove indispensable to some forms of mise-en-scène, as Bazin noticed in Citizen Kane.

Grâce à la profondeur de champ, des scènes entières sont traitées en une seule prise de vue, la caméra restant même immobile. Les effets dramatiques, demandés antérieurement au montage, naissent tous ici du déplacement des acteurs dans le cadrage choisi une fois pour toutes. (141)

Yet, even when important to the operation of a scene, the actors still seem a function of the scene’s blocking by the director. When the actors themselves, for example, above and beyond a particular film’s diegesis, start to assume any signifying function, Bazin’s analyses conflict, reflecting acceptance of and at the same time recalcitrance towards
viewers’ conceptions of star persona(e). Of actor Jean Gabin in *Le Jour se lève*, Bazin writes

So Gabin was quite right in demanding of his scriptwriters a crisis scene of homicidal fury. It constitutes the significant moment in a rigid destiny where the spectator recognizes the same hero in film after film... (*LJsl...PR 12*)

But, discussing the suspension of fan magazines during the war, Bazin proposes the following.

Criticism must seize the exceptional opportunity offered by the temporary disappearance of movie magazines specializing in the cult of the star to assume responsibility for this worthwhile fight.

The establishment of a certain specialization of criticism is also desirable. The daily press could provide a synopsis of the film and give a succinct opinion about its technical and artistic merits. In delivering this opinion it could make known the director, the dialogist, etc...., recalling as necessary their previous works. (*FCOR 63*)
In other words, the reputations and professional credits of certain members of the production—indeed a great number of them given the three elliptical, hyperbolic suspension points after “etc.”—amount to a subject for serious criticism while those of others, i.e. the actors, may not. Bazin’s quote would posit an intertextual reference to other works by the same director or writer as “necessary” to understand critical discourse on a film but that the same does not hold true for actors. Surprisingly, Bazin, who systematically insisted that critics not disassociate cinema from its popular and commercial function, proposes, in his effort to legitimize film criticism, to ignore what for many people—maybe for a few critics as well—surely seems one of the constitutive elements of the cinematic experience: performers. As Susan Hayward notes in her eco-history of French cinema, “[t]he choice of which film to see is largely determined, in the first instance, by the genre and the actors”; and she adds, “directors do influence choice, but on a much smaller scale” (Hayward, FNC 55). So, while Bazin’s criticism effectively demonstrated an academic and technical method of film analysis and underscored the director’s role in the composition of the mise-en-scène, this mode of criticism did not, it would seem, successfully
integrate the function of the actor, and more particularly the star, into its overall perspective.

The last several decades of French film theory, then, have elaborated both implicit and, quite often, explicit responses to Bazin’s work. Apparatus theory, for example, considers the role of cinema not simply as an expression of a given director’s artistic vision, but as a social structure and a means of storytelling in relation to an ideal spectator. This approach treats cinema as an institution within a historical context, or as Christian Metz terms it, a “fait social total” (Metz, LC 5): film viewing, Metz’s “fait filmique” (7), becomes a moment of contact with one’s own (repressed) dreams and fantasies. Judith Mayne summarizes these concerns in a description of institutional theory that points to the importance and limitations of Metz’s contributions.

Virtually all theorists of the apparatus assume a monolithic quality to the cinema, that is, the cinema works to acculturate individuals to structures of fantasy, desire, dream, and pleasure that are fully of a piece with dominant ideology. (Mayne 18)

Mayne elaborates,
the cinema creates a regressive state in the spectator, a return to the sensations of infantile wholeness, and for Metz, that regressive state encourages the possibilities to reactivate the "imaginary signifier," that is, a host of traumas associated with the development of subjectivity-voyeurism, the primal scene. (18)

In clarifying apparatus theory’s attention to the intersection of Lacanian psychoanalysis with Althusserian ideology and apparatus, Mayne points out one possible drawback of this type of approach: the neglecting of real people’s lives in favor of a consideration of idealized Western subject positions, e.g. the spectator, cinema viewer, etc. Also, such positions, what with the male dominance in Western culture, often read as male-gendered. As such, apparatus theory proves most useful when analyzing the processes whereby, specifically, mainstream films allow (male) viewers to identify with a certain point of view, i.e. the male director’s through the camera lens.

Metz exposes these processes in detail in his explanation of the signifiant imaginaire. This theory of spectatorship begins with an emphasis on how cinematic language relates a narrative.
Étudier un scénario d’un point de vue psychanalytique (ou plus largement sémiotique), c’est le constituer en signifiant.

En cela, le scénario ressemble au rêve, comme lui ressemblent beaucoup de productions humaines.

(Metz, SI 43)

Filmic language, like poetic language or dream language, for example, figures or “scripts” the composition and flow of the various images. Charles D. Minahen elucidates the mechanics of (poetic) scripting as a transformation of personal psychological fantasy-scripts of a particular erotic imagination into carefully constructed, sensually charged, evocative, even provocative, works of art with broader appeal.

(Minahen 121)

With cinema, specifically, the scripting of the artist’s fantasies in the film engages with those of the viewer/reader in the movie theater through identification. In considering this process, Metz partially rules out the idea that the viewer simply identifies primarily with the actor on the screen. In the first place, many scenes do not contain actors and, secondly, such identification
ne nous dit rien encore quant à la place du Moi spectatorial dans l’instauration du signifiant. Mais puisqu’il existe, on peut justement se demander où il est durant la projection du film. (Metz, SI 68)

The critic proposes instead that the viewer identifies with “lui-même comme pur acte de perception” (69). The viewer stares at the wall in the movie theater, the one different from the other three, the “quatrième mur” (the miroir); and then, as Metz states, “ce miroir nous renvoie tout, sauf nous-mêmes” (70). Metz clarifies the task before a viewer in this strange hall of mirrors:

   il faut que je perçoive l’objet photographié comme absent, sa photographie comme présente, et la présence de cet absent comme signifiant.

L’imaginaire du cinéma présuppose le symbolique, car le spectateur doit avoir connu d’abord le miroir primordial. Mais comme celui-ci instituait le Moi très largement dans l’imaginaire, le miroir second de l’écran, appareil symbolique, repose à son tour sur le reflet et le manque. (80)

Through this negotiation of absence and presence, the viewer (position) reestablishes connections with moments when the
viewer first began to construct, to dream-figure, or even to script the world in ideal terms via the “primordial mirror,” a mirror which obviously did include him.

Laura Mulvey, whose work helped found feminist film criticism, addresses the maleness inherent in institutional theory’s viewer position by evoking the binaries that grant discursive power to an idealized masculine gaze.

...pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional, exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (Mulvey, VPNS 11)

Further, Mulvey exposes apparatus theory’s reliance on necessarily gendered notions by defining the above engagement with absence and presence as a harkening back to the castration complex (11).

Another of Mulvey’s theories invites institutional criticism to reconsider the very concept of the look as a primary means of achieving identification.
There are three different looks associated with cinema: that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of characters at each other within the screen illusion. (17)

With Metz, the real people that create and that view cinematic works were subsumed by the patriarchal ideologies to which apparatus theory refers. Viewers enjoy "un voyeurisme unilatéral, sans exhibitionnisme de la part de l'objet regardé" (Metz, SI 12). Mulvey, on the other hand, denaturalizes this pleasure in looking by exposing images as constructed. While characters, unlike actors, within the apparatus of a "fait filmique" presumably have no idea they are objects of visual pleasure for cinema spectators, the actors of the cinematic institution meticulously cultivate their appearance. As such, theories like Mulvey's have, in response to apparatus theory, helped open areas of study for considering the real people, like actors and directors, as well as their personae, which operate within the daily realities of the cinematic institution.

Accordingly, empirical studies, another type of cinema criticism, have challenged the tendency of apparatus theory to speak in abstract terms about institutions and
spectators. These empirical, historical approaches to cinema relate and analyze events of a given film's production, of a work's or an artist's role within the overall industry of cinema, or with public responses to film. For example, empirical studies allow for film readings which take into account a given director's behavior on the set, or a studio's decision-making processes with regard to a given film, or a film's impact on fashion, popular culture, etc. Empirical studies anchor film to the infrastructures unique to its existence and story-telling praxis. One drawback with this approach, as with many critical modes purporting to explain past events, involves the necessity of weighing each individual critic's interpretations of events with relation to that critic's perceived motives for maintaining such an interpretation. At times, conflicting versions of the same event arise; the reader must decide to what extent and for what reason to believe which version.

Turk relates a telling case, concerning Arletty's initial screen appearance in Hôtel du Nord, of conflicting histories. According to Carné, the director himself had to act out, for Arletty, the complicated blocking required for the scene where Arletty, quite symbolically, emerges from
underneath a towel with which she covers herself while using an inhalator. Carné claimed Arletty had trouble mastering the order of events for this sequence (Turk 145, Carné 112). Arletty, on the other hand, recalls no such difficulty (Turk 145, Demonpion 168). Further still, scriptwriter Henri Jeanson claims that Carné at first did not even want Arletty for the role at all (Turk 144-45, Demonpion 167, Pérez 48), whereas Carné claims the contrary. According to Turk, “[p]erhaps the truth of the matter is less consequential than the impression which the latter-day Carné wishes to give” (Turk 144-45). Depending on the whose account seems more believable, Carné either exerted more or less influence on Arletty’s rise to fame due to this film and that famous first appearance.

Another drawback to empirical studies, given the vast array of experiences compromising a film’s history, stems from the fact that these types of studies cannot possibly address every cogent issue. For example, in a review of Robert L. Carringer’s book, The Making of Citizen Kane, Richard M. Gollin praises Carringer’s insistence on art direction, cinematography, and so forth, as auteurist contributions to the film, but criticizes his lack of attention to actors.
The most notable lapse for a book with this title is the virtual absence of comment on acting [...] one may well wonder whether the arch-choreographer was Welles alone, or how the players arrived at readings of lines which now seem inevitably right even in their oddity... (Gollin 273)

Gollin’s remark again underscores how the history of cinematic collaboration studies tends to focus on the technical and material aspects of film rather than on the actors.

Star theory, then, particularly as developed in the last two decades, reintegrates the role of the actor. Richard Dyer, who helped define this approach, analyzes very famous celebrities in relation to their role in society and, also, with reference to specific performances. Dyer contends that, in general, stars represent both a “reinforcement of values under threat” (Dyer, 5 25) and a “displacement of values” (27). As an example, he traces actor Jane Fonda’s “reconciliation of radicalism and feminism with Americanness and ordinariness” (83). Fonda outraged some people with her politics yet, in many films—which exploit her beauty and sex appeal—she embodies an archetypal example of “to-be-looked-at-ness.” In this
respect, she demonstrates her ability to signify
simultaneously, an essential element for distinguishing
actors from stars. On the screen, this quality reveals its
presence whenever, for example, filmgoers remind themselves
that the character on the screen is actually, in real life,
the star playing that character. In other words, if a
 certains action, look, tone of voice, posture, etc., directly
calls to mind a certain star, then the performance of that
action on screen first signifies as the star then as part of
the narrative (126-131). This quality also permits stars to
signify as both normalizing societal force (cultural icon)
and a means of escape (figure of difference and
marginality). For the purposes of this study, this type of
star quality appears with both Marais, a handsome and strong
“leading man” type but gay and a self-admitted arriviste,
and Arletty, a working-class Marianne figure whose politics
and choice of lover displeased many.

Dyer also touches upon issues of authorship suggesting
“the major problem that all concepts of authorship present
us with—in, be it said, all the arts—is the relationship
between the semiotic or aesthetic text and the author”
(152). Dyer, like Schultz, evokes the problem of
transparency and the difficulty of associating expression
with any one person or position. Dyer points out that attempts to solve the problem often lead to conclusions that the film necessarily springs from an author's unconscious. Instead, Dyer suggests that, "we have to think in terms of people working on and in those [semiotic] codes" (152).

Dyer's notion of authorship consistently takes into account the role of the star and star image.

It is certainly possible to establish, as 'auteur theory' enjoins us, continuities, contradictions and transformations either in the totality of a star's image or in discrete elements such as dress or performance style, roles, publicity, iconography. However, the relationship between these and the star always has to be established by examination of what sources there are concerning the actual making of the image and films. That is to say, a star, in films, publicity and promotion, is a semiotic construction... (152)

Dyer, noting the constructedness of star image, reminds readers not to assume the real people behind star personae always necessarily control all discourse surrounding their own images. In the film industry, magazine photos and newspaper articles, for instance, sometimes contribute as
much to star image as actual appearances in film. Paul McDonald elaborates upon this "negotiation" of star image. 

...stars and moviegoers may be better thought of as social 'agents'. Agency does not presume that stars and moviegoers can freely determine structures of representation or power, only that they can negotiate movements within those structures. (McDonald 200)

McDonald highlights the audience’s role in responding to, in recognizing and, so to a certain degree, in defining a star’s image. McDonald also calls into question the notion that publicity "actively" creates images and that fans "passively" accept and consume those images. Based on Dyer’s and McDonald’s analyses, most any discourse (biographies, press articles, critical studies, audience reactions, etc.) about stars can become part of a culture’s construction of star images or star personae. Consequently, these theories lend nuance to the gendered notion, from above, of the ideal viewer. Star theory, when for example taking into account female viewers who emulate the dress or mannerisms of a female star, demands the inclusion of women’s roles in defining and/or reinforcing dominant, as represented through cinematic icons, discourse.
In summary, all four of the major approaches to French film, from above, have accounted for the collaborative aspect of cinema in different, but limited, ways. Bazin and critics like him, while emphasizing the director’s authority over a film’s production, did recognize the input of others; but they tended to limit their remarks to the technical contributions of writers, camera operators, and editors. In response to auteurist criticism, apparatus theories placed film within its social context, but these theories’ reliance on hetero-normative, psychoanalytical analyses of the ideal spectator neglected each individual film’s production history as well as historical and cultural specificities. In contrast, empirical studies do integrate production elements, often including at least some details of actor/director relationships. Lastly, star theory, as its name suggests, analyzes the role of the actors/stars, but concentrates mostly on the star, as sign, in relation to the cinematic institution. While all of these major critical modes certainly represent important sources of reference for this study, none of them provides a coherent, generalized theory of collaborative authorship. For this reason, the next part of this study consists of a brief examination of recent theorizations of co-authorship in literary criticism.
These investigations into collaboration in literature serve as a model for this study to follow when considering the filmic genre.

In literary criticism, discussions of collaborative authorship yield two approaches that prove particularly helpful here. The first posits that the co-writing of literary texts represents a challenge, both politically and ideologically, to traditional power structures. This challenge does not stem from the collaborators themselves, but rather from the difficulty in integrating these texts into forms of literary criticism appealing to the authority of a single author. As Alison Hickey explains:

Collaborative arrangements arouse [critics’] anxieties about authority not so much because such arrangements strike them as manifestations of actual “conspiracy” as because they point to the questionable origins and status of authority. The collaborative moment serves as a reminder that authority is not organic and unalienable. (Hickey 307)

Hickey implies that response to collaborative texts calls into question the critic’s own position of power, within the academe especially, where individual figures of authority
usually (are expected to) work alone. Hickey continues that collaboration reveals authority as "vulnerable to deconstruction" (307). And in her deconstruction of authorial power over a text, Hickey points out that editors, critics, and readers—through alteration, analysis, reception, and consumption—also contribute to the text's cultural significance.

Hickey’s arguments with regard to literary criticism seem equally relevant when considering director/actor co-authorship in cinema in light of auteurist criticism. When Bazin privileged the director, he also sought to assure film criticism’s place within academic discourse. In a 1943 essay, Bazin asked the following question.

We already have a history of the Seventh Art by a Sorbonne professor, and one day we will have an 800-page thesis on the comic art of the American cinema between 1905 and 1917 or something like that. And then who would dare maintain that the subject cannot be taken seriously? (Bazin, FCOR 55-56)

Perhaps Hickey’s arguments help to expose an underlying, and likely subconscious, appeal to authorial authority through which, like literary critics before him, Bazin, all the
while assuring his own position in society and history, carried out his critical work. Moreover, Hickey’s comments reflect how a shift from auteurist or institutional criticism to spectatorship and collaborative studies follows the shift in twentieth-century thought from structuralism to post-structuralism. For instance, with Bazin, the power of the director remained whole and uncomplicated; it operated systematically and transparently in controlling the meaning of a film. When the director’s influence becomes just one of several factors determining a film’s reception, Bazin’s paradigm demands a reconfiguration to account for the specificities and individual histories of these other factors.

Wayne Koestenbaum explores the second trend in literary collaboration useful for this study. Koestenbaum uses the term “double talk” to describe the expression of dually authored texts, which, according to that critic, generally exhibit an erotic charge. Instead of a partnership being an instance of negotiation of expression and authority, working together becomes “a superstitious hope, a longing for replenishment, and union that invites baroquely sexual interpretation” (4). Since Koestenbaum considers male-male collaboration, he assigns this charge a homoerotic valence.
Koestenbaum's study also highlights the productivity of the partnership. For his male collaborators, "the text they balance between them is alternately the child of their sexual union, and a shared woman" (3). Here lies the crux of the homoerotic argument; as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has pointed out, the "gender asymmetry" in male-male-female triangles usually highlights to a greater degree, not the bonds between the each man and the woman, but rather, the location on the homosexual-homosocial continuum of the relationship between the two men (Sedgwick 21-25). For Koestenbaum's study, this latter relationship constitutes a "striking sexual phenomenon" (Koestenbaum 14) where sublimation of desire and fear of intimacy express themselves textually.

Ironically, the application of Koestenbaum's theories seems more appropriate to the partnership between Carné and Arletty rather than to the one between Cocteau and Marais. While sublimation of desire appears textually—through the sensuous and dreamy images of the stars involved—in films by both pairs, Cocteau and Marais obviously did express intimacy and desire in other ways. For Carné and Arletty, though, a respectful distance, as well as the obvious lack of a physical dimension, marked their close friendship.
Turk contends that Arletty “served a screen onto which [Carné] projected primal desires” and that she “understood the nature and limits of Carné’s attraction to her” (343). Perhaps their work together represents a possibility for the release of any unresolved erotic charge between them onto the filmic text.

The homosocial analyses in Koestenbaum’s study appear convincing, but his remark calling the text the “child of their sexual union” seems less useful in the two partnerships discussed here. Both pairs have engaged in collaborations that did not yield a final, textual product but still contributed to their personae. For instance, part of the appeal of the Cocteau/Marais partnership comes from their continued contribution, as a couple living and working together, to the rebirth of French cinema overall during and after World War II. Just their iconographic presence in the industry, apart from any one project, impresses many fans (as seen earlier). As Ginette Vincendeau summarizes, “a fundamental attribute of stardom is the articulation of the private with the public” (Vincendeau 48).

In the case of Carné (who has stated that “mes plus beaux films sont peut-être ceux que j’ai préparés sans pouvoir les tourner”)) Robert Chazal claims the following:
Cette déclaration de Marcel Carné est indispensable à retenir pour situer le metteur en scène par rapport à son œuvre propre et à celle des autres. Dire que Carné est un grand cinéaste en fonction des films qu’il a réalisés, mais aussi de ceux qu’il aurait dû tourner, n’est pas un artifice de langage ni la formulation d’un paradoxe. (Chazal 9)

As an example, an unrealized Carné/Arletty film project in 1947, La Fleur de l’âge, set to take place on Belle-Île, (Carné 225-233) contributes, although granted to a lesser degree than their realized film projects, to the personae of both the director and actor. For Carné, it counts as one of the many famous unfinished projects that mark his reputation. Further, as the filming suffered terrible setbacks then lack of assistance and support from producers, the project shows how Carné struggled to maintain his position in the industry after the war. For Arletty, the pauses in production allowed her to explore the island and purchase a résidence secondaire that she discovered there (Demonpion 328-30). In French culture, a newly purchased vacation home in the country can signify success as it underscores the French appreciation of leisure time.
Moreover, as Vincendeau points out, French stars often buy such properties, a trend she labels as their “return to nature” (Vincendeau 19). Arletty’s ownership of such a house, and at such a famous tourist destination would, according to star theory, definitely contribute to her status as a French cinematic icon.

Anecdotes aside, the above theories of literary collaboration, along with the above review of collaboration in French film criticism, account for the primary definition of the French word collaboration as it relates to multiple authorship and star persona in this discussion. The secondary definition, “politique de cooperation avec un ennemi, en partic., avec l’occupant allemand sous l’Occupation (1940-1944)” (Larousse), also merits mention given its impact on the personae of all four artists under consideration. Carné, while suffering criticism simply for remaining in France during the Occupation, nearly made a film for the Continental film company, which the Germans controlled. Arletty, as seen earlier, went to prison for her affair with Soehring. Marais served in the drôle de guerre and the résistance; but both the media and the army often did not take his participation seriously. Marais sometimes became angry in the face of such criticism,
against him and Cocteau, and, despite the possibility of arrest, on at least one occasion reportedly fought back with his fists (Steegmuller 442, Marais, Hdmv 134-35). Cocteau, although he encouraged speaking out, by artists especially, against foreign oppression and unjust rule, maintained a low profile during the Occupation as the open secrets of his opium use and homosexuality would, and to some extent did, elicit unfair harassment from the Germans, the right-wing Vichy government, and the Surrealists. Even worse, officials discontinued many of his plays during the Occupation while Vichy partisans, and on some occasions la bande à André Breton, violently disrupted Cocteau’s shows by shouting insults (Steegmuller 440-445, Touzot 128-139). Moreover, Cocteau, for whom “l’amitié passait avant tout et n’avait pas de frontière” (Marais, Hdmv 143), remained friends with and attended the Paris opening of German sculptor Arno Brecker; these actions also proved catalysts for criticism.

As the above incidents and criticisms suggest, most any action during the Occupation on the part of a highly visible member of the French cinema industry could, at the épuration, elicit either praise or disapproval. Accordingly, these artists tended to weigh each career move
against the possibility of its post-war ramifications. To illustrate this point, and also to address very generally some other influences of the Occupation on French filmmaking, the story of another of Carné’s famous unfinished projects, the science fiction feature *Les Évadés de l’an 4000*, elucidates some complex interactions of political collaboration with art, politics, violence, fear, homophobia, misogyny, and anti-Semitism.

Carné’s career began reaching its pinnacle in the early forties as the French cinema industry experienced both positive and negative changes. Bazin speaks of a “renaissance” of French cinema during this period by pointing to the public’s need for escape and distraction and to the government’s role in assuring that entertainment (Bazin, FCOR 43). For instance, the Vichy-sponsored C.O.I.C. (Comité d’organisation de l’industrie cinématographique) regulated production quotas and assured profitability; according to Alan Williams, the C.O.I.C. “rescued the French film industry from near-collapse” (Williams 250). Williams also points out, however, that the C.O.I.C.

implemented a new law requiring that anyone working in the cinema had to obtain a
“professional identity card.” The regulators’ notion of identity, however, was not exclusively professional: each applicant had to prove, among other qualifications, that he or she was not a Jew. (251)

Another influence on the cinema of this time appeared in the form of censorship; films of the Occupation period had to be in line with Pétainiste ideology as exuded, for example, in the nationalist chant of “travail, famille, patrie.” Susan Hayward explains:

The films of that period reflect the effect of censorship in that, with a few exceptions, most of them are far removed from reality, dealing mostly with melodramas (including historical melodramas). (Hayward 39)

Alongside official censorship boards, such as the Propagand Staffordel, Hayward continues, there existed unofficial censors.

For the first time in French Cinema history, cinema critics contributed to this repression (the most notorious of whom was François Vinneuil, the nom-de-plume for Lucien Rebatet, of the Fascist Je suis partout). (39)
Further, Hayward notes that censors of the time did not simply expurgate "offending" scenes from finished films; rather, these organizations proactively bowdlerized scripts, contracts, and treatments. Filmmaker François Truffaut mentions that this type of intrusion into the production process influenced at once both the form and content of Occupation-era works. He stresses that even a director like Carné, known for exercising great control over decisions on the set,

was restricted to a 'supervised liberty' under the eye of Rebatet-Vinneuil. It is understandable that cinema took refuge in historical films and films of fantasy and enchantment. (Truffaut 18)

This pre-censorship contributed to the failure of Les Évadés de l'an 4000.

Carné had signed with Continental and had begun plans, which included casting Marais (Marais, Hdmv 131), for the film. Before continuing, readers will recall that, according to Williams,

Continental was an early, carefully crafted result of the process known as Aryanization, whereby businesses owned wholly or in part by Jews were
seized and sold, at a fraction of their real value, to racially “pure” buyers. (Williams 255)

The Germans chose Alfred Greven to head the enterprise; Williams describes him as a “respected though not particularly celebrated figure of the German cinema industry.” The Germans expected Greven to produce “cheaply made, unambitious fare for a lucrative, quasi-colonial market.” But, “Greven had very different ideas, and he set about signing contracts with the best directors, writers, stars, and technicians” (256). While many famous members of the industry, for example director Jean Renoir and poet, and long-time screenwriter for Carné’s films, Jacques Prévert, refused to work for Continental, the company did attract some big names like actor Fernandel and screenwriter Charles Spaak. The company even produced such unexpected work as Henri-Georges Clouzot’s Le Corbeau (1943), a decadently anti-Vichy, anti-Nazi, and anti-bourgeois drama of denunciations. Furthermore, according to Williams, Greven purportedly allowed Jews, Communists, and Leftists “secretly” to remain in his employment (256-61).

Carné insists that, in fact, Greven tricked him into accepting a contract by insinuating that other prominent directors were also being signed: “J’avais été joué. Le
chantage avait réussi et je m’en voulais d’être stupidement tombé dans le piège que m’avait tendu Greven” (Carné 148). Carné, anxious from the outset that Greven would slip into his contract some sort of trap, had negotiated carefully; the director especially wanted to choose the subject himself, to avoid inadvertently making a propaganda piece, and to film the project in France. Having won these concessions, Carné still began to feel apprehension at working for “l’ennemi”:

C’est ainsi que, sur le point de réaliser un très grand film d’une ampleur inhabituelle, je m’aperçus avec effarement que je n’avais qu’un désir: trouver un prétexte légalement valable pour rompre mon contrat. (150)

Greven’s constant, politically motivated intervention into Carné’s project would provide such an occasion. Carné wished Jean Cocteau to design the film’s costumes; Greven waffled, and then eventually refused to engage the artist. Carné threw a tantrum in Greven’s office saying that since “l’on mettait un malin plaisir à contrecarrer [s]es projets, il [lui] était impossible de continuer à assumer [s]on travail” (151). The C.O.I.C. summoned Carné and warned him to be careful about attacking powerful officials like
Greven. In the end, though, Greven released Carné from his contract; he says “[j]’avais ma liberté” (151). Although this science fiction project may have proven a classic of the genre and of French cinema, its failure to come to fruition allowed Carné to make Les Visiteurs du soir (1942), with the, relatively speaking, independent producer André Paulvé, and, later, the chef-d’œuvre, Les Enfants du paradis (1945). In addition, since the comités d’épuration already attacked Carné simply for working at all during the Occupation, an association with a Continental production would most likely have harmed his reputation even further.

In retrospect, the épuration arguably did not so much seek the “truth” about Occupation-era actions, of for example directors like Carné, but rather allowed for a morally sanctioned release of pent-up energy and hostility. Describing the French reaction to the Liberation as “hysterical” rather than “an assumption of a collective consciousness of what the recent past meant,” Hayward explains that, “France’s mood after the Liberation was more schizoid than irrational” (Hayward 129). Lending support to Hayward’s argument, films such as Claude Berri’s Uranus (1990) illustrate the inability of the French to assess blame, for their humiliation, because of the contradictory
excesses and hypocrisies of the political and social forces at work in the aftermath of the war. But, for the purposes of this study, the national temperament proves less important than the judgments levied against specific individuals by the comités d’Épuration.

Such judgments, and their subsequent dismissals or penalties, for members of the performing arts, especially, became permanent parts of the reputation of the person in question. For example, the committees judged prolific filmmaker Sacha Guitry rather harshly, for supposedly working with the Germans during the Occupation, then pardoned him. The committees looked askance at Clouzot’s Le Corbeau and then banned it at the Liberation, since, according to F. Vanoye, et al., “il aurait servi à donner une mauvaise image de la France en Allemagne” (Vanoye et al. 23). As Hayward implies, members of public professions, like show business or the press, fared badly vis-à-vis their actions during the war in that, obviously, their own publications, films, etc., even their own celebrity, served as proof of their actions (Hayward 129). Carné, himself a victim of the Épuration, recounts the occasion when Vinneuil’s [Rebatet’s] wife—claiming, to the director’s incredulity, that the once ubiquitous “critic” had been
supportive of Carné’s making Les Visiteurs du soir—asked Carné to sign a petition commuting her husband’s death sentence. Carné experienced a dilemma in that, even though morally opposed to the death penalty, he did not wish to lend support to Vinneuil, whose writing has caused so many so much harm. The fascist writer had even leveled anti-Semitic remarks against gentile Carné simply for working with Jews—who decorously allowed others to take credit for their contributions to Occupation-era films in order not to risk Carné’s entire productions—like set designer Alexandre Trauner and composer Joseph Kosma. Truffaut cites Vinneuil as having accused Carné and his Jewish colleagues of making “‘French cinema wallow in a fatalism, a determinism, that is degrading’” (Truffaut 18). Such atrocities notwithstanding, Carné explains his solution vis-à-vis the petition: “Je lui demandai d’obtenir trois ou quatre signatures connues et de revenir me voir aussitôt après” (Carné 174). Mrs. Vinneuil never returned; her husband, eventually only imprisoned, continued to write both during and after his incarceration.

Arletty’s biographer also points to jealousy, in the case of Arletty at least, as a possible motive for retaliation by the épurateurs.
Comédienne adulée, touchant probablement les plus gros cachets, elle a pu attiser des convoitises, des haines sourdes, des rancœurs tenaces. Sa liaison avec Soehring, de notoriété publique, a, sinon, fait des jaioux, du moins exaspéré des esprits vengeurs. (Demonpion 313)

Turk points out that "[t]ens of thousands of Frenchwomen slept with Germans during the Occupation. None but Arletty starred in three films" (Turk 341). In an interview with Arletty, Turk quotes the actor: "I’m sure that if I had not been so famous, I would never have been incarcerated" (341). Conversely, if not precisely for her celebrity, Arletty may have suffered a worse fate. As Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais so strikingly depict in Hiroshima mon amour (1959), the usual punishment for a woman having slept with a German included the public humiliation of having her head shaved; such women, as Hayward makes clear, "were easy scapegoats for a nation’s anger at its own humiliation" (Hayward 129). Arletty’s punishment, though, consisted of eighteen months internment—complete with short leaves for studio sound dubbings—at a more or less comfortable residence at La Houssaye; this sentence, as noted earlier, caused her to miss the premiere of Les Enfants du paradis. "Le soir de la
première, Arletty n’est pas à la corbeille. Une absence qui, rétrospectivement, ne fait qu’ajouter à la légende” (Demonpion 297).

However, in spite of the criticism for their professional activity during the Occupation, actors’ and filmmakers’ very public works symbolized a national pride and unity, which Frenchmen validated retroactively as having helped encourage the Liberation; Demonpion notes, “le monde du spectacle est à l’image de la France libérée” (283). Carné discusses those who treated him as suspect, during the épuration, in light of his own contribution to the resurgence of French cinema during the war.

Je ne suis pas sûr qu’un cinéma français à l’agonie les eût tellement chagrinés. Cela, en tout cas, eût répondu à leur politique du pire, alors que notre cinéma connut durant la guerre un essor et un rayonnement exceptionnels. Comme on se plût à le reconnaître par la suite... (Carné 202)

Demonpion clarifies, and thereby lends support to Carné’s assertion, that, with Les Enfants du paradis, France, “convalescente, peut faire aussi bien sinon mieux que les Américains en matière de fresque historique. Leur superproduction Autant en emporte le vent date de 1939”
(Demonpion 295). Turk takes particular note of Carné’s 1979 special César for Les Enfants du paradis as well as a slew of other awards and honors the filmmaker has received (Turk 428-32). Finally, Geneviève Sellier reminds readers that Les Enfants du paradis continue depuis plus de 45 ans à alimenter quasiment seul le besoin de consensus du public et des professionnels à servir le “prestige de la culture française,” jusqu’à cette récente “Nuit du cinéma” à Canal +, où il fut désigné comme le plus beau film français de tous les temps! (Sellier 121)

These remarks demonstrate that, despite all the possible negative ramifications of remaining professionally active during the Occupation, the cinematic works and the personal histories issuing from that period have, over time, contributed to—and in some cases perhaps assured—the celebrity of, for example, Carné and Cocteau or the star image of actors like Arletty or Marais. The continued mentioned of these incidents alone fuels the discourse sustaining celebrity. As Demonpion rhetorically, and succinctly, asks, “L’artiste n’existe-t-il pas essentiellement à travers sa célébrité?” (Demonpion 283)

Whether people deem the specific, historical actions in
question as traitorous or patriotic, and whether the artists involved merit some form of punishment or retaliation, remain questions perhaps better relegated to populist, politico-moralistic polemics.

Regardless, the politicized actions of these four, ironically, mostly apolitical personalities only constitute one aspect of their personae. Certainly, many other elements contribute to star personae, such as magazine articles, movie reviews, interviews, publicity photos, gossip, and so forth. However, as their films represent another, and arguably the most central, aspect of our constructs of these figures, the next chapters will now turn to the textual analyses of the six works in question here: *Hôtel du Nord* (1938), *Le Jour se lève* (1939), and *Les Enfants du paradis* (1945), alongside *La Belle et la Bête* (1946), *Les Parents terribles* (1948), and *Orphée* (1949).
CHAPTER 3

THE "ATMOSPHÈRE" OF HÔTEL DU NORD:

ARTICULATING NARRATIVE SPACE AND STAR SPACE

The next three chapters examine the Carné/Arletty partnership through textual analysis of three films, beginning with Hôtel du Nord (1938). By the late thirties, Carné’s hit Le Quai des brumes (1938) granted the filmmaker the freedom to choose his own subject matter and to cast the performers of his choice. While the question remains as to Carné’s initial enthusiasm about working with Arletty on Hôtel du Nord, the project did allow Carné an opportunity—his first and only real success in star making—to transform Arletty into a major screen icon. In previous films, and certainly in her stage acts, Arletty, according to Turk, played “naughty soubrettes and flashy streetwalkers [embodying] an easy mix of coquetry and idealism” (Turk 142). The actor’s endearingly clunky gait, parigot accent, mature beauty, and straightforward, sincere delivery proved an effective combination for her to play, as Turk labels her
character in *Hôtel du Nord* for example, the “whore with a heart of gold” (144). This mixture of the common and the sublime, of the everyday and the extraordinary, also marks the first major film in the Carné/Arletty partnership and serves in the articulation of Carné’s poetic realist style as well as Arletty’s star persona.

Adapted from Eugène Dabit’s 1929 novel about the working-class residents of a small hotel overlooking the locks of the Canal St. Martin in Paris, *Hôtel du Nord* follows the lives of different characters during the days leading up to a Bastille Day celebration. There are many subplots in the film, yet two stories dominate the narrative, which contrasts the relationship of Renée (Annabella) and Pierre (Jean-Pierre Aumont) with that of Raymonde (Arletty) and Edmond (Louis Jouvet). The former couple rent a room in the hotel intent upon committing a double suicide. After shooting Renée, however, the horrified Pierre loses the courage to fire on himself and attempts escape. Renée, after recovering in the hospital, returns to the hotel, gains employment as a waitress, and tries to rekindle her affair with the now jailed and ashamed Pierre. The latter couple, a prostitute and her gangster pimp, watches the disintegration of their relationship, because of extensive bickering and infidelity, as the film
progresses. In addition, they face police harassment and vengeance from other criminals.

While at first the film seems to concentrate more on the lovesick Renée and Pierre, who constantly languish over their doomed affair, the focus shifts, largely because of the stronger performances by the more experienced Arletty and Jouvet, to Raymonde and Edmond, whose piquant, comic repartees account for some of the film’s more memorable scenes. The speeches by Renée, on the other hand, border on the cliché, e.g. “Si tu ne m’aimais plus, Pierre, je n’aurais plus rien. Je serais seule au monde,” etc. But those between Raymonde and Edmond, with their extensively stylized turns of phrase, contrast in tone to both the melodramatic pining by Renée and Pierre and to the generally realistic, everyday dialog of the rest of the characters in the film.

Critics (Turk 150, Pérez 48, Carné 109) have suggested that the blandness of Annabella’s lines reflects Hôtel du Nord screenwriter Henri Jeanson’s lack of respect for that talent of that actor, whose casting seemingly helped the adaptation project receive funding (Carné 109). Even so, Carné’s visuals do not tend to redeem the film’s supposed star in the important scenes that develop her character. Instead, they situate her in staged poses within almost
expressionistic, dream-like settings, which break from poetic realism’s theoretical anchorage in real life. For example, in the hospital bed, Annabella lies flat with her body completely covered by white sheets from the chin down. Bare white walls comprise the majority of the uncluttered set lit by beams of light shining in from a small open window or through the glass panes of the hospital’s room dividers. Annabella’s head seems to float in undefined space as she awakens from her surgery and, dreaming of Pierre, tells the uninterested nurse, “Là-bas, on sera libre. Ce sera merveilleux.”

Unlike the hospital set, Alexandre Trauner’s painstakingly reconstructed hotel façade, the canal, and the locks, spring forth with realistic details such as painted signs, clocks, and other markings of daily life. For the interior scenes, the actors constantly manipulate glasses, tableware, clothing, bedding, and other apposite items for a hotel and café. In an important scene for the development of Arletty’s character, and in contrast to Annabella’s hospital scene earlier, Raymonde expresses her love for Edmond while in contact with these quotidian objects.

Raymonde returns to the hotel after several days of questioning and harassment at the police station over her lack of updated identity papers. She discovers that, during
her absence, Edmond had an affair with Jeanne, the rather shy housekeeper. Initially angry, Raymonde forgives Edmond when he announces his plans to leave the hotel and take Raymonde to Toulon. In good spirits, Raymonde, with the help of Jeanne, packs her bags and at one point even offers her timid rival the gift of an old dress saying “la preuve que j’ai pas de rancune.” As the women open the suitcase and place the clothing and other objects inside, Raymonde tells Jeanne about traveling with Edmond.

RAYMONDE: ...Voyager avec lui, c’est un rêve. Cet homme-là dans une gare, c’est un autre homme. Il est aux petits soins et tout avec vous. Il vous achète des oranges, il vous les pèle. Il vous allume votre cigarette avant de vous l’offrir. Il est imbattable question de délicatesse. Il vous explique tout le pays où qu’on passe, [...] un vrai géographe. Et plus qu’on descend vers la mer, plus il devient tendre. [...] Avec lui, on prend des troisièmes et on a l’impression d’être en première.

JEANNE: Vous avez souvent voyagé ensemble?

RAYMONDE: C’est la première fois.

Raymonde recounts a dream vacation that she could nonetheless possibly realize with Edmond. A simple train
ride in third class becomes a grand, first-class adventure and an occasion for the expression of romantic love. Moreover, the direct delivery of this dialog by Arletty, alongside the mundane activities of the scene, and the classical, or invisible Hollywood-style, cinematography (medium to medium long shots, shot-reverse shot editing, Arletty in the traditional star position with flashier clothes and more time on camera, etc.) allows the viewer to concentrate on each detail of Raymonde’s fantasy. A peeled orange becomes a symbol of affection and devotion while the looming sea, the station at the end of the line, draws out the tenderness of a normally cruel man.

Such transformations of prosaic elements represent a constitutive aspect of Carné’s poetic realism. In his films, everyday objects and places, such as articles of clothing and lit cigarettes, or hotel rooms and train stations, acquire a poetic nuance without any deformation or defamiliarization of the object in question. Bazin proposes the following analysis:

Le réalisme de Carné sait, tout en restant minutieusement fidèle à la vraisemblance de son décor, le transposer poétiquement, non pas en le modifiant par une transposition formelle et picturale, comme le fit l’expressionnisme
allemand, mais en dégageant sa poésie immanente, en le contraignant de révéler de secrets accords avec le drame. (Bazin in Pérez 65)

Turk follows in the same critical tradition when describing scenes like the one above as poetic realism when "all elements of the setting ame[t] symbolic value without any distortion of verisimilitude" (Turk 142). Similarly, for Maureen Turim:

In Poetic Realism, the accent is on poesis, on the trope deployed strategically, framed in a manner that sparkles with a simultaneous sense of design and imaginative play of thought and language.

(Turim, PRPIO 74)

These definitions of poetic realism help explain how Carné's films create dreams out of everyday life. Even in the confines of a modest hotel room or in a third class train compartment, the humblest or most downtrodden member of society can experience happiness through an imaginary exploration, and also through a communal exploration as in the hotel packing scene, of fantasies and perfect worlds. However, when the characters of poetic realism actually try to live out these dreams, failure inevitably ensues. This failure takes place on two levels. Diegetically, the characters do not succeed in their plans because of some
tragic event, usually death or separation. Cinematically, Carné visually glorifies the failures, while his depictions of positive resolutions to human dramas seem trite. As his rather classical technical style enhances scenes of false hope, suffering, entrapment, and despair, that same style generally renders happy endings anticlimactic, and, strangely, unrealistic.

A comparison of the fates of the two couples in the film illustrates the important role of failure in the articulation of Carné’s narrative style. Before the packing scene, above, Edmond announces to Raymonde that their departure will take place once Raymond attends to a few “details.” Filmed—like most of the interior scenes of the hotel—in classic medium shots, the scene announcing the departure helps to advance the plot of the film and to reconcile the couple. Next comes a shot, from outside the hotel, of Edmond turning around to look out of the window. The frame within a frame of the window posits Edmond between two worlds: his domestic life inside the hotel room behind him and the unforeseen world outside. Then the camera assumes Edmond’s point of view in a high angle shot, like many shots of the canal, depicting the locks opening and a barge passing through. This somewhat clichéd visual suggestion of the possibility of departure carries a rather
precarious and foreboding nuance given that one of Edmond’s “details” involves escaping from some angry, enemy mobsters. Jouvet’s worried, pensive expression in the window serves as a contrast to the symbolism of the canal gates opening towards the sea.

Later in the film, upon failing to settle his score with his enemies, Edmond enters the hotel room, after the packing scene, and tells Raymonde, who carries her suitcase towards the door, “on ne part plus.” This line, which Raymonde repeats at moments of exasperation with Edmond, becomes a refrain throughout the rest of the film to indicate the failing relationship between Edmond and Raymonde. Next, Edmond hands Raymonde the train tickets and instructs her to take them to the station for a refund. Raymonde, emotionally wounded, throws the tickets on the bed, unable to accept the humiliating task of turning in these symbols, of her dreams, for money. After this scene, a short montage of the canal and surrounding neighborhood follows. A wipe, or substitution of one image by another through a sweep across the screen, opens the sequence, which starts with a clock indicating a quarter past twelve. A high angle shot of the canal, a low angle shot of the canal, a long shot of a tired worker resting his head on a bench, and a low angle shot of stairs leading from the canal up to
the hotel complete the sequence which closes, as it opened, with a wipe. The next scene shows a busy lunch service for local workers, complete with indecent flirting and bawdy humor, in the hotel’s dining room. This lunch scene recalls one of first scenes from the film, where the residents celebrated a communion with lively conversation and risqué humor around a noisy, crowded table.

Throughout Hôtel du Nord, and in other of his films as well, Carné uses wipes to indicate different actions occurring at the same time in the plot, but in different locations. In the sequence above, the wipes combine with shot matching (from the communion scene) to indicate the cyclical rhythms of working class life; regardless of dreams of departure, daily routines continue. The canal, more than a mere physical setting, constitutes a defining feature of this life in the film by providing employment, patrons, and a constant flow of people and goods. Turk, in his analysis of the opening and closing scenes in the film, notes that Carné uses matching shots of the canal in order to create a “disengagement from real time and space” (Turk 132). Accordingly, the montage sequence above marks the closed space of the filmic world through a visual insistence on the famous and expensive set. The high/low shots of the canal, in contrast with the medium shots of the interior
scenes of people’s lives, frame the characters and plot within that fictitious world. The wipes, in the above sequence, parenthetically indicate the atemporal nature of that space.

Eventually, Edmond leaves Raymonde for a brief affair with Renée, who in turn leaves him after Pierre’s release from prison. The initial break up of Edmond and Raymonde takes place in the most famous scene of Hôtel du Nord, a scene that made Arletty a star. After another shot of the canal gate opening to allow for the passage of a boat, Edmond and Raymonde exit the hotel for a day of fishing in the country. They exchange their famous lines halfway across a narrow footbridge over the canal. Edmond feels trapped in the relationship complaining, “Je m’asphyxie. Tu sais, je m’asphyxie.” Raymonde tries rekindling the idea of going to Toulon and suggests, “À Toulon il y a de l’air puisqu’il y a la mer.” Edmond responds, “Partout où on ira ça sentira le pourri.” He later announces, “J’ai besoin de changer d’atmosphère, et mon atmosphère, c’est toi.” In anger, Raymonde cries out, “Atmosphère! Atmosphère! Est-ce que j’ai une gueule d’atmosphère?” Afterwards, Raymonde returns to the hotel alone.

These comic lines express the closed-in environment of the hotel and of the film itself. On the verge of escaping
across the canal, to enjoy an excursion in open rural spaces, the lovers' separation thwarts their departure from everyday dreariness. In fact, throughout the film, most every escape from the confines of the hotel carries a negative charge. For example, Raymonde left to go to jail, Renée left for the hospital, and Pierre left for prison. In the scene with Raymonde, Edmond does leave for a day of fishing alone, but he still returns to the hotel afterwards. Knowing his enemies will eventually find him anyway, he continues returning to the hotel after each of his excursions until his eventual murder in his hotel room.

The sequence on the footbridge owes its success in large part to Arletty's distinctive voice, which contributes to the closed world of Carné's poetic realism in a phonetic manner as well. Arletty's pronunciation of the -ère sound, with the open, lengthened vowel, in words like "mer," "air," and "atmosphère," could suggest the hope for liberation and escape. By contrast, Edmond's lines are marked by closed vowels, "like "i" and "u", in "tu sais," "pourri," and the repeated "asphyxie." Edmond's closed body language, turning away from Raymonde—unsure in her footing on the narrow bridge in her extremely high-heeled shoes—and towards the other side of the bridge, visually underscores the impossibility of escape, especially for Raymonde. In a
final shattering of her hopes for happiness with Edmond away from the hotel, he uses a word to denote openness, "atmosphère," as an insult.

This scene’s insistence on dry, comic hopelessness also carries political implications. Steven Ungar asks if Edmond "embod[ied] the mood [...] of a France for which the inevitability of a war with Germany was now a matter of time" (Ungar 394). Ungar references an earlier scene where Raymonde, unaware of the extent of the danger from their enemies, complains to Edmond about his fatalism. Pessimism, over political events in Germany, may have prevailed during the interwar years, and especially the late thirties, and Carné’s works such as Le Quai des brumes, Hôtel du Nord, and Le Jour se lève, seem to attest to that general frame of mind. However, when considering films as historical texts, difficulties arise due to the many varieties of histories and to the various possible readings of each film.

For instance, the scene above also speaks to the importance of vacations in French culture and to the fragile political relationships that allowed for France’s first congés payés. Critics often read scenes like the one above as emblematic of the demise of Léon Blum’s Popular Front (Turk 131, Ungar 394). By 1938, with the final defeat of Blum by Daladier, there came a temporary halt in socialist
reform; but, on the other hand, the subsequent government never overturned the Popular Front’s landmark legislation granting two weeks of paid vacation to all French workers. Gérard Labrune and Philippe Toutain underscore the cultural values behind this law.

Au-delà des déceptions politiques, des maladresses économiques et de l’échec final de l’expérience, le vote des congés payés atteste de l’idéal humaniste qui a été celui du premier gouvernement Blum. La loi montre que l’essentiel réside dans cette volonté de libération de l’homme qui marque l’esprit de 36. (Labrune, et. al., 107)

In France, vacations can certainly connote this socialist agenda granting a new dignity to the working, and middle, classes as their standard of living improves. In addition, the ideal vacation often included a seaside destination. At the filming of Hôtel du Nord, though, such a trip would have remained just slightly out of reach for most French, as Hayward explains.

...the seaside was evoked in film as a dream, a fantasy, not a tangible reality. Indeed, in the late 1930’s, the forty-hour work week meant that what was available to the working classes was a
trip out on their bicycles to the countryside at weekends... (Hayward 163)

Further, Hayward draws a gender distinction stating that working class women’s “immobility corresponds to the male’s potential mobility and women are fixed without much say or control” (163). So, what with the pre-war nervousness and sense of impending doom, as well as the hiatus on social reform for workers, Hôtel du Nord, culturally, also proffers only the possibility of mobility and release. The escapist reverie marking Carné’s flat images on the fourth wall delivers merely the fleeting hope of imaginary escape. Even the film’s de facto star, Arletty, does not achieve her goal of leaving the hotel. After she stumbles off the bridge, in her mobility-impairing high heels, the film cuts to a shot of the hotel owner mundanely spraying Raymonde’s bed for bugs. However, Arletty does not go down without having her say. Her final insult to Edmond (“Bonne pêche, et bonne atmosphère!”) resonates satisfyingly, and also possibly politically, as she unglamorously walks back to the hotel. The signifying function of the vacation in the film offers a way to read the film politically but does not reduce, as some readings can imply, the film, or any one of its scenes, to a mere political statement.
The above scene then helped a new star leave her mark on the audience through her distinctive voice. Arletty’s accent turns Edmond’s insult into a performative moment for Arletty beyond the scope of her character. In fact, Carné almost cut the lines, until he saw Arletty’s engaging performance, because he felt it “unlikely that a whore would respond quite that way” (Turk 135). Arletty rewrites the line as she speaks it, through her parigot accent and vowel sounds, giving the words cinematic importance as the lines grant her character a degree of independence from Edmond. Demonpion labels her performance as a “tournant décisif dans sa carrière cinématographique.”

Auréolée par sa nouvelle gloire, Arletty est plus que jamais demandée par les producteurs. Les propositions de contrat affluent, ses cachets passent en quelques semaines du simple au double, puis au triple, à quelques milliers de francs près. (Demonpion 173)

With this stylization of her lines, Arletty speaks to the audience as France’s newest star. Moreover, this new star sprang up from the working class milieu associated with her character in the film. Arletty, the daughter of a mechanic from Courbevoie, grew rich and famous by drawing from, and not by denying, her own socio-economic roots and her own
accent. She did so in a film by Carné—incidentally the son of a cabinetmaker from Paris’s seventeenth arrondissement—about the kinds of people and places familiar to both star and director from their formative years. As cinema reflects and creates culture, so this film reflects Arletty’s background but creates a stardom that would remove her from that background.

The above stylization in Arletty’s lines also speaks to the audience thematically by adding an element of enigma to an otherwise simple, supporting character. Jacques Siclier states that Arletty “gives a well worn character [Raymonde/prostitute] a truly unusual presence” (Siclier, TGA 129). If Raymonde and Edmond serve in binary opposition to the first couple, subverting the poetic expression of their attempted suicide, and if Raymonde serves in opposition to Edmond, by establishing herself as an intermediary between the audience and the film’s dream of escape, as in the example above, then Arletty’s performance takes on pivotal importance. The Arletty character assumes a thematic and narrative focus organizing and redirecting readings of the film. In addition, according to Vincendeau, Carné also contributes to this effect by granting more close-ups and costume changes to Arletty than to Annabella, theoretically the film’s main star (Vincendeau 27).
By contrast, the reconciliation of Renée and Pierre at the end of the film seems mundane and rather unimportant. In fact, amidst the Bastille Day celebration, the danse du tapis in the street in front of the hotel, and the general holiday mood, Renée’s announcement to the hotel owners about her marriage to Pierre takes place, with Pierre absent, rather undramatically as she and the owners scramble to serve their customers. Renée assures the proprietor’s wife, Madame Lecouvrer (Jane Marken), that they will still see each other for frequent visits; the Marken character laments the departure by saying “ce n’est pas la même chose.” In other words, their rekindled affair does signify to the same extent as earlier since their relationship will take place away from the world of the hotel (film set). Later, as the owners and Renée, with Pierre still absent, meet at the counter to place and collect drink orders, Madame Lecouvrer makes a final request.

La petite Renée, quand vous partirez, ne dites pas au revoir. Faites comme si vous alliez faire une course. Comme ça, Lecouvrer et moi, on pourra toujours croire que vous alliez revenir d’un moment à l’autre.

Madame Lecouvrer almost appears to equate the happy resolution of the doomed lovers’ problems with an errand
like any other and that has no lasting effect on life along the canal. Further, Pierre’s continued absence from the scene contributes to a lack of visual reinforcement of the couple’s reconciliation. After this scene, the street carnival continues, and then Edmond returns to the hotel to meet his fate. In the last scene, Renée and Pierre sit on a bench along the canal as dawn approaches. The bittersweet tone of their brief conversation harkens back to the melodrama of their initial (suicide) scenes together as if no change (in tone at least) has taken place at the hotel. Renée’s dialogs with the hotel owners, during her employment with them, sounded as realistic and everyday as the lines from the majority of the film’s characters. Yet, once back with Pierre, the sentimentalized, languid delivery returns in the last lines of the film.

RENEE: Le jour se lève.

PIERRE: Il va faire beau.

RENEE: Viens, maintenant c’est fini.

PIERRE: Quoi donc?

---

1 Pérez succinctly sums up the anachronistic effect on critics of this dialog: “Cet échange de répliques fournirait un enchaînement idéal au commentateur de l’œuvre de Marcel Carné si son cinquième long métrage, Le Jour se lève, avait été prévu avant l’achèvement de son quatrième, Hôtel du Nord. On y verrait une sorte de ‘private joke’ d’une ironie particulièrement amère, puisqu’on sait bien que le jour ne se lève point, dans le film qui suit Hôtel du Nord, sur un ciel pur, et qu’il sera loin d’y faire beau” (Pérez 56).
RENEE: L’Hôtel du Nord.

The characters then walk along the canal and over the footbridge. Their traditional type of love story, with its necessarily happy ending, requires their departure from the world of the hotel. Renée’s line symbolically closes a chapter of their lives as it provides a closing narration for the film itself. Unlike the termination of the Jouvet/Arletty couple, the Annabella/Aumont pair cannot express their relationship according to the objects and places of Carné’s film. Instead, they float in dreamy spaces, like the barren sets of the hospital, the jail, or the pre-dawn emptiness after the street fair. Instead of manipulating everyday objects, they articulated their love with a dramatic object, the revolver.

The scenes between Renée and Pierre suggest an exploitation of the pre-determined, poetic trope of star-crossed lovers. This choice remains at odds with, for example, the phonetic and visual binding of the Arletty character to the diegetic realm, where the poetry behind the mundane comes to life cinematically. As such, the stronger scenes of the film, the scenes that best articulate Carné’s poetic realism, remain, not those between the two supposed stars of the film, but rather those between Arletty and Jouvet or, even, for that matter, between the other hotel
residents and the major protagonists. Also, Carné’s strong scenes with Arletty incorporate elements of her star persona such as sexual liberation, in allowing Edmond an affair in her absence, and independence, by fighting back when called atmosphère, and by eventually finding a more devoted boyfriend by the end of the film. This synergy between Carné’s filmmaking style and Arletty’s star persona takes shape in this film; as Carné notes in his autobiography, “[t]el fur le début d’une collaboration affectueuse qui durera près de dix années” (Carné 112). Their collaboration, and their mutual reinforcement of each other’s cinematic talents and personae, eventually helps assure both important positions in the overall history of French film.

Carné, though, did not explore very completely, perhaps due to the comic nature of the Raymonde character in Hôtel du Nord, one aspect of Arletty’s persona: the actor’s physical beauty and mature sex appeal. While many of her scenes involved undressing or changing clothes, their forthright depiction by Carné somewhat desexualizes the images of Arletty in her undergarments. For example, in one medium close-up shot of Arletty’s exposed legs, she unceremoniously steps down on an overstuffed suitcase, forcefully trying to close it with her bodyweight. Like the
other details of the film, changing clothes and walking about in one’s underwear appear more as everyday activities than as occasions for overt scopophilia. At one point in the film, Raymonde does recount some details of her prostitution activities in a metro station, but she talks about a day spent counting trains due to a lack of clients. Later films from the partnership, however, grant more importance to Arletty’s on-screen sexuality both thematically, in her trademark role of prostitute or kept woman, and visually, including a (censored [Turk 167]) nude scene in the shower for *Le Jour se lève.*
CHAPTER 4

THE CHARACTERIZATION OF CLARA:

POETIC REALISM AND SEXUALITY IN LE JOUR SE LÈVE

Immediately after the release of Hôtel du Nord, Carné began work on Le Jour se lève. The two films, although strikingly different in narration and tone, share common traits—such as the re-creation of realistic working-class environments and heroes—of Carné’s filmmaking style. Moreover, in each film, massive sets by Alexandre Trauner dominate the visual landscapes; interestingly enough, these sets both stood on the same location at the Billancourt studios (Carné 124, Pérez 60, Demonpion 174). The sets play important roles, as important perhaps as any character, in the two films. For example, while the hotel and canal sets served to illustrate the collective situation of an entire neighborhood of working-class people, the six-story apartment building looming menacingly over the Le Jour se
lève working-class suburb set\(^1\) helps define the desperate situation of the film's main character, François (Jean Gabin).

Opening with François's murder of Valentin (Jules Berry)—a dishonest and cruel dog trainer for whom Clara (Arletty) worked and with whom she lived—the film traces, in a series of flashbacks, the events leading to the killing. As François relives the events, his sense of alienation and isolation increases, as does the number of attempts by the police to enter the room and arrest him. His story had begun simply; François, a factory worker, meets a young and beautiful florist's assistant, Françoise (Jacqueline Laurent), during her flower delivery to the factory. The two discover that they not only share the same Saint's Day, but also, that both spent their childhoods as wards of the state. Forebodingly, Françoise's floral arrangement wilts, due to the factory's fumes, during their flirtation. Upon falling in love with her and eventually making marriage plans, François, espying the two together after the dog show, discovers that Françoise has also been dating

\(^1\) John W. Martin notes that Dubonnet subsidized the enormous cost of this set. In recognition, Trauner includes four gigantic posters with the liquor company's name on the outside of the building (Martin 134). This type of advertising (product or logo placement), while not new in French films (see Toulet 156-59), certainly represents an exceptional choice with regard to the integrity of the tightly reconstructed realities of Carné's worlds.
Valentin. Meanwhile, Clara quits her job, thus ending, in the process, her relationship with Valentin. Meeting François after the show, Clara falls in love with him and the two begin a brief affair. Eventually, François chooses Françoise over Clara after believing Valentin’s false identification of the younger woman as his own long lost daughter. Clara reveals the truth of the matter by showing François the identical brooches, which of course both she and Françoise possess, that Valentin offers to all his lovers. Françoise becomes hysterical upon learning of Valentin’s death at François’s hands; Clara, in emotional pain herself, comforts the younger woman. As the film ends, back in the present moment where it began, François commits suicide just before the arrival of the police.

This film, like Hôtel du Nord, examines the impossibility of the working classes of escaping their situation and inevitable fate. This film also follows the relationships between two couples, François/Françoise and Valentin/Clara. Unlike the earlier film, though, where in all but a few instances the relationships ran parallel to one another, the intersection of the relationships in Le Jour se lève propels the narrative forward, through the flashbacks, to explain the Gabin character’s mood. In this film, the Arletty couple does not lighten the somber tone.
Instead, each character contributes an emotional and psychological factor to François’s fragile state of mind. Françoise’s innocence—for she really does not love Valentin—contrasts with Clara’s frankness. In contrast to Clara’s straightforward and realistic expectations for a relationship within the context of everyday life, Françoise represents an impossible dream of escape. She and François make their plans to marry and travel to the country amongst the artificially grown flowers in a nursery hothouse. In that scene, Carné’s close-ups of the two make the couple appear to float within a dream-like space. However, like the similar shots of the Annabella/Aumont couple planning their unrealized suicide in Hôtel du Nord, these spaces offer ironic deception despite their immediate promise of lyric intimacy. Valentin’s lie concerning his relationship with Françoise ruins the dreams of the François/Françoise couple as the evil Berry character enrages François to the point of murder.

Trapped in his room, alone and waiting to die at the hands of the police, François remains the film’s central character. As Bazin points out,

In reality, Gabin is not a character who gets asked to play the hero in the story—the story is always built around him as a person. Gabin would
not recognize any script but one which incorporates his own destiny—a fit of anger, murder, leading to his own death. (Bazin, PR...Ljsl 11)

Even, for example, the set contributes to the creation of the François character. Turk insists that this building becomes an objectification of François’s condition: isolated, run-down, and perched precariously beyond the grasp of law and society. The steep, high-angle views of the interior staircase—a maze of banisters and railings—seem to function as an objective correlation of François’s bewilderment... (Turk, 154-55)

In Carné’s classical filmmaking style, high angle shots do draw attention to physical surroundings that serve as important psychological or symbolic elements of the diegesis. As Turk suggested, the open stairway rails up to François’s secluded room, along with the many exterior shots of the building’s towering presence in the working-class suburban square, do suggest the complexity of François’s anger and emotions. The stairways can also, for example, represent the difficulty with which the neighbors, and for that matter the film spectators as well, try to understand
François’s motives. In one of the very few lighter moments in the film, as the police pound on François’s door, Carné presents a high angle view of the center of the stairwell. Lining the railings, neighbors’ heads peer out and up as the stair winds to the top of the building. In response to the police, Gabin fires a shot, and, from the same high angle position, Carné’s camera captures the synecdochic heads receding quickly in unison. François’s neighbors, out of fear and misunderstanding, return to their respective piliers leaving the protagonist alone to face his demise.

Carné, with Le Jour se lève, perfects the style he had articulated in the more folkloric Hôtel du Nord. Le Jour se lève allows Carné to make use of the sets, of objects on the set, e.g. the flowers or the brooch, and of Gabin’s and Arletty’s star personae, to explore the extent and limits of poetic realism within a dramatic narrative with an unusual form, i.e. a traditional story told in reverse chronological order. The episodes of flashback purportedly challenged the director (Carné 121, Turk 152) to adapt a rather simplistic plot into a psychological study. In reference to Carné’s mastery of form, Turk labels this work “the most Carnésian of Carné’s films” (Turk 176).

Gabin’s predominance in the film reflects upon Carné’s excellent choice of stars as well as his accomplished
direction and in-depth creation of male characters. For example, as will be suggested in the next chapter, the well-defined and visually fetishized Baptiste character arguably occupies the central position in *Les Enfants du paradis* despite Arletty’s top billing and starring role. This effective portrayal of male stars/sex symbols contrasts with Carné’s sometimes flattening depiction of female ingénue types. In contrast with the cinematic cliché of the male film director’s becoming infatuated, both off and on the screen, with his film’s young female starlets, Annabella and Laurent, whose youth and beauty would surely prove central concerns for other directors, remain rather uninteresting stereotypes of young innocents.

Instead, Carné turns his interests to Arletty in his explorations of gender and female sexuality. Annabella and Laurent, both popular mainstream stars of the time, accommodate the typical spectatorial position of passive, attractive females before active, gazing males. Beautiful and glamorous female actors like these conform perfectly to cinema’s tantalizing offer of escapism and plastic visual pleasure. The older, streetwise Arletty, on the other hand, imposes a more realistic, pragmatic approach to screen sex appeal and to human relationships between the characters. In these early days of the their collaboration, Carné relies
on Arletty’s persona and screen presence to account for a complex feminine element unexplored as fully with performers like Annabella or Laurent. The director posits Arletty as his poetic realist femme fatale and leading-lady. Lovely enough to compete visually and superficially with the younger women, Arletty further provides depth of character as well as a firm anchorage, as seen in the discussion of Hôtel du Nord, to the tenets of his directorial style.

While not stealing the show as in Hôtel du Nord, Arletty does not limit her role, in Le Jour se lève, to filling the gaps in Carné’s gender divisions or in providing a mere counterexample to the likes of a Renée or a Françoise. Just as in real life, Carné and Arletty depend upon one another for the success of their shared professional enterprises, so do Arletty’s characters depend on other (usually male) characters in the films for success. However, and again in a reflection of Arletty’s real life persona, each of her characters recognizes the limits of the male’s possible contribution. While Françoise sinks into despondent irrationality upon learning of François’s predicament, Clara, equally hurt, remains strong and lucid by contrast. While Françoise calls out for François, Clara expresses her emotion in her own terms, independent of the male object of her affection, by turning toward the sight
(site) of François's building out of a window and crying realistically—arguably unconventional activity for a mainstream concubine—into the camera.

The characterization of Clara by Arletty, but still within Carné's cinematic world, draws initially on elements exterior to the film. For instance, Arletty's stage plays and previous films helped her create a persona of sexual liberation and professional independence. At the same time, as she gained success, she enjoyed the mondain Parisian social scene and came to represent a Marianne figure for France. In fact, during the drôle de guerre, she served as troop mascot for several military units who painted her name on their tanks (Demonpion 188-92). Of course, these episodes occurred before her encounter with Soehring.

The close timing between Hôtel du Nord and Le Jour se lève also invites comparisons between Raymonde and Clara. For example, the two exhibit economic independence—both relating this fact through detailed discussions of their jobs—and sexual liberation from normative morays such as marital fidelity. Yet, both women’s jobs depend entirely upon the whims of men and both look to men for emotional fulfillment as in, for example, the scene from Hôtel du Nord where Clara recounts her day at work in the metro station. With no male customers, she counts trains to relieve her
boredom. Further, Raymonde lives with, and appears to have fallen in love with, her pimp Edmond. As Raymonde explains in the “Atmosphère!” scene, “par terre on se dispute, mais au lit on s’explique, et sur l’oreiller on se comprend.”

In Le Jour se lève, Clara lives with, and works as an assistant for, another cruel man, Valentin. In her first of four major scenes in the film, Clara leaves the stage halfway through the dog show. Her famous gait, the same one from the “Atmosphère!” scene, provides an intertextual reference to her earlier characters as Arletty walks across the concert hall to the bar. Still in her revealing black bustier costume, she meets Gabin, flirts with him, and asks him to buy her a drink. François, who tracks Françoise in the crowd, seems uninterested; so, Clara offers to buy him a drink. She claims that her freedom begins tonight. After his act, Valentin approaches to confront Clara, begging her to stay and citing their memories together. Clara responds, “est-ce que j’ai une gueule à faire l’amour avec des souvenirs?” After her gait, this second reference to Hôtel du Nord, cf. “est-ce que j’ai une gueule d’atmosphère,” suggests to the viewer that Clara, at this early moment in the film at least, and the beloved Raymonde character share common traits. Capitalizing upon these intertextualities, Arletty’s characterization gains a head start. For the
remainder of the film, she concentrates on adding nuance to
the character and on assuaging any viewers’ fears of
simplistic repeat performances often prevalent in situations
of recurrent casting in similar roles. After the exchange
with Valentin, Clara explains to François how the man
originally attracted her with dreams of the Riviera and
mimosas. François reacts with shock since, in the scene
just before, Françoise mentioned her own dreams of the
Riviera and mimosas. The present scene ends when François
follows Valentin outside as the latter meets up with
Françoise.

Throughout the exchange between François and Clara,
Arletty’s character exhibits emotional and economic
independence, sexual freedom, and disillusioned lucidity.
Liberating herself from Valentin, Clara will no longer serve
as the man’s passive assistant on stage. She spends her own
money, on drinks for her and Gabin, and seeks the company of
the man of her own choice. Moreover, her active sexuality,
since after all she approaches François and not the
contrary, emphasizes the passive aspects of Gabin’s
character. For example, when the uninterested François
tells Clara she wears too much make-up, Clara retorts that
she removes it before going to bed. Clara’s flirtatiously
aggressive advances highlight François’s attraction to, and
lack of success with, more innocent and naïve women such as Françoise. In fact, he attends the dog show only to witness, powerlessly, Françoise depart with the trainer. These sexual and emotional plot elements also serve in highlighting François’s overall role in the film as victim of economic and emotional circumstances.

Perhaps when critics, such as Turk, refer to the ambiguously “androgynous” qualities of the Carné/Arletty collaboration, they recall dialogues such as this one between Arletty and Gabin. Although he definitely fulfills the role of masculine, poetic realist hero in this film, scenes like the one above call the relative normativity of that hero’s sexuality into question. For example, and even though they lack power over their situations in general, other Gabin heroes assume more control over their devoted female love interests, such as in other Gabin films associated with poetic realism like Julien Duvivier’s Pépé le Moko (1937) or Jean Renoir’s La Bête humaine (1938). In this scene from Le Jour se lève, though, Gabin leans helplessly against the bar as Françoise, Valentin, and Clara exercise their influences over his affairs of the heart.

Clara’s role in the film as portent of truth and emotionally mature, experienced woman of the world takes form in this scene, with her remark about the Riviera and
mimosas, and becomes even more intertwined with her sexuality in her next scene. François arrives at Clara’s apartment and surprises her in the shower. In the censored version of the film, without the nude scene, François greets Clara as she coyly peers out from the bathroom door. At one point in the scene, Clara even asks about “la petite,” i.e. Françoise. Next, the couple lies on the bed to discuss their relationship. Carné’s medium and medium-close shots of the couple suggest intimacy yet, unlike in the greenhouse scene mentioned earlier, their conversation remains grounded in the day-to-day aspects of their relationship, e.g. Clara tries not to demand too much of François in the relationship but would nevertheless like him to stop by more often, etc. Then, Clara rises and looks out of the window; a high-angle shot of the sidewalk below depicts Valentin’s arrival. The couple, framed by the windowsill, looks out with an impending sense of doom. Interestingly, the next time the couple assumes that position within the window frame occurs during their final break-up scene. Intrusions, as symbolized here by Valentin, from the outside world, systematically seem to result in the break-up of Carné’s protagonist couples.

Clara walks over to the door, opens it, and exposes Valentin on his knees listening through the keyhole. Caught
in the act, he replies glibly, "oui, j'écoute aux portes." Turk reads this scene as a reversal of a primal scene where the voyeur, and not the object of the gaze, suffers intrusion. Further, Turk comments upon the reactions of the other characters.

Compared with François's and Clara's unruffledness, however, Valentin's nonchalance is unconvincing. Opposite their maturity stands Valentin's infantilism—which François and Clara deride through their words and glances. (Turk 172-73)

Afterwards, Clara, understanding the nature of the men's conflict, asks them to continue their discussion of Françoise elsewhere. As they leave, Carné holds a shot of Clara for several seconds as she displays a sad, heartbroken facial expression and then eventually takes a lonely drink from her teacup.

Clara's understanding of the subtleties of human relationships becomes evident in this scene. In the first place, she demystifies certain sexual aspects with, for example, her forthright request that François spend more nights in her room or with her unflinching exposure of the peeping tom. Then, she demonstrates her strength of will in accepting the inevitable when, for instance, she unjealously
asks about “la petite” or when she sacrifices her time with François so that the men may settle their score. However, this knowledge and these acts of self-denial and courage in the face of fatalism take their toll. As Siclier lauds,

This is the mystery and the paradox of her performance: she is never common. [...] and she hides the seedy side of her characters under quiet burlesque. [...] It’s because Arletty has class. To Clara, [...] Arletty lends her admirable face and deep set eyes in which, from time to time, some unconfessed dream can be seen.

This woman [...] has great moral strength hidden within her... [...] It is the sign of a secret purity. (Siclier 130)

Despite her outward acceptance of the harsh realities of daily life, such as the fact that both men love Françoise more than her, Clara manages to rise above her own pain relying upon, as Siclier suggests, an inner sense of her own self worth. However, another actor could possibly have played Clara as promiscuous, bitter, sarcastic, or even maudlin in the face of such circumstances. Here, though, Arletty’s performance relies upon the subtle paradox of Clara’s personality as, according to Georges Sadoul, “acide, provoquante, désabusée, bonne au fond” (Sadoul 79). As seen
earlier in the discussion of Dyer’s research, this combination of non-normative and quintessential qualities proves necessary to become a star. In this film, Arletty exploits this admixture of positive and negative traits in the Carnésian world of the broken dreams of François.

In her next scene, just after the greenhouse scene between François and Françoise mentioned earlier, Gabin arrives in Arletty’s room to announce his decision to choose Françoise over her. Turim points out that

…it is actually difficult to accept emotionally the logic of the narrative by which François must break off with [Clara] to return to his doomed idealization, his infatuation with Françoise. We can analyse this intuitive discomfort not only in terms of a casting imbalance (the comparative weakness of Jacqueline Laurent’s performance) that undercuts narrative determinations, but also as a longing, ultimately suppressed by the film…

(Turim, PRPIO 70-71)

The audience’s attraction to Arletty notwithstanding, Clara accepts her fate on the surface; but again her pained facial expressions belie her underlying hurt. Clara says she will look for another job, as if her employment and love affairs must necessarily coincide with one another. At this point,
Clara also exposes the truth about Valentin’s relationship with Françoise. Moreover, she recounts, to a squeamish, horrified François, Valentin’s method of dog training, which involves burning the animals with lit cigarettes. Next, she admits, “moi aussi, il m’a abîmée.” Viewers will recall that, in Hôtel du Nord, Edmond also hurt Raymonde giving her a black eye, which lasted through several scenes. Clara, like her predecessor Raymonde, experiences pain both emotionally and physically at the hands of men. Clara, though, has learned to take control of her situation by leaving Valentin. In the predeterminism of Carné’s cinematic world, this modicum of control over one’s destiny represents a real triumph.

Next, Clara performs the one possibly bitter act of the film by explaining how Valentin offers the same brooch to each of his lovers. Pulling out a box of the identical brooches from her drawer, she says “elle en a une aussi, la petite.” Carné holds the shot of her stoic face during a long fade out. This technique, which Carné also used in Les Enfants du paradis (see Turk 234), of ending a scene with an insistent shot of Arletty in a posed expression conveying a crucial plot twist, underscores Arletty’s contribution to
Carné’s overall poetic realist vision. This Brechtian\(^2\) flourish breaks from Carné’s linear narration and creates a purely cinematic moment where viewers unashamedly gaze continuously at a screen figure meticulously framed for their consumption. However, these shots do not simply exploit the joy in beholding Arletty’s beauty; instead, they highlight her pivotal role in announcing truths linked to sexual or emotional relationships between people. In these Arletty moments, she floats cinematically on the screen, but instead of conjuring an impossible dream, as in earlier such shots of couples, she conveys some vital fact of everyday existence. In cinematic insistence, she highlights the importance of real life events in the plot. In Clara’s last scene in the film, Carné includes another shot of this type.

The scene opens as Clara comforts the despondent Françoise. In medium to close shots, the younger woman cries out for François, regretting the way she has treated him. Clara, saddened by François’s situation, holds back her tears as she tells Françoise to try to sleep. Neighbors knock at the door notifying Clara that the police intend to

\(^2\) Brechtian alienation (or distanciation) techniques, where, with the cinema, films draw attention to the medium itself through, for example, jump cuts, extended close-ups, narrative intrusions, etc., abruptly force spectators to accept or reject the images and actions on the screen “on a conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience’s subconscious,” and “make the incidents represented appear strange to the public” (Brecht 91).
use tear gas to force François out of the room. Clara returns to Françoise; the latter stammers, "il n’aime pas Clara." At this point, Clara breaks down and sobs openly. However, so as not to upset her young patient even more, she turns away and moves toward the window. Staring out through the closed window, she anxiously looks over towards François’s building. Carné frames her, within the mise-en-abîme of the windowsill, for several seconds. Then, in the last shot of her in the film, Arletty turns back into the apartment and returns to Françoise.

This scene, and this last shot in particular, highlights not only Clara’s emotional angst, but also, thanks to the framing, her loneliness. Furthermore, it adds a new dimension to Clara’s personality, and, accordingly, to Arletty’s persona: maternal\(^3\) instinct. Despite the pain "la petite" causes her, Arletty cares for this orphan instinctively protecting her as much as possible. None of the earlier scenes in the film posits any relationship between the two women, nor have they ever exchanged any dialog before this moment. Clara’s maternal instincts,

\(^3\) As life sometimes imitates art, or vice-versa, shortly after this film’s release, Arletty informally adopted Marianne, a young girl from a troubled home. This fan, who had followed Arletty through the bookstalls along the Seine one day, remained Arletty’s only “child” (Démonpion 218-219).
whether performative, situational, or sincere, seem to take over as the need arises.

This scene also highlights Arletty’s characters’ ability to establish bonds with other female characters in films despite their various associations with the male characters. For instance, as seen with Hôtel du Nord, Raymonde developed a friendship with the hotel house cleaner with whom Edmond had an affair during Raymonde’s incarceration. In Le Jour se lève, the Arletty character nurtures Françoise even when the younger woman, albeit in a dazed confusion, continues to insist on her victory over Clara with François. As Sedgwick contends, and as this scene supports, often love triangles lead to a valorization of the two rivals within a gender asymmetry. Further, as mentioned earlier, Sedgwick explains that this valorization positions the relationship at some point along the homosocial-homosexual continuum (see Sedgwick 21-25). The placement along this continuum depends upon the strength of the sexual charge of the scene.

In this case, the weak charge, due to the sad circumstances and motherly valence, points more to Arletty’s homosocial bond with the younger woman. However, one small, phonetic detail nuances this conclusion. Earlier in the film, François and Françoise express a flirtatious
excitement upon discovering that, except for the gender marker "-e," they share the same name. At the end of the film, François remains sequestered in his monolithic apartment building. On the level of the plot, the two women mourn a lack, of the male François, but on the linguistic level, the two women mourn an excess of sound. The marker "-e," although silent by itself, adds an extra, feminine, here, [z] sound to the end of the name. As "François" remains present in Françoise, the woman no longer lacks a lost lover, but instead, possesses something. In this case, her name contains an extra, feminizing appendage not present in the male version. Thanks to the older woman’s nurturing and to the younger woman’s name, Clara and Françoise, at least phonetically, carry the entire love triangle within themselves.

With the inclusion of savvy sexual liberty, emotional maturity, and maternal instincts, Arletty’s persona reaches another turning point with this film. No longer merely the vampy comic relief, as in her earlier works, Arletty’s characters come to life within more dramatic contexts. Plus, in collaboration with Carné, she contributes to poetic realism’s demystified, fatalistic treatment of love. Carné, for his part, uses Arletty to add depth and complexity to his treatment of human relations. As such, his masterly
camera work, elaborate sets, and psychological development of the Gabin character do not completely overpower the film, which could have rendered it more a study in form.

Between *Le Jour se lève* and *Les Enfants du paradis*, Arletty starred in stage plays, short subjects, and several films (many labeled by critics as *théâtre filmé*) with other directors. While popular, these films did not affect the development of her persona as much as her next film with Carné, *Les Visiteurs du soir* (1942). Arletty plays a mysterious troubadour that the devil sends to disrupt the romantic happenings at a medieval castle. For many of the scenes, she disguises herself as a young male; this state of affairs renders somewhat homoerotic her seduction of another male character. However, critics only very vaguely alluded to this aspect of her role. Chazal, for example, states that Arletty “a su donner à son rôle plus d’ambiguïté encore que n’en avaient espéré les auteurs” (Chazal 44). In this case, Arletty brings an element to the project beyond the original script; and, as such, her persona contributes uniquely to the film’s overall success. The public and critics overwhelmingly praised both the film and Arletty’s performance. The actor herself notes this successful work’s influence on her career: “[t]ournant de ma carrière, [j]e passe du personnage léger à l’énigmatique” (Demonpion 221).
Further, this film marks not just another step in the evolution of Arletty’s persona, it also represents a new style of films by Carné and his screenwriter/collaborator Prévert. Because of political censorship during the Occupation, filmmaking of the period yielded many historical melodramas and literary adaptations. By setting films in the past or in mythical times and spaces, directors and producers could avoid overt social commentary about the Nazis or the Vichy government. Several trends emerged then. Some filmmakers produced light-hearted entertainment completely devoid of any political overtones. Others inserted subtle or ambiguous images and statements into their films that the public could read as messages of resistance. Carné’s films represented still a third trend.

His Occupation-era works eschewed political stances, but they did not fall into the category of light fare for a public in search only of entertainment, escapism, or quite simply a heated theater on a cold night. Instead, he and Prévert began exploring more universal topics, such as human emotions and love, on a grander scale. Before the war, Carné wrenched the symbolic from everyday objects; now, Carné deals directly with the symbol. As Jean-Pierre Jeancolas notes, in reference to Les Enfants du paradis, “the 1943 film distils, sums up, and surpasses French-style
‘realism’" (Jeancolas 85). Carné’s images and mise-en-scène seek less an accurate depiction of working class life and, instead, convey a preoccupation with pure aesthetic beauty in their composition. However, even though Carné starts to concentrate on the more poetic side of Poetic Realism, he continues to explore familiar themes such as, for example, the difficulty of finding true love, the individual in relation to society, and the dreams and aspirations of the poor and downtrodden. In this next film, Carné and his team tend to articulate these themes through staged instances of performance and gazing.
CHAPTER 5

LOOKING AT GARANCE LOOKING-AT:

STAR PERSONA AND AUTHORSHIP IN LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS

Opening to critical acclaim and continuing its initial run for ten months, Carné’s over three-hour long epic consists of two parts, or époques (Le Boulevard du Crime and L’Homme blanc). The story line follows the relationships between Garance (Arletty) and four men who each love her differently. As the first part of the film begins, Garance works as a model, posing nude as La Vérité while revolving inside a large tank of water, in a tent on the Boulevard du Crime¹ in the nineteenth-century theater district on the northeast (then) outskirts of Paris. After leaving her job,

¹ In a repeat of an earlier cycle, Trauner’s massive set for Les Enfants du paradis sits at the same location—this time at the Victorine studios near Nice, in the “Zone libre”—as did his equally famous, although somewhat less expensive, castle set for Les Visiteurs du soir (Carné 185, Pèrez 74, Turk 224, Jeancolas 79). Jeancolas’s definition of Carné’s Poetic Realism accounts for the director’s, along with his collaborators’, well-known transformations and manipulations of the precise details of enormous physical spaces: “Carné’s cinema does not reproduce reality, it produces its own reality, by consensus” (Jeancolas 79). In the cases where different sets occupy the same position over time, one could argue that Carné’s cinema continually “re-produces its own reality.”

110
Garance encounters, while walking down the street, the garrulously flirtatious budding actor Frédérick Lemaître (Pierre Brasseur). Garance next visits the articulate, and ostensibly homosexual, criminal Lacenaire (Marcel Herrand), for whom she represents an “ange gardien.” Afterwards, while watching a passionate, and soon love struck, mime, Baptiste (Jean-Louis Barrault), in front of the Théâtre des Funambules, a fellow passer-by accuses Garance of pick-pocketing his gold watch. The police arrive to arrest her. Baptiste, having witnessed the crime from the stage, saves the day by revealing to the crowd that Lacenaire, by now departed, had actually committed the crime. In thanks, Garance throws the mime a flower and a coquettish glance.

Meanwhile, Frédérick seeks employment at the theater. Baptiste tells his tenacious fiancée, and fellow performer, Nathalie (Maria Casarès, in her first on-screen role) that he has fallen in love with Garance. Later, Baptiste and Garance serendipitously meet up in a pub. The two discuss love, dreams, and childhood as Baptiste walks her home suggesting she take a room in his hotel. Once inside, and even though the two desire one other, Baptiste becomes too emotional and leaves Garance by herself. She begins a brief affair with Frédérick, who secures her a job at the Funambules. A rich and powerful dandy, the Count Édouard de
Montray (Louis Salou), attends the show and falls in love with Garance. Visiting her dressing room with a large bouquet of flowers, the Count offers Garance his calling card and, in vain, the chance to become his mistress. During this time, Lacenaire perpetuates a botched robbery and murder attempt at the hotel. Unaware of the crime, Garance returns home only to face police charges of complicity. To save herself, she hands the police the Count’s calling card.

Years later, when the second part of the film\textsuperscript{2} begins, Frédérick and Baptisté have both become major stars. Garance, now the Count’s mistress and traveling companion, returns nightly to watch, in secrecy, the hit stage play starring Baptisté, with whom she has finally fallen completely in love. Frédérick reunites the two despite Baptisté’s marriage to Nathalie, who has since given birth to a child. The Count and Lacenaire try to humiliate one other out of mutual contempt and because of misunderstandings about their respective relationships with Garance; Lacenaire eventually murders his rival. In the final sequences, Baptisté and Garance find the strength to

\textsuperscript{2} Distributors initially insisted on showing each part separately at different theaters. Carné, fearing viewers would not necessarily return for the second half, eventually lobbied for a full-length showing at one location but with double the normal ticket price (Carné 192-3).
admit their love for one another. However, Nathalie arrives to reclaim Baptiste just as Garance, sure that happiness must forever elude her, slips away. The final scene depicts a frantic Baptiste pushing through the crowd as Garance, enigmatically and with a stoic countenance, speeds away in her carriage.

Williams posits an explanation for this rather cryptic and unresolved ending.

The film seems to be mainly about mental projections, specifically the way each of the four men, in love with the beautiful courtesan Garance (Arletty), projects on to her the image he desires. She says, “I’m so simple,” but they cannot see her as she is, only as they want her to be. Only Baptiste, in the end, can see her clearly, in his mind’s eye as she leaves him forever. (Williams 284)

As Williams’s word choice, “mind’s eye,” would imply, the Truth, La Vérité, about Garance, and for that matter any false idea of her as well, materializes only precisely within the mind of the characters (and perhaps the spectators as well) as they gaze upon her. Jill Forbes takes this idea one step further by suggesting the
possibility of assigning specific meanings to the “figure” of Garance.

For a psychological character, or even as a fatally beautiful woman, Garance hardly comes alive, but as a figure of inversion, a projection of Baptiste’s homosexual desire (and, on occasion, that of others) she is entirely convincing.

(Forbes, LEdp 63)

In symbolizing an unrealized desire on the part of her suitors, Garance represents a blank screen for projections of fantasies. As a specter of desire, Garance then serves as a figure of the overall cinematic apparatus as a site for individual and collective gazing at the presence of an absence.

Moreover, elements of the star persona of the now very famous Arletty help support this cinematic reading of her character. Forbes points out a degree of typecasting concerning the film’s star male actors playing the major male characters of the film; for example, audiences were familiar with Barrault’s very physical roles on the stage. Forbes sees no such typecasting for Arletty and calls attention to the differences between the actor’s earlier roles as “kind-hearted prostitute.” Forbes argues that viewers approach this film with pre-conceived notions about
Arletty’s persona, e.g. her wit, her “gouaille,” and so forth, but that “unlike the other characters, we have no model for Garance” (56-57).

From a historical point of view as well, Garance has no model. Using archived texts, Carné and Prévert based the four major male characters on people who really existed; they created Garance, and Nathalie, for the film. Jeancolas remarks that:

Imagined by Prévert, molded by Carné, [Garance] is an original—a complex, astonishing, and definitive heroine—which the seventh art has lodged in the collective imaginary for at least two generations. (Jeancolas 86)

Sellier concurs, stating further that “le culte dont ce film est toujours l’objet passe souvent par une confusion entre les acteurs et leur rôle” (Sellier 122). Sellier cites the example of a younger female actor, Anémone, who, after seeing Garance in this film, states her own wish to become a star. However, in the very same citation, the young actor also says, “j’étais toute petite quand on m’a raconté son procès’” (122). Since no trial takes place in the film, the younger performer obviously refers to Arletty’s real life trial. Here, star persona, based on a very specific, personal, and pro-filmic element, affects the reading a
character within a film. Perhaps, as critics sometimes suggest, Prévert and Carné expected Arletty’s certain political troubles even as production on this film began. If so, they could possibly, even unknowingly, have exploited the public spectacle of her upcoming troubles. Whatever the case, the cinematic nature of the Garance figure and her centrality within the plot often involve the relationship between spectacle and spectator. For this reason, the following discussion considers key scenes of looking(-at) and of being-looked-at, to borrow from Mulvey’s neologism, in light of Arletty’s contribution to Carné’s expression of his cinematic concerns and of Carné’s contribution to the construction and evolution of Arletty’s star persona.

As mentioned earlier, Mulvey has stated that, “the determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly” (Mulvey, VPNS 11). By underscoring this active/male-passive/female binary, Mulvey exposes traditional, mainstream cinema’s practice of looking at women for voyeuristic pleasure. Further, she deconstructs this look, positing it between a reinforcement of the patriarchal, symbolic order and a fetishization of the female actor in response to castration anxiety.

Arletty’s initial appearance in the film represents a visually stylized—if not outright campy-mise-en-scène of
such an instance of male-female looking. Garance works as a model, representing “La Vérité” in a street carnival tent; patrons pay to stand behind an iron railing and watch her rotate nude in a large tank of water. In her outstretched hand, she holds a mirror. Turim contends the inclusion of the mirror in Garance’s hand nuances male desire for that character.

The irony of Garance’s sideshow display as an object of desire becomes apparent, as she is never simply available to a male gaze or to male possession; the mirror works to indicate, through a flirtation with the image of vanity, a nascent sense of female-generated desire. (Turim, LBM 166)

Turim’s analysis falls directly in line with Arletty’s star persona of acting according to her own desire despite the threat of public decry, e.g., “mon cœur est français, mais mon cul est international” (Demonpion 321).

Forbes, in her study of the scene, writes that Truth was traditionally represented, as Arletty is here, in the narcissistic pose of a woman looking at herself in the mirror. But the mise-en-scène is also a representation of the proverb that ‘la vérité est au fond d’un puits’ (truth is found at
the bottom of a well, that is, very hard to find).

(Forbes, LEdp 38)

In fact, the Truth proves very hard to find indeed. Soon after this scene, Garance announces to Lacenaire that her job in the tent as “La vérité” has ended; she says patrons became dissatisfied with the “La Vérité jusqu’aux épaules.”

This scene also evokes the construction of the cinematic apparatus as a site for collective gazing, and specifically for gazing at female movie stars. As cinema historians have noted, before the advent of movie theaters, patrons actually watched films in tents and other temporary structures in the street (see Williams 48–9). Moreover, these viewers soon discovered scopophilia as a fundamental form of visual pleasure in cinema. In the scene in question here, Carné hints at this pleasure with a close-up shot of Arletty. Then afterwards he denies viewers this pleasure as his mise-en-scène suggests a deconstruction of Arletty’s “to-be-looked-at-ness.” When Arletty/Garance, icon of the cinema and avatar of the Truth, spins around, she projects her gaze, through the mirror, onto the male viewers in the tent and, by extension, onto the viewers in the movie theater. Because of this arrangement, the water line (yet another mirror) in the tank cuts off, in perhaps a symbolic castration, the expected pleasure of viewing a nude human
form. Trying to see a little more of the Truth, viewers meet their own gazes reflected in the water and the mirror. These mirrors expose Metz's moi spéctatorial seated (un)comfortably in the theater and unable to continue with the visual exploration.

Mirrors, though, provide for only one of Carné's cinematic metaphors. In the watch theft scene, a little later in the film, Carné introduces theater as another site for gazing. The scene—in a mild parody of the topos of father/son conflict—opens with Baptiste's father, also a performer, attracting customers to the Funambules through the public humiliation of his son for comic effect. After the father/son sequence, the watch stealing sequence occurs and the police arrive to arrest Garance. Baptiste speaks out that he witnessed the event; as the mime speaks, the pantomime stage starts to surrender to the filmic medium. This event happens after the parental figure creates a performative space for Baptiste. In this instance, if theater seems the forefather of cinema, then photography, the visual image, would perhaps need to serve as its foremother. Accordingly, Garance arrives.

Upon watching the show for a while, Garance must eventually argue, after the theft, for her innocence with the police. Arletty, as her fans well know, made her debut
as a theater performer before beginning work in film roles like Madame Raymonde, which made her a star. This scene restages that rise to fame as it, like the tent scene, deconstructs the authoritative male gaze upon her. Throughout the entire rest of this epic film, Arletty does not speak with her trademark parigot accent; more or less standard French, her subsequent speech conveys an honest depth of emotion, a refined sharpness, and a sophisticated dignity. However, when the police officer accuses her of pick-pocketing the gold watch, she unceremoniously retorts, “Il paraît que Monsieur avait une montre en or. Maintenant il en a plus. Il dit que c’est de ma faute. Pourquoi? Mystère!” Once Baptiste restores her innocence, her accuser apologizes stating that, “tout le monde peut faire une erreur.” Arletty responds, “oui, mais pas une erreur judiciare.” The “-ère” endings (mystère, judiciaire) harken back to “le mot” from Hôtel du Nord as does the vision of Garance-like Madame Raymonde before her and Arletty, in real life, after her—under police threat more for unfortunate circumstances than for any actual wrongdoing.

Now though, and unlike Madame Raymonde, who spent several days in jail for her expired papers, Garance literally has friends in high places. From the makeshift stage, the mime Baptiste yells out that he has seen the
crime. The talking mime, now silent again, recreates, to
the delight of the crowd, Lacenaire’s crime and subsequent
departure. Moreover, this sequence further establishes the
cyclical narrative style of the overall film, which Carné
hinted at with the revolving tank in the tent scene. At
staged intervals, the depictions of performance in the film
mimic, reflect, and comment upon the events of the plot
immediately preceding them. For the tent scene, included in
the opening tableau, Carné introduced cinema’s ability to
reflect; with the watch theft scene, he puts this ability
into practice. In addition, in both scenes, Garance steals
the show, assuming a central role in the film from the
outset.

After the police release her, she approaches the stage
and throws a flower to the love struck Baptiste. For the
rest of the film, men give women flowers, and not the
reverse. Garance, though, can give or receive flowers; she
seems to have a symbolic power over them what with her
earlier announcement to Frédérick, about her own name,
“c’est le nom d’une fleur.” The flower tossing shot grants
Garance the power to express affection as she wishes or, in
other words, to throw around her power over the gaze. Even
before the arrival of the police, Garance had remarked, with
respect to Baptiste, “moi, je trouve qu’il a de beaux yeux.”

121
She feels attraction for the very organ that Baptiste depends upon for his profession, that he needed to save Garance, and that he employs in becoming attracted to her. The scene ends as Garance gives Baptiste a coy glance; Baptiste becomes almost paralyzed with desire. As such, and again using everyday objects, like mirrors and flowers, Carné introduces this love story with a reversal of (Mulvey’s) traditional active/passive roles.

By contrast, the next instance of gazing, for consideration here, does not reverse, but rather, exaggerates traditional active/passive roles in the cinema. Upon entering the theater, Baptiste confesses his love for Garance to Nathalie. Like with the love triangles and relationship comparisons in earlier films, such as the suicide attempt in Hôtel du Nord or the greenhouse scene in Le Jour se lève, Carné’s shots distinguish true love from banal cinematic clichés of love. As Pérez points out, the majority of the first époque consists of traditional camerawork.

L’Homme blanc passe du plan général familier du Boulevard du Crime au plan américain et au gros plan. Les êtres sont sous nos yeux et ne peuvent plus fuir parmi les choses. (84)
Sellier refers to a “statisme de la caméra,” noting that, “les acteurs sont filmés le plus souvent en plan américain, ce qui permet d’apprécier leur costume et leurs gestes pendant qu’ils disent leur texte” (Sellier 75-76). So, Carné’s inclusion of a high angle shot of Nathalie, with the camera in position just off to the side of Baptiste’s face, amounts to a striking psychological commentary of the Nathalie/Baptiste relationship. Nathalie seems to occupy the correct position for the gazed-at female; but the camera does not occupy the correct position to account for the gazing male, i.e. Baptiste’s point of view looking down at Nathalie. To complicate the roles further, Nathalie constantly compliments Baptiste on his good looks; theoretically, the male (viewer) should carry out this function on the female while gazing at her. Instead, Baptiste holds the flower and dreams of another love.

Nathalie’s insistence at first seems futile; then, it becomes somewhat threatening in its capacity to destroy the Carnésian, cinematic love between Baptiste and Garance. Part of the uneasiness issues from the very nervous Casarès. As Carné recalls:

Tout se déroula sans encombre si l’on excepte la nervosité de Maria Casarès, dont c’étaient les débuts à l’écran. Elle était prise en effet d’un

123
tremblement convulsif dès que je disais ‘moteur.’
Il me fallait arrêter, lui prendre les mains dans les miennes un bon moment. Ensuite on pouvait tourner, et encore ne se débarrassait-elle pas complètement d’un léger chevrotement dans la voix.
(Carné 185)

Her voice does tremble throughout the film, which creates an uneasy aura surrounding her character. Further, her costumes seem threatening both within the context of the film and of the historical period. She first appears in a wedding dress, which obviously poses a threat to Baptiste’s true feelings for Garance. In later scenes, she wears a Mädchen-esque smock as she interrupts an early scene where Garance comes close to admitting her love for Baptiste.

Nathalie, in her “Teutonic” costume, evokes Vichy ideals of womanhood and marriage, ideals against which stands Garance, a name that “rhymes with France,” as Turk has noted (see Turk 246). Nathalie’s force of will carries negative connotations\(^3\) technically (with the out of place high angle shot), visually and politically (through her costumes), and

\[^3\] Another theory suggests that Prévert intentionally penned Nathalie in a negative manner to reflect the poet’s own miserable suffering and feelings of loneliness and isolation. During the writing of the film, the sensitive writer experienced extreme heartbreak upon ending his relationship with a younger woman: “Sous la gaieté de façade, sourdait une souffrance comparable à celle qu’il prêtait à Nathalie. La fée l’avait défiguré un bel amour qui résista tant bien que mal jusqu’à la fin de l’année 1943” (Courrière 507).

124
empirically and historically (through the writing and acting). However, in defense of Casarès, no ingénue could possibly compete very well cinematically with Arletty in a Carné feature. Later though, as discussed in a subsequent chapter, Casarès assumes her own star quality as a Coctelian hero, or perhaps villain, par excellence.

The next scene for commentary, here, uses one of the most classical of cinematic techniques, shot/reverse-shot, in continuing the love relationship between Garance and Baptiste. After running into Garance by chance in a pub, Baptiste walks her home through the streets of Paris at night as the two discuss their childhood years. Like Arletty, Garance grew up humbly; she also started surviving as a young woman by depending on men to a certain extent.

Baptiste spent his early years dreaming, perhaps, he says, of Garance. As of this scene, Baptiste’s love for Garance has already become more of an emotional devotion than a physical, sexual yearning. This state of affairs, as Turk notes, reverses the traditional active/male and passive/female roles in the street scene where the two have their first on-screen kiss.

To follow custom, the camera ought to focus on Garance. But Carné chooses instead to frame and highlight Baptiste’s full face, quivering with
expectancy, as Garance, shot from the rear, inclines forward and initiates the kiss. (Turk 287)

In the (stereo-)typical shot/reverse-shot, the man first appears in a more or less horizontal medium or close-up shot, which parallels the viewer’s position with that of the camera. Then, the woman, sometimes with a soft focus, comes into view in a more close-up shot, which assumes the point of view of the male protagonist. Based on Turk’s comments above, then, Arletty, the supposed object of men’s desire, does not occupy the proper position, within the syntax of film language, for a traditional expression of such desire.

Moreover, this scene breaks somewhat with tradition with respect to actual on-screen romantic activity on the part of Arletty. The actor herself has remarked on this subject with regard to her persona.

...érotique, érotique, non pas du tout ça; il n’y a rien de ça ni dans les films, ni dans les pièces que j’ai interprétés... ou alors c’est un vaudeville et j’ai l’air de dire au public que je me fous du bonhomme s’il m’embrasse et si je l’embrasse ça a l’air d’une vraie blague. (Arletty, LD 233)

Apparently, Arletty’s comic persona can sometimes override attempts at serious movie kisses. Arletty continues that in
the majority of her films, even those that explore sexuality, her characters do not really engage in romantic activity. She notes the exception of the scene with Barrault:

ça doit durer, je ne sais pas, une demi-seconde, ce baiser, [Carné] l’a fait avec un tel soin, cela a duré tellement longtemps, que pour être à la hauteur l’un à l’autre avec Barrault, moi, j’étais un petit peu descendue, et lui remonté, pour ce fameux baiser qu’il devait donner probablement au-dessus de moi (234)

The actor’s recollections point to Carné’s attention to the placement of the actors with regard to one another. Interestingly enough, Arletty recalls that the two stood more or less at an equal height; further, she uses the term “probablement” to qualify Barrault’s vertically superior position in the scene. Arletty, though, may not have realized on the set that the camera placement could subvert that, relatively speaking, superior position. With the kiss scene, Carné places the newly sophisticated star Arletty in a new type of situation for her persona; then, he rejects filming the scene using traditional techniques. Accordingly, Arletty adds a layer of nuance to her persona of sexual independence by appearing in a traditional kissing
scene, while at the same time resisting traditional female depictions within such a scene. That same persona allows Carné to revise once again the active and passive roles within the Garance/Baptiste relationship. The scene also suggests that, unlike the tent patrons, the police, and Nathalie, all of whom figure others according to their own desires, e.g. as sexual object, criminal, or husband, Baptiste and Garance exert no such pressure on one another. For instance, Baptiste does not unproblematically realize his childhood dreams by simply capturing Garance. And with Baptiste, Garance does not obtain the frivolous, superficial pleasure that she has come to expect with most men.

In contrast to this slight step towards a truer discovery of her feelings for Baptiste, Garance continues to resist the attempts by her other suitors to figure her according to their own dreams. After a performance as a statue, in a pantomime which replays both Baptiste’s and Frédéric’s courtship of her, Garance returns to her dressing room. On her way, she waggishly refuses Frédéric’s romantic advances; only in this scene, out of the entire movie, does Arletty walk using her famous side-to-side sashay from earlier films. After playing an elegant moon goddess statue in the pantomime, Garance’s off-stage persona, due to this gait, seems very down-to-earth. This
about-face on the screen restages the real-life change in Arletty’s persona after starring in this film. Moreover, it also points to, and plays upon, the differences between the mysterious Garance character and the relatively unequivocal, straight-talking Arletty in real life.

Once in her dressing room, her suitors visit her one by one. As she removes her make-up while looking in the mirror, Garance refuses Frédéric, forcing him to realize that, basically, they just enjoyed each other physically. Forbes reads such scenes of Garance looking in the mirror while talking to her lovers as “visually challenged.” In other words, it seems on the surface that her lovers look at Garance, but, in fact, the shot depicts Garance “contemplating her own face in the mirror.” Moreover, Forbes considers the mirror as potentially portentous; “the truth will be the inverted image of what is seen in the mirror” (Forbes, LE 60). Therefore, while Garance removes her make-up, a symbol her stage persona as desirable star, the make-up remains in place for Frédéric. He can only see her as object of desire. Garance does not accept Frédéric’s overture because, in his desire, she detects that same force which pushes Frédéric selfishly toward fame and beautiful women in general.
When the Count arrives, he professes his love saying he could make her the richest and best-adorned woman in Paris. As Garance listens, she changes clothes—into a simple, checkered dress—behind a screen while stating her contentment with her own life. The Garance character rejects the Count's desire to figure her as he dreams her. Instead, Garance continues to figure herself, out of view of the Count, by dressing in somewhat plain and unpretentious clothes and modest jewelry; she controls “The Truth” about her life, as seen in the metaphor discussed earlier, through an emblematic adornment of her own body. She blocks the Count’s active male gaze with the screen. Ironically, this screen also blocks the viewer’s gaze upon Arletty’s nude body, a body supposedly passive and available to the male gaze for visual pleasure on the movie screen.

The next scene for examination, occurring at the very end of the first part of Carné’s two-part feature, stages another reversal of active/passive bodies, but this time with respect to the authoritative, judicial gaze. One of Garance’s suitors, Lacenaire, has attempted a murder at Garance’s hotel. Afterwards, Garance returns to her room completely unaware of the crime. The proprietor, Madame Hermine (Jane Marken), has informed the police that Garance knows the suspect; and the police subsequently question
Garance, accusing her of complicity. They ask her her name ("Comment vous appelez-vous?"), to which she replies: "Je ne m’appelle jamais. Je suis toujours là; j’ai pas besoin de m’appeler. Mais les autres m’appellent Garance, si ça peut vous intéresser." Earlier in the film, when Frédéric introduced himself to her in the street, Garance had responded that, "on m’appelle Garance." These two statements lend support to the argument for Garance as figure of others’ desire, which they mediate through the cinematic apparatus to which her character refers and belongs. A function of other people’s thoughts and fantasies, Garance does not bother to name, or to script, herself; those around her accomplish this task for her. Nevertheless, Garance does still have the power to manipulate names. When on the verge of arrest, she makes use of the Count’s name by presenting his calling card.

In contrast to her arguably passive subversion of the gaze through glancing at herself in the mirror, Garance now actively introduces this calling card, a symbol of patriarchal power, to redirect the authoritative gaze of the police, who wish to figure her once again as a criminal. Rapid shots next frame each character looking at Arletty and wondering whose card she has offered. As the police examine the card, Arletty looks at the other characters and enjoys
their shocked expressions. According to Turk, “Carné often holds on the final image of sequences several seconds longer than convention dictates” (Turk 234). In this instance of such a shot, the camera, in Brechtian fashion, lingers on Garance, after she hands over the card, long enough for viewers to start to realize their watching of the actor Arletty on the screen. As such, this sequence becomes an instance, on the part of the characters and the viewers, of looking-at Arletty and of Arletty looking-at.

The political implications of this scene—obviously filmed before Arletty’s real-life arrest—also accentuate the effect of Carné’s timing and allow for Arletty to look-at a possibly judgmental public as well. Sellier expands upon this notion:

Dans le film, ses démêlés avec la police et son insolence tranquille face à la grossièreté des représentants de l’ordre [...] laissent penser que Prévert et Carné prévoyaient la situation délicate où elle se trouverait après le départ des Allemands, tout en témoignant à leur manière d’une grande indulgence pour Arletty. (Sellier 45)

In real life, Arletty did not fare as well, in the face of persecution, as did Garance. Audiences at the film’s premiere, for example, gazed upon Garance, as Arletty
remained an absent presence. In fact, people actually attended the opening to “see” this absence (Demonpion 295). As they watched Arletty on the screen—and perhaps as a symbolic, cinematic punishment for any wartime humiliation—this audience seemingly elicited a non-threatening version of castration anxiety, one of the cinema’s primal fantasies. Although she symbolically emasculated France through her affair with Soehring, Arletty reassures, through her screen presence and her presence on the screen, the continuity and grandeur of French culture in the face of threat. By appropriating the persona of Arletty, and—almost literally here—erasing the person of Arletty, France constructs one of its cinematic icons, but nevertheless still in the image of Léonie Bathiat.

In the second époque, Garance further incarnates such grandeur, in stature, comportment, and dress, after becoming the Count’s concubine and traveling companion. However, she does not love the Count and returns nightly to the theater to watch, in the veiled secrecy of her theater box, Baptiste star in a hit play. When Frédéric joins her in the loge one night, the two both gaze paternalistically, or maternalistically, at Baptiste on the stage. At this point in the film, the intense visual scrutiny upon Baptiste suggests that he, and not Garance after all, occupies the
central position in the story. Moreover, this image of Garance and Frédérick enraptured by the sight of Baptiste matches an earlier shot of the Count and his friends delighting in the pleasure of watching Arletty. Now Baptiste evolves into the central object choice of the film’s characters; and, like Garance earlier, he experiences similar difficulties in this role. For instance, Nathalie loves him as the husband she desires. Frédérick, gazing at Baptiste from the theater box, states, “il est vraiment merveilleux.” Frédérick’s statement, though, has less to do with Baptiste than it does with Frédérick, who reveals his jealousy over the mime’s talent and ability to attract Garance.

The statement carries a slightly homoerotic charge thanks to the mise-en-scène of looking. Carné-like Cocteau, as the next chapters will propose—plays upon the double possibility of homoerotic gazing. First, and most simply, the gazer desires to possess the object of the gaze. Secondly, and perhaps more cogent here, the gazer desires to emulate or to be(come) that person; this may seem, superficially at least, more possible in the homoerotic situation given the matching gender of gazer and gazee. In this scene, Carné stresses this possibility in that Frédérick and Baptiste practice the same profession with
almost the same amount of success. Sellier, in her reading of the film, even sees Baptiste as a figure of Carné’s own homosexual desire.

Bien que créé sur mesure pour Jean-Louis Barrault, ce personnage incarne l’image d’artiste la plus brillante, la plus émouvante et la plus proche de lui que Marcel Carné ait suscitée dans son œuvre.

Jamais sans doute il n’a donné une expression aussi poignante, bien que déguisée, de son homosexualité... (Sellier 51)

Earlier in the film, for the kiss scene with Garance, Carné meticulously blocked the actors and arranged the camera angles. The resulting shot, relying also on Arletty’s persona of sexual liberation and independence, established a passive space for Baptiste to occupy as object of desire. Furthermore, with the theater scenes, Carné provides a space for the viewer to gaze upon and desire Baptiste in positioning the camera from the point of view of the film’s audience members. Pérez explains:

On est frappé, par exemple, par l’utilisation systématique des plans frontaux (la caméra placée au premier rang des fauteuils d’orchestre)... [...] qui a [...] pour effet de nous donner l’impression
déraisonnable d’assister réellement à un spectacle du boulevard du Crime... (Pérez 82)

Carné’s staging of looking at Baptiste, and from the same point of view as the theater audience or film viewer, underscores the homoerotic possibilities, for Carné but also for Frédérick and, even, the viewer, of desire to have and to become like the artist on the stage.

Moreover, this staging draws attention away from Garance, as she no longer works as a performer in the second époque. Pérez questions her true love for Baptiste stating that, “il est difficile de ne pas se convaincre qu’elle n’aime, en fait, que l’amour de Baptiste” (87). Pérez supports his argument by comparing Baptiste’s love to the loyalty a child shows to his or her parents. In fact, as Garance watches maternally from her theater box, Nathalie, in hopes of dissuading Garance from returning to the theater, sends her own child in to talk to Garance. Garance—in perhaps a reference to the maternalistic aspects of Arletty’s persona mentioned in the last chapter—displays bittersweet warmth toward the child as he innocently carries out Nathalie’s machination.

Nathalie’s plan, for the moment at least, fails as Baptiste and Garance eventually return to the hotel together. Nathalie arrives with the child to reclaim
Baptiste for the last time. She and Garance each proclaim their love for Baptiste; however, they announce this to one another as Baptiste remains silent on the other side of the room. At one point, he tries to speak, but Nathalie tells him not to interrupt. Garance, perhaps remembering how, before, her suitors constantly attempted to figure her to the measure of their desire, leaves the hotel and gets in her carriage.

Baptiste frantically runs through the street celebration; members of the crowd block his attempt to catch her. For the last shot of Arletty, Carné depicts her sitting somberly inside her moving carriage. The blank seatback behind her contrasts with the visually crowded street scene of dancing and confetti throwing. Garance, having fulfilled her role in the narrative, seems to recede into the cinema itself. Carné, once again, holds the shot of Garance against the blank background, reminiscent of a blank movie screen, for just a bit longer than necessary to convey the character’s state of heartsick, though stoic, resignation. In her elegant gown and dramatically still pose, Arletty presents the image of a major movie star; she appears against a screen, above the crowd (in the street behind her carriage), as the male protagonist chases after her in desire. The viewer then must decide what choice she
made, and if she made the correct choice. Ironically, this mise-en-scène matches to a certain degree the events at the film’s premiere. Arletty, a rich and successful star, sacrificed her freedom for her romantic relationship with Soehring; she only attended the film’s opening as a screen presence unable to answer in person to any judgments on the part of the viewers. Her cinematic, iconographic status—visually suggested in this last shot of her—carried the burden of defending her role in the film and in real life.

As this last shot, the tent shot, the mirror shots, the kissing scene, and the calling card sequence all suggest, Arletty’s persona allows her to gaze back at characters in the film and at the viewers. Not portraying her as mere object of the gaze, Carné capitalizes upon this aspect of the actor’s image in a subtle retooling of a traditional melodrama. As Forbes explains:

Uniquely, perhaps, in the history of cinema, Les Enfants du paradis is a melodrama about men, a melodrama whose structural dispositions are inverted in relation to depictions of gender.

(Forbes, LEdp 60)

The personae of other female actors, such as Annabella or Laurent, would perhaps not permit so dramatic of a reversal. By comparison, Arletty emits a stronger sense of that aspect
of star quality, and in line with Dyer’s definition of it, that allows the audience to view her as a simultaneous figure of normativity and difference. For example, according to Hayward, Arletty “attracts in a way that is different and ambiguous” (Hayward 172). The critic continues that Arletty’s witty banter and working-class roles appeal as masculine traits and that her unmysterious, in most roles, and sincere, frank sexuality appeal as feminine traits (172).

Perhaps because of this reliance on Arletty’s persona, and his continued collaborations with Trauner for the sets and Prévert for dialogs, critics sometimes point to an “uncertain attribution of authorship,” as Turk labels it (Turk 219), with this film, and, for that matter, with others by Carné as well. By appropriately exploiting Arletty’s persona, by well-disposed staging of Prévert’s dialogs, or by artful filming of Trauner’s sets, Carné fills his frame with a well-balanced mixture of elements of other people’s artistry and craft. This collaborative style allows him to express his vision through others, as in the discussions above, in creating a film about the desire of, for, and by Baptiste (and/or Garance). Carné’s collaborative style comes from the choices he makes on the
set as much as from the choices about which partnerships to maintain.

If Carné’s career never again reached the same heights as during and just after the Occupation, perhaps the reason lies in that fact that his collaborative arrangements with Prévert and Arletty changed. The poet—who at the same time published *Paroles* (1946)—and the director soon ended their partnership after a few less successful film projects. In the case of Arletty, her roles in Carné’s films became weaker, perhaps reflecting her brief period of unpopularity at the *épuration*. Moreover, Carné’s filmmaking style fell into temporary disfavor as the New Wave steadily approached. His *cinéma de papa*, as the younger critics derogatorily called it, along with his populist star Arletty, did not find as comfortable a place within the new “*qualité française*” films of the fifties or the *Nouvelle vague* in the late fifties and early sixties.

These newer films, often made by cinema critics cum filmmakers, also displayed more personalized and intellectual visions of the world. In this mode, and also simply for practical and monetary concerns, the New Wave directors no longer built massive sets or hired the same mega-stars. Instead, they often worked with *les moyens du bord* to tell their stories and to challenge traditional
camerawork and editing. While Carné manipulated elements of the cinema, including people, to explore privileged themes, the New Wave directors started to question the very nature of cinema overall.

One director, Jean Cocteau, bridges the gap between these older and newer styles of filmmaking. His work transitioned well between the forties and fifties due to its personalized, poetic style and resistance to categorizing. Cocteau, like Carné in this respect, also tended to use the same actors, and especially Jean Marais, from one project to another. However, as the following chapters will discuss, Cocteau’s collaborative efforts operated much differently. For example, unlike Carné, Cocteau wrote his own scripts and designed many of his own sets and costumes. Whereas Carné’s brand of collaboration combined the stronger points of each person’s talent for the creation of a unique cinematic style, Cocteau’s collaborative relationships, like with Marais for example, serve in the expression of Cocteau’s extant and evolving-away from the real and towards the surreal and fantastic-poetic vision. Lastly, Cocteau’s style appears more self-reflective than Carné’s, whose collaborative efforts, such as those with Arletty or Prévert, more strongly bear the signature of the collaborators as individual contributor’s to the project,
and not, as with Cocteau, as articulations of elements of
the director's autobiography.
CHAPTER 6

LES PARENTS TERRIBLES: FIGURING A COCTELIAN STAR

In early 1937, Cocteau "[d]écouvre Jean Marais" (Touzot 193), a young performer, and member of an acting class whose version of Édipe roi Cocteau had agreed to produce. Marais, cast in the play’s chorus, sought out the older artist in hopes of a more consequential role in future works. Cocteau took an instant liking to the energetic actor whose credits to date had included only small theater roles and cinema work as an extra. Their meeting spawned a personal relationship and professional collaboration that would make Marais a star and would help create Cocteau’s cinematic legacy. The next chapters examine three films from this legacy, La Belle et la Bête (1946), Les Parents terribles (1948), and Orphée (1949), in an attempt to trace the interdependent articulations of Marais’s star persona and of Cocteau’s auteurist style. Moreover, as the next chapters will argue, these three
films specifically mark key stages of that articulation: the creation, definition, and exploitation of the personae (both star and cinéaste) in collaboration.

Before their meeting, Cocteau had made only one film: the autobiographical, homoerotic, and surrealist short-feature Le Sang d’un poète (1930). However, the artist enjoyed a well-established reputation as poet, painter, writer, playwright, and Parisian socialite. Upon meeting Marais, and up until the outbreak of war, Cocteau started writing theater roles for his newest protégé. As the Délégation à L’Action Artistique de La Ville de Paris noted, in its homage to Cocteau, Jean Cocteau: poète du spectacle (1984):

Désormais, Jean Cocteau va écrire pour Jean Marais un certain nombre de rôles, et donc un certain nombre de pièces. Le coup d’essai dans cette direction se révélera coup de maître, puisqu’il s’agit des Parents terribles, créés en 1938 au Théâtre des Ambassadeurs; tant la pièce

---

1 In fact, as this chapter will contend below, Les Parents terribles contributes, albeit somewhat anachronistically, more than the other two films listed to the creation of the personae since the film represents a very faithful adaptation of a play Cocteau wrote, in 1938, as a star vehicle for Marais.
que son jeune interprète remporteront un succès considérable. (34)

After the *drôle de guerre*, during which Marais served in the French army, Marais’s popularity as a stage actor, and at times director, grew. During and after the war, Cocteau looked to film to continue Marais’s rise to fame, as Williams explains:

After an absence of over a decade Cocteau had returned to the cinema during the Occupation to help his lover, the actor Jean Marais, become a film star. This goal he achieved spectacularly well in his first original commercial screenplay, for Jean Delannoy’s *L’Eternel retour* (*The Eternal Return*, 1943). Marais became an early prototype of the postwar film star as sex symbol, playing a contemporary Tristan to Madeleine Solange’s similarly updated Isolde. (Williams 320-21)

This role as Tristan, though, and for which Marais colored his hair blond, has created some controversy, especially among critics today, as representing an anti-Semitic stereotype designed to highlight the blond, Aryan beauty of Marais in concurrence with the pro-Germanic mood of many collaborationists of the time. Moreover, what with
scriptwriter Cocteau's remaining friends with official Nazi sculptor Arno Brecker during the Occupation, this alleged Aryanization, visually speaking at least, of the classic French literary figure of Tristan seems somewhat reminiscent of Hitler's official, and often unconsciously homoerotic, state art. As such, these plastic representations of anti-Semitism, even if existing unbeknownst to the mostly apolitical and certainly not outwardly anti-Semitic Cocteau-Marais couple, in the pair's films can read as symptomatic of that historical time period's latent bigotry. Alternatively, such representations may point toward a possible, although certainly politically disengaged, fascist-like tendency—in the sense of using dictatorial, or more precisely directorial, force to impose one single vision to the exclusion of others—with respect to Cocteau's depiction of beauty², which, on a few occasions, he has described as a kind of purity (see Marais Hdmv 74).

However, neither Cocteau nor Marais seemed particularly interested in the war or its implications, at

² The very notion of beauty, while obviously not the main subject of this study, may carry with it an inherent kind of fascism in that, arguably, it can be seen to impose itself aggressively on the world. As the Count states, in Les Enfants du paradis, "La beauté est une insulte au monde, qui est laid."
first; for Marais, it merely meant a professional set back. As the actor has noted:

Ce qui est horrible, c’est, en fait, que je ne me représentais pas une guerre, ni les souffrances de millions et de millions d’êtres, ni la mort. Je pensais: “Je ne jouerai pas Les Parents terribles.” (Marais, Hdmv 79)

Marais admits to his own naïveté; but he underscores that in fact the task fell to him to relate the latest war news to Cocteau, as the latter did not regularly read the newspapers. This lack of interest also created problems for Cocteau at the épuration, as Steegmuller explains:

...his manifest willingness to tolerate the company of the occupants brought him to the attention of the “purification” tribunals after the Liberation in 1944. He was exonerated of any serious misconduct; and, in a transformation typical of his career, one of his drawings of Marianne in a Liberty Cap, wearing the tricolor rosette of the French Resistance, was disseminated around the world in millions of miniature copies, having been adopted by the Fourth French Republic as its twenty-centime stamp. (Steegmuller, JC:BB 31)
As for Marais’s own situation after the épuration, several “mythologies” have emerged, as a recent Internet article from Tétu magazine details:

Arrive la guerre et ses mythologies parfois fragiles. On se souvient de Marais cassant la gueule au collabo Alain Laubreaux, critique théâtral de Je suis partout, qui attaquaient violemment Cocteau. On oublie qu’il fallut l’intervention de l’auteur de Thomas l’Imposteur auprès de son ami le sculpteur Arno Brecker, chantre du régime hitlérien, pour éviter le pire à Marais. Marais raconta aussi que la Résistance ne voulut pas de lui, à cause de son goût pour les garçons, et parce qu’il ne savait pas tenir sa langue. Il n’empêche que ce ne sera que dans les derniers jours de la guerre que le comédien rejoindra précipitamment la 2e DB, révulsé par l’épuration et inquiet pour son propre sort. ("Couple éternel du cinéma français." from Tetu.com)

As these citations show, Cocteau and Marais emerged from the war with their reputations mostly intact despite their not having been perfect models of Resistance fighters.
Perhaps, as with Arletty, their perceived value to France's cultural iconography helped them through the difficult situation and the questions about their actions. In any case, as France began to rebuild, the two found themselves poised to become major figures of the reconstruction-era cinema.

From this time forward, Cocteau started gaining worldwide recognition more for his cinema than possibly for his work in other mediums.

It is scarcely too much to say that Cocteau’s artistic importance for the rest of his life, from the last year of the war to his death in 1963, lies almost exclusively in his authorship and production of films; and it is chiefly his films which, particularly outside of France, have perpetuated his name: the titles alone conjure up a film festival. (Steegmuller, JC:ABB 33)

Because of this rather abrupt change in focus in Cocteau’s artistic production, this chapter focuses on the film Les Parents terribles—released after La Belle et la Bête—as both a bridge between the Occupation-era theatrical productions and the post-war films of the Cocteau/Marais collaboration and, also, as a general introduction to the
Coctelian œuvre. This film, like most all of Cocteau’s (cinematic) works, addresses his relatively concise core system of privileged themes, such as self-reflection, the mythologies of Narcissus and Orpheus, homoerotic desire, and poetic creation. As with other of Cocteau’s works, too, this mostly realist-style, narrative film, which Cocteau crafted from his own earlier bourgeois, melodramatic play of the same title, expresses those themes very specifically through thefiguring of Marais’s character and persona.

Cocteau’s creative methods at first seem intensely solitary; but they consistently involve the presence of others. This paradox, according to Elizabeth Sprigge and Jean-Jacques Kihm, relates to a general sense of loneliness on the part of the artist:

More even than when he was working in the theater, he found his inner loneliness assuaged by working with other people—that loneliness to escape which, he said, he engaged in endless talk. (Sprigge and Kihm 159)

In order to achieve the delicate balance between solitude, for poetic creation, and human companionship, Cocteau—just as he had done earlier with Raymond Radiguet, his first
protégé—would often leave Paris for a provincial, seaside hotel with Marais. In fact, Cocteau almost cyclically returned with Marais to the same places where he had sojourned with Radiguet earlier. On Cocteau’s 1938 summer trip to Toulon and Saint-Tropez with Marais, and while the young actor explored the countryside, met with friends, or learned scuba—using the newly invented equipment to be featured in the filmic version of *Les Parents terribles*—Cocteau wrote the play *Les Parents terribles.* On this occasion, Cocteau’s inspiration to write came slowly, much to the agitation of an anxious Marais, as Joseph Barry explains in a Spanish-language journal: “durante dos meses no escribió una sola línea y ello enojó a Marais. Para estimular a Cocteau, le contaba historias acerca de su propia madre, a la que llamaba ‘Rosalie’” (Barry 21). To pass the time, Marais recounted his life growing up fatherless, under the care of his elderly grandmother, a stern aunt, and an adored mother who, due to kleptomania, often spent time “en voyage,” a family euphemism for prison. Then, as Marais describes, late one night Cocteau began to write:

Huit jours, huit jours et huit nuits, d’une traite, sans rature, presque sans repos, il
écrit. Sa figure se rayait, se froissait, se crispait—une mine féroce, un assassin. Un assassin de ses personnages. [...] Il me révéla que lorsqu’il était étendu, la pièce se formait en lui, acte par acte, scène par scène, phrase après phrase, mot après mot et que lorsqu’il écrivait—ce qu’il détestait—il devenait en quelque sorte son secrétaire. (Marais, Hdmv 75)

Before beginning this rather metaphysical writing process, Cocteau had asked his friend to describe the type of role he would like to perform. Marais responded:

Un jeune homme moderne, avec des sentiments extrêmes, qui rit, pleure, crie, se roule par terre; bref, dans une intrigue contemporaine, un rôle où l’on pourrait imaginer un acteur d’autrefois. (Milorad 59)

Cocteau delivered just such a role.

The play and the film, which used more or less the same script and performers, concern around a young man, Michel (Marais), who arrives home one morning to a worried, doting mother, Yvonne (Yvonne de Bray). Yvonne becomes jealous upon learning of Michel’s night spent with his fiancée, Madeleine (Josette Day), who also happens to be
the mistress of Georges (Marcel André), an unsuccessful inventor, Michel’s docile father, and Yvonne’s neglected husband. To complicate matters further, Yvonne’s spinster sister Léonie (Gabrielle Dorziat), who lives with the family in their stifling, cluttered apartment called “la roulotte,” has always loved Georges. Yvonne throws a fit of jealousy as Léonie and Georges plot to end the young lovers’ affair, which causes Michel to pout, cry, and lay on the floor in his darkened, untidy room. Léonie, partly out of bitterness towards her sister and partly in response to a change of heart after meeting and empathizing with Madeleine, reconsiders her plans with Georges and reunites the lovers. Yvonne, who cannot stand to see another woman bring happiness to her son, commits suicide by drug overdose. The story ends as the family—plus the addition of Madeleine as a replacement for Yvonne—huddles in mourning around Yvonne’s bed.

This conventional family drama breaks with Cocteau’s earlier theatrical works in its straightforward, although psychologically complicated, plot and seemingly realistic style. The magical, surrealistic sets, costumes, and characters of Cocteau’s earlier plays do not appear in this star vehicle, as Milorad explains:
Il semble que cette pièce, à l’origine, n’ait pas constitué une œuvre “inspirée,” ce que son auteur appelait un “cadeau,” une œuvre de “chance,” mais que le premier mobile en ait été le simple désir d’écrire une pièce à l’intention de Jean Marais...

(Milorad 58)

Bettina L. Knapp underscores this concern with Marais, both on and off the stage/screen.

What makes the genesis of Intimate Relations [Les Parents terribles] of particular interest is the fact that it was written for and about Jean Marais. The actor, then, played his own character. His stage mother whom he resembled, incredibly enough, was performed by the celebrated actress, Yvonne de Bray. (Knapp 94-95)

Knapp continues that, during the play’s initial rehearsals, de Bray and Marais developed a relationship somewhat similar to that of their characters’: passionate, tempestuous, and nearly incestuous. This latter aspect, which inspired controversy and the usual, run-of-the-mill moralistic outrage, forced the very successful play to move from its first run at Le Théâtre des Ambassadeurs to an
equally successful run at the Bouffes-Parisiens, an, ironically, equally prestigious theater. The play ran once more during the Occupation until the Germans, predictably, banned it. Cocteau had originally planned to make the film version during the war for Marais (Marais, Hdmv 86), but the project eventually failed due to censorship and other more mundane circumstances, such as interest in other projects, Cocteau’s attempts at drug rehabilitation, and several bouts of minor illness on the part of Marais. Because of the delay, by 1948, an older Marais now had to play an immature character of twenty-two years of age, over twelve years his junior in real life. Despite this drawback, the original cast reunited and managed to revive the familial ambiance of their initial rehearsals. Cocteau credited this friendly atmosphere as contributing to the film’s success (Sprigge and Kihm 174). The relatively inexpensive filmic version, which nonetheless demonstrates high production values, appealed to broad audiences, especially in France during the post-war, reconstruction period. Even though this film differs remarkably from Cocteau’s more readily recognizable poésie de cinéma, the work remains typically Coctelian in its personalized mode of expression. As Williams reminds us, “Cocteau’s films
are arguably more significant as expressions of his personality and artistic vision... [...] Though in the cinema’s evolution, they are not of it” (Williams 321).

An examination of the particular features of this personal, artistic vision—and especially in the exceptional case of the “realist” film Les Parents terribles—starts with a consideration of the muse. Throughout his career, Cocteau gained inspiration from many sources such as, for example, his childhood, his mother, his classmate Dargelos, Radiguet, opium, and, in this instance, Marais. For Cocteau, Marais possessed a combination of dramatic, almost mystical, qualities and abilities that fit perfectly with the director’s vision.

Le triomphe de Jean Marais, mon Michel des Parents terribles, vint des grands fantômes dont il méditait les audaces et de ce que la peur d’être indigne de ma confiance le jetât dans une folle sincérité, moins dangereuse, à son estime, que le contrôle de ses dons. (Cocteau, Mms 74)

Marais himself attests to the influence of Cocteau on his talent; later in the actor’s career, he must face this “peur” as director of a play of his own.
On répète. J’ai si peur d’être influencé par Jean Cocteau que je lui demande de ne pas venir à mes répétitions. Pourtant, je ne peux rien faire sans me demander ce qu’il ferait, ce qu’il dirait. (Marais, Hdmv 130)

Such reciprocal praise for the genius of the other marks most all of the discourse about Cocteau by Marais and about Marais by Cocteau. Despite their mutual recognition of talent, though, both of them always seemingly acknowledged Cocteau’s authority. As such, Marais tended to acquiesce to nearly all of Cocteau’s decisions, both on and off screen. Nevertheless, Cocteau did ask for advice and input from Marais and, given the older artist’s graceful, polite, and generally kind demeanor, seems never to have authoritatively imposed his will on the younger performer. Cocteau respected and appreciated not only the actor’s work ethic, but also the manner in which Marais’s acting style served his own poetic expression:

...Jean Marais, mon Orphée, donne, de pièce en pièce, de film en film, l’exemple du travail qui efface le travail et de ce réalisme irréel, par quoi la poésie se prouve.
Marais’s influence on Cocteau then operates on two levels. In the first place, events from the actor’s real life—just as do actual events from Cocteau’s own life—inspire fictitious refiguring on the part of Cocteau. Secondly, Marais’s range of characters, his natural ease in front of the camera, and his cinematic presence—perhaps thanks to his youthful good looks and athletic physique—served to inspire Cocteau to push his films away from traditional styles of film realism in their exploration of some of the artist’s central concerns.

As for the first type of influences, i.e. the ostensible centrality of autobiography to Cocteau’s work, Les Parents terribles contains many apparent coincidences between actual and fictionalized people, relationships, and events. Dominique Marny notes that

En écoutant les dialogues, on pense inévitablement aux rapports de Cocteau avec sa mère... à ceux de Marais avec la sienne; pourtant
Sprigge and Kihm suggest that Yvonne’s “consternation” over Michel’s love affair with Madeleine parallels a similar reaction, in real life, on the part the rather bourgeois Madame Cocteau with regard to a love affair between an adolescent Jean and an “unsophisticated” young woman named Madeleine Carlier (Sprigge and Kihm 33). Milorad recalls that “jusque-là, le partenaire le plus important, dans la vie de Marais, a été sa propre mère, un peu abusive, un peu excessive” (Milorad 59). Milorad continues:

...le jeune Michel, dans Les Parents terribles, surnomme sa mère Sophie en souvenir du fameux personnage de la comtesse de Ségur; or, Jean Marais nous raconte, dans son autobiographie intitulée Mes quatre vérités, qu’il surnommait Rosalie sa propre mère, en mémoire du spectacle du Châtelet, Rosalie et Chabichou. De même, Michel a comme Jean Marais du goût pour les arts plastiques. (59-60)

Milorad also posits that the difference between Marais’s mother and Cocteau’s accounts for the creation of the Léonie character: “Yvonne, la mère-entrailles-et-cœur,
devra, pour se rapprocher de Mme Cocteau, être
contrebalancée, tempérée, complétée par Léo, la mère-tête”
(61). The critic adds that, “Léo peut devoir aussi quelque
chose à la grand-mère et la grand-tante maternelles de Jean
Marais, lesquelles flanquaient sa mère comme Léo flanque
Yvonne” (62). Leonie’s presence serves as a nuance for the
stereotypical character of the domineering mother, often
blamed for a son’s weakness or immaturity. Plus, if not
for the presence of Léonie, the incestuous overtones
between Michel and Yvonne could overpower the drama,
rendering the play’s psychology simplistic and its inherent
misogyny even more oppressive. Instead, Léonie reminds
spectators of the pain Yvonne’s obsession with Michel has
causéd the family, especially George, whom Léonie had loved
before her sister. Grounded within the familial context
beyond Michel, Yvonne appears less grotesque.

Several passages from one of Marais’s autobiographies
also invite comparisons between his relationship with
“Rosalie” and Michel’s relationship with “Sophie.” For
instance, upon seeing each other, after a week’s
separation, teenaged Marais rushes to his mother’s arms:
“Huit jours sans avoir été dans les bras de ma mère! Les
effusions n’en finissaient pas. En dépit de mes quinze
ans, je me comportais comme un bébé devant elle” (Marais, Havana 36). In the play, Michel jumps into bed with Sophie and holds her in his arms as he recounts his new relationship with Madeleine. In real life, when Marais starts spending late evenings with Cocteau and friends, his mother reacts badly.

Aussi n’admettait-elle mes rentrées nocturnes. Moi, j’étais si heureux que j’avais envie qu’elle le fût aussi avec moi. Elle, elle souffrait que je puisse l’être en dehors d’elle. Notre entente extraordinaire se disloquait. (67)

Likewise, in the play, Yvonne realizes the imminent demise of her close relationship with Michel once he spends nights away, with Madeleine no less, from “la roulotte.” Of course, one obvious difference between these two instances of jealousy remains that, on the screen, Michel’s choice of Madeleine does not accurately reflect the real-life gender displacement, from female to male love object, which apparently threatened Marais’s relationship with his mother.

Marais also notes that his use of the expression “c’est formidable,” accented on the “for-,” made its way into Cocteau’s play, although in a different form.
L’”incroyable” des Parents terribles ne venait pas de ma mère, mais de moi. Je disais à tout propos, “C’est for-mi-da-ble.” Jean, qui ne trouvait pas ce mot français, le changea en “in-croya-ble” [sic]. (78)

While borrowing from actual events like these, though, Cocteau never strove to recapture reality; instead, he allowed his or Marais’s memories to suggest possible reworkings within the imaginary realms of the theater or cinema. In the filmic version of Les Parents terribles, then, he builds upon these events to elaborate Coctelian themes within the framework of a realist drama and Marais star vehicle.

By positioning Marais’s character at the center of the drama, Cocteau figures him as an ingenuous, child-like object of desire naively believing in his own freedom despite a pre-determined fate. In order to express such an idea in this, at first glance, archetypal example of théâtre filmé, Cocteau makes intricate use of camera angles and movements. Medium and close-up shots comprise the majority of the scenes, especially those that allow major plot advancements. For example, before Michel’s arrival, when Léonie informs Yvonne that Michel’s absence suggests a
new girlfriend, Cocteau frames the two actors, in profile, facing one another, in a close-up. This somewhat traditional use of the close-up stresses the major revelation that upsets the household.

By contrast, Cocteau films Yvonne’s initial suicide scene—which establishes her psychological obsession with Michel—in a very non-traditional use of the high-angle shot. As Léonie and Georges rush around the apartment to try to counteract the insulin overdose, by feeding Yvonne sugar, Cocteau films the forty-five second sequence, containing five different shots, from varying degrees of high angles. Then, returning to medium shots of the characters, Yvonne regains consciousness and says, “Je vous demande pardon; j’ai été grotesque.” Next, another fifty-second long high-angle sequence, consisting of two different shots, follows as Georges and Léonie put Yvonne in bed. These high-angle sequences of extraordinarily long duration pull the viewer from the intimacy of the apartment and grant a god’s-eye view of the action. The characters, trapped in their world, move about below in seemingly familiar patterns, e.g. attending to an obsessive Yvonne. As Knapp proposes, “they are pawns of fate, of chance” (Knapp 97). The change in angle from the rest of the
film’s shots supports Knapp’s commentary on the bourgeois, Oedipal world that unfolds in medium shots and that awaits Michel.

For the majority of the film, these medium and close-up shots recount the story as the camera follows the actors around the apartment. René Gilson remarks that “on est là, on est dedans, parmi eux, on a l’impression qu’on leur marche sur les pieds, on a envie de dire ‘pardon’” (Gilson 57). Cocteau spells out this goal in detail.

Je souhaitais trois choses: fixer le jeu d’artistes incomparables; me promener parmi eux et les regarder en pleine figure au lieu de les voir à distance, sur une scène; mettre mon œil au trou de serrure et surprendre mes fauves avec le télé-objectif. (Cocteau Eadc, 95)

The keyhole viewing position—a major trope of the cinema and of its Oedipal dramas—which, by the way, Léonie uses at one point in the film to eavesdrop on Michel and Yvonne’s conversation, focuses the viewer’s attention on the act of looking and underscores the importance of the object of that gaze. Moreover, this realistic detail on a door recalls the many doors in the apartment set. The “roulotte” seems a maze of interconnected rooms, each

164
associated with one character or another, whose doors the characters must open and close to pass through daily in order to interact with one another. Cocteau highlighted this detail of the set and “insisted that the doors should be solid enough to be banged” (Sprigge and Kihm 139). In the film, Michel makes his initial entrance by slamming a door—and thereby establishing his character as central to the plot—to announce that he has finally returned home.

Michel’s arrival locks in the personalities of each family member in a sequence with one of the few camera movements of the film. The camera moves quickly from character to character, as each speaks, and thus blurs the space in between them. Michel, the center of attention, notices that “Sophie” seems ill. Georges complains that Michel caused her suffering and disapproves of the childish nickname. They ask him where he spent the night, to which he replies, “Mais écoutez les enfants!” Then, he excuses himself for the disrespectful remark. Yvonne castigates him, telling him to listen to his father: “C’est ton père qui commande ici.” Léonie retorts, “Incroyable.” Yvonne tells Michel to go explain himself in his father’s study; Michel replies that Georges has no study, only an untidy room. In fact, earlier shots had depicted Georges in his
“study” tinkering un成功fully with his scuba apparatus. Later in the film, though, Georges announces that he spends his time in this room adding up numbers and achieving incorrect results.

Georges, Yvonne’s rejected husband and a failed inventor, represents the future in store for Michel if he cannot escape the family drama through his relationship with Madeleine. However, this escape seems doubtful given Georges’s own failed relationship with Madeleine. Plus, once Léonie and Georges plot against the young couple, Madeleine enters, whether she realizes it or not, the “roulotte.” Gilson elaborates on the differences between Georges and Michel:

Georges, c’est la faiblesse et la honte. Il est simplement les hommes. […] Michel alors est le héros, c’est-à-dire la victime, tour à tour souffrant et glorieux, aveuglé de lumière et les yeux crevés, entrant dans la terrible voie de l’ordre établi. (Gilson 65-6)

Michel tries to convince Yvonne to understand, support, and find happiness in his relation with Madeleine. At first, the family refuses even to go visit the young woman in her contrastingly tidy and orderly apartment. However, Georges
and Léonie hatch a plan to shock Madeleine—still unaware of
the father-son relationship between Georges and Michel—into
breaking up with Michel by showing up at her apartment en
famille. When they announce their consent to meet the
young woman, Michel seems overjoyed. Forebodingly, though,
Cocteau films the announcement scene from the fatalistic
high-angle.

While, before, the relationship between his parents
and Michel established the latter as an Orphic character,
trying to make poetry in a constraining world of mortals,
the Madeleine-Michel relationship establishes him as a
Dargelos-type character. The combination of boyish good
looks, athletic prowess, and precocious virility of
Cocteau’s former classmate, Dargelos, from the Lycée
Condorcet in Paris, helped define the poet’s sense of
beauty. As an unattainable object of desire, Dargelos lead
Cocteau to associate beauty with both purity—which Cocteau
defines as “être fait d’un bloc” (Marais 74)—and pain, or
even, eventually through the myths of Narcissus and
Orpheus, death. Cocteau often commented on the presence of
Dargelos in his œuvre, as in the following exchange from
William Fifield’s 1962 interview:
Fifield: Je crois avoir décelé un certain personnage toujours présent dans votre vie et dans vos œuvres...

Cocteau: L’élève Dargelos.

Fifield: ...un type different, désintéressé, une sorte de tentation d’ouvrir le coquillage, si je puis dire... un type different de vous... (Cocteau, JCoJC 74)

Marjorie Keller qualifies the Dargelos character somewhat similarly:

Magic powers, military status, and arrogance characterize Dargelos’s behavior. In much of his other work, Cocteau ascribes these qualities to the character of childhood. Dargelos is the idealization of the child for Cocteau. (Keller 27)

Sprigge and Kihm comment upon this idealization stating that, “as he became a ‘myth’ in Cocteau’s treasury of obsessions, the real Dargelos was lost in the imaginary one” (Sprigge and Kihm 29). Sprigge and Kihm also recount that, as Cocteau’s death approached, friends of the poet discovered “Pierre Dargelos living peacefully with his wife in the environs of Paris.” Cocteau’s former classmate
responded “reticently.” As the critics suggest, “clearly it was wiser only to admit the use of his name in that first youthful and never-to-be-forgotten experience of falling in love with human beauty” (Sprigge and Kihm 248). Ironically, earlier in their book, these same critics analyze an old school photo of Dargelos and conclude that “Dargelos was in no way a classic beauty; he had rather thick lips, a snub-nose and deep-set, dark-circled eyes over which fell a lock of inky hair” (28). Not surprisingly, it would seem Dargelos’s beauty originates more from within Cocteau’s (often unreliable) memories than from real life. Jean Marais then takes the place of the real Dargelos within the imaginary of the film. Moreover, this reworked childhood reference informs, somewhat ironically perhaps, the screen family’s Oedipal drama.

As always with Cocteau, though, the real drama may lie, one step removed from the screen, between Cocteau and the fictional world and characters he figures self-referentially. In Cocteau’s mind, and because he admired him from a distance, Dargelos remained a pure specimen of beauty unhampered by any human weaknesses, which a closer relationship inevitably would have revealed. Moreover, Cocteau’s actual physical contact with Dargelos appears
limited to visual observation and, on one mythical—though possibly only imagined or much embellished—occasion, a snowball fight. As Cocteau relates in the novel, *Les Enfants terribles*, Dargelos throws a snowball, which conceals a large stone inside, at a Cocteau-like character. The pain causes the snowball’s victim to pass out; however, this pain stems less from the concealed stone than from the striking contact with ideal beauty.

In *Les Parents terribles*, contact with Michel—played by the good-looking Marais—causes pain for Yvonne in that she can never truly possess him because of limitations with regard to incest. In their scenes together, Yvonne fights against this restriction saying that she represents not a mother, but a “camarade” for Michel. However, Cocteau, in one of the film’s strangest, most surreal shots, visually forbids a comfortable resolution for their relationship dilemma. In a disquieting close-up, the lower half of Michel’s face rests on the upper half of Yvonne’s head as Michel tells his mother about his affair. Together, Michel and Yvonne constitute one face: a disharmonious, torn apart, and misassembled face. Even before this visual clue, though, Michel had already replaced his mother with Madeleine in the plot. Death, then, eventually becomes
Yvonne’s only option in the face of an unattainable object of desire. Madeleine, unlike Yvonne, does enjoy a physical relationship with Michel. In a telling reversal, though, Madeleine’s sexual attraction to Michel allows her to see him as a child, a role Yvonne rejected in her sublimations and obsessions. Madeleine exposes, not the sexuality of the Dargelos personage, but its other aspect: child-like purity. Due to a clogged tub at “la roulotte,” Michel takes a bath at Madeleine’s apartment while waiting for his family to visit. This scene figures Marais as a sex symbol, by proffering a measure of scopophilia, as Marais splashes about in the tub, assisted innocently by Madeleine in a motherly fashion. Despite his age, Marais appears young in the shot. As he dries off, Madeleine comments on her feelings for Michel:

Tu sais, c’est ta propreté que j’aime. [...] À l’extérieur tu n’es pas sale. Tu as la saleté des enfants; des genoux d’enfant, ce n’est pas sale. À l’intérieur il n’existe personne au monde de plus propre que toi.

The knee reference comes directly from Dargelos mythology. The young boy’s rough games supposedly always kept his
knees dirty and scraped, a trait that appealed as a polar opposition to the bookish, sometimes sickly Cocteau.

After the tub scene, Michel and Madeleine await the arrival of the family in a series of romantic, though hauntingly familiar, poses. As they lie on the bed, their physical behavior together differs only just slightly—thanks to just a tinge of outright eroticism—from the behaviors earlier between Michel and Yvonne. This first hint that Madeleine will not save Michel from his fate to continue “la roulotte” leads to a confirmation in the last sequence of the film.

Once Léonie decides to allow the lovers their relationship after all, she introduces Madeleine into the family’s home. Yvonne sees the happy lovers and retreats back into her own room; the camera, in the film’s first such tracking shot, backs away from the happy scene from a position just off to the side of Yvonne. As such, the image relates her point of view without assuming it physically as Yvonne moves off to the right of the screen. This shot reads as a variation on the earlier high-angle shots; here, though, for dramatic effect, the camera, while still removing the viewer from the action, hints at immediate identification with the characters’ position. In
the final shot, the new family huddles around Yvonne’s bed as the camera tracks back away from the group. An unsteady rail caused the image to bounce (Marais 183); Cocteau liked the effect and did not reshoot. Instead, he added the sound of horses’ hooves and wagon wheels along with a voice-over, in his own voice: “Et la roulotte continuait sa route.”

This authorial post-script stresses the personal nature of the work for Cocteau, beyond its usefulness as a Marais vehicle. In fact, the entirety of Cocteau’s oeuvre tends toward self-portraiture, as Cocteau states: “tout grand artiste, même s’il peint des volets ou des pivoines, trace toujours son propre portrait” (Cocteau Eadc, 7-8). Sprigge and Kihm claim that, “whatever Jean Cocteau is portraying he gives us a portrait of himself” (Sprigge and Kihm 175). Marais cites another version of the statement from Cocteau.

Jean Cocteau disait: “Lorsqu’un artiste peint une paire de souliers, un comptoir de fruits, un paysage, c’est son propre portrait qu’il peint. La preuve est que l’on dit un Cézanne, un Picasso, un Renoir, et non une paire de souliers, un comptoir, etc.” (Marais, Hdmv 103-4)
However, in order to paint a cinematic self-portrait, given the collaborative nature of the medium, Cocteau must include the contributions of other people, and especially, of actors. In front of the camera, the performers grant life and movement to the fantasies Cocteau figures and scripts; as such, the cast members must correspond with Cocteau’s concerns, as in the example with the Dargelos character above.

Cocteau creates a star vehicle for Marais, but one filled with personal, Coctelian themes. By playing the Dargelos-like character, Marais highlights his own performance and personal traits as well as Cocteau’s themes. For example, perhaps Michel’s enthusiasm—in trying to structure his own life, just as Orpheus tried to create poetry before being torn to bits—recalls Marais’s own optimism and sincerity at the beginning of his career, exactly when Cocteau wrote the part for him. The narcissistic tendencies of Michel, as a child in a pre-Oedipal state and at the center of attention, contextualize the actor’s experience in his first major, successful starring role. The film’s links to real life references help define Marais’s persona as they contribute to the drama.
With his star performer, Cocteau plays with the boundaries of actor and persona, and, with self and other. Moreover, writing “directly in images and sounds” (Williams 321), Cocteau stretches the boundaries of cinematic realism, at least as defined as classical, Hollywood-style editing and seamless narrative. He invites spectators inside “la roulotte” to participate in the drama; but he gives a guided tour, complete with commentary, using high-angle and tracking shots. This type of camera work appears elsewhere in Cocteau’s cinema as well, but Cocteau exploits the techniques differently. In his other films, the realism of Les Parents terribles gives way to on-screen material that more directly depicts fantastic children’s stories and poetic adventures. In these works, Cocteau crosses boundaries, not just of cinema and reality, but also spatially and visually within the diegesis.
CHAPTER 7

CROSSING BOUNDARIES IN LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE

Throughout his career, Cocteau blurred the boundaries and conventions of genre by, for example, including his paintings as part of theater sets, by adding drawings to his writings, or by choosing modern music and choreographing his ballets as moving tableaux. Cocteau also traversed boundaries by adapting his poetic themes and visual imagery into stage plays, then by adapting these plays to film and, eventually, television productions. Scholars sometimes read these practices as emblematic of the dual life suggested by Cocteau’s persona: prominently social and mondain as a celebrity, but intensely personal and spiritually alone as a poet. The following discussion of La Belle et la Bête examines ways in which the film visually and thematically contributes to this persona through Marais’s characters while, at the same time, developing the actor’s own persona.

176
Marais plays two major roles in the film, the Bête and Avenant, binary opposite characters that inhabit diametrically opposed worlds at the beginning of the film. By the dénouement, the characters merge into one single being, the Prince, combining the best elements of the two individuals. As their melding occurs, the film itself switches back and forth between genres from conventional fairy tale to epic myth. Moreover, this switching takes place cinematically through Cocteau’s special effects and Marais’s performance.

The story, somewhat surprisingly for a Cocteau adaptation, follows the well-known 1756 version, by Madame Le Prince de Beaumont, of the fairy tale’s plot rather closely. Belle’s father, financially ruined by bad business and by Belle’s greedy, evil sisters, makes a journey to town to reclaim his fortune. Unsuccessful, he must return home at night. Lost in the thick forest, he stumbles upon the Bête’s magic castle and, invited inside by doors that open automatically and moving statues that give directions, he enters and spends the night. The next morning, on his way out, he picks for Belle (Josette Day) a rose, one of her favorite objects, but also one of the secrets to the Bête’s power, and, incidentally and
profilmically, in Cocteau’s art, an important symbol of beauty. The Bête appears and sentences the father to death for picking the flower. After the father returns home, Beile agrees to go live with the Bête in order to save her ailing father from death. Belle moves into the castle, refuses the Bête’s nightly offers of marriage, and then asks to return home when her father becomes sicker. Back at her house, Bête attends to her father as her evil sisters, her brother, and Aventant, the family friend, scheme to save Belle and steal the Bête’s fortunes. Aventant and the siblings learn to use the Bête’s magic to get to the castle. As Aventant enters the Bête’s magic pavilion, a statue of Diana shoots him with an arrow. This arrow, however, transforms him into the, now dead, Bête, who had died earlier from a broken heart and from a loss of his magic powers. This transformation, in turn, causes the Bête’s corpse to change into the handsome, and very much alive, Prince (also played by Marais). The Prince and Belle fly off to live happily ever after.

The film opens in the, relatively speaking at least, realistically typical fairy-tale world of Aventant: a large country house in a temporally vague period. The opening shots, playing on Marais’s now established cinema and
theatrical persona as cascadeur (Marais, Hdmv 144), establish Aventant’s physical energy and athletic tendencies as the character shoots an off-target arrow into the bedroom of Belle and her evil sisters. Aventant, not concerned about the others, asks, “Belle n’a rien?” This statement unleashes the scorn of her sisters as they dress for a social engagement. The next scene depicts their departure in sedan chairs as they insult their lackeys. These opening sequences use medium, medium-long, and long shots to establish a linear narrative consistent with the conventions of telling a fairy tale with tradition of quality or Hollywood-style cinematography and editing.

The first shot of Aventant and Belle alone, however, breaks somewhat with this style. As Belle scrubs the floor, and sees her reflection in the shiny parquet, Aventant’s outstretched arm enters the shot from the upper left dropping a rose on the floor in front of Belle. At the same time, Aventant’s reflection blends slightly with Belle’s on the mirror-like floor. This shot derives its symbolic importance both from within the diegesis and, in reference to the personae of Cocteau and Marais, pro-filmically. With regard to the plot, Belle’s love of flowers links her directly with the Bête’s castle as

179
Avenant’s hand brings to mind his earlier attempt at archery, foreshadowing the film’s culmination in the pavilion. As their reflected images blend slightly, the symbolism of flowers and archery immediately separates them, placing Belle within the magical world of the Bête, and Avenant within the realistic world of the country home. Marais’s hand and rather muscular forearms suggests his persona as handsome, athletic leading man. The flower, a cherished theme of Cocteau’s art, recalls the poet’s fascination with Narcissus (in whose place by the pond a flower grew after his death). Moreover, the reflective floor constitutes a Coctelian mirror, a highly significant object in the artist’s œuvre, representing the downfall of Narcissus, the passage into another worlds, and a metaphor for the cinema itself. Marais’s reflection in that mirror further evokes the structuring of Cocteau’s cinema through Marais’s image, both figuratively and literally.

In a later scene, when Belle returns to the house to care for her father, a playful mise-en-scène in the garden explores further this “image” of Marais. Belle arrives home to find her sisters drying sheets on clotheslines. Unaccustomed to household chores, the sisters let the sheets drag on the ground. At one point, the camera, from
behind a sheet, films the shadows of the sisters complaining about housework’s toll on their hands. The frame-within-a-frame, or more precisely the screen-within-a-screen, of the sisters against the sheet provides a visual metaphor for the cinema itself, and especially of an earlier form of shadow-puppet cinema. As Belle sits in front of a sheet/screen to explain her story to her sisters, Cocteau switches to a shot of Marais/Avenant, shirtless, chopping wood. Interestingly, Cocteau films the other characters either against or behind the sheets yet captures Marais between rows of sheets. Marais’s masculine image seems embedded, pun notwithstanding, within the imaginary layers of the metaphoric fourth wall. This central position in the cinematic apparatus corresponds to a central position within the film’s plot and within Cocteau’s cinematic oeuvre. René Gilson argues that the scene’s realism, i.e. when Belle remarks on the dragging sheets, does not subtract from the plastic beauty of the images (Gilson 50-1). Cocteau, although a bit unhappy with the emphasis critics place on such scenes, concedes to an excess—although in his mind a well-justified excess—of personal style here.
À chaque fois qu’on descend au pittoresque, le spectateur s’y accroche comme à une bouée dans le naufrage. Il ne distingue plus que cela. [...] pour La Belle et la Bête, ils s’abattent sur la scène des draps. (Cocteau Eadc, 112)

The Petit Larousse defines “pittoresque” as “qui frappe la vue, l’attention par sa beauté.” The beauty in question most certainly refers to the scene’s imagery, “qui frappe les yeux” of spectators as the sheets flap against the characters, as well as to Marais’s uncovered physique.

This beauty, though, finds its alter ego in the atrociously hideous Bête. The Bête’s magic, surrealistic, and Coctelian world connects with the “realism” of the world of Belle’s house in three different ways. In the first place, the same actor plays both the Bête and Avenant. Secondly, the characters physically cross boundaries within the diegesis to reach this world. Lastly, Cocteau establishes symbolic linkages by drawing on the concerns central to the entirety of his œuvre, such as self-reflection, narcissism, homoerotic desire, and poetic creation. The following paragraphs look at examples of the above three types of connections, or boundary-crossings, starting with the third.
The opening arrow scene suggests the Coctelian mirror in its manifestation of passageway. According to Evans Lansing Smith,

...the related image of the window is established at the beginning of the film, when Avenant (a friend of Beauty’s brother who loves her), accidentally shoots an arrow into the sister’s room, nearly killing their pet dog. Avenant and the sister quarrel through the window (the arrow anticipates the climax of the film, when the statue of Diana in the Beast’s pavilion shoots Avenant as he descends through the skylight window in its ceiling, and the dog on the floor represents a domesticated form of the Beast theme in the film). (Smith 242-44)

While windows, doors, and frames suggest the mirror theme, the film also contains a magic mirror, in Belle’s room at the Bête’s castle. This mirror, though, unlike the shiny floor from earlier, does not depict the person looking in it; instead, it depicts the person about whom the looker thinks. In this manner, the mirror grants access to another (part of the) story just as Cocteau’s self-
reflective story-telling gives life to the characters in
the artist’s mind and in the film.

Another Coctelian object par excellence, the mask, plays a role in linking the Avenant and Bête characters symbolically. Masks conjure a variety of ideas, both within Cocteau’s works and in general; masks, in many cases, denote an artificial, and usually beautiful, human face. As such, masks can play the same role as mirrors, which, according to Richard Dyer, “frame sections of reality and render them on a shimmering, one-dimensional surface: they make reality into beautiful pictures” (Dyer, NYSI 66). Dyer further contends that such images can play a unique role in films, like La Belle et la Bête, which display a gay sensibility.

It may well be that the ability to hold together a passionate belief in something with a concomitant recognition of its artificiality is a defining feature of much gay culture. (66)

Accordingly, the ugly image of the Bête’s mask would suggest the handsome face underneath. As such, the scopophilic, homoerotic desire from the sheet scene carries over into scenes of the Bête, held tentatively in check by
the mask, as the plot unfolds toward the final transformation back into a Prince.

However, Marais does not actually wear a mask per se in the film; Cocteau achieved the special effects for the Bête using make-up techniques. Gilson underscores the collaborative effort necessary for this visual creation.

Cocteau a créé la Bête, moralement, il l’a pensée, animée—je dis bien: lui a donné une âme—Christian Bérard l’a revêtue, lui a donné un masque, c’est-à-dire un visage, Jean Marais l’a incarnée, c’est-à-dire, lui a prêté, lui a donné sa chair, absolument. (Gilson 41)

Gilson’s quote establishes the Bête as a uniquely cinematic figure, relying on the formal and artistic operations of the cinema (e.g. directorial authorship, make-up and special effects, performance, etc.) for its very existence. Next, Steegmuller points out the centrality of the “mask,” and subsequently of Marais, in the film:

The most haunting feature is Marais’s Beast mask, a remarkable creation, so appealingly beastlike as to be more ‘becoming’ than his lover’s—postcard transfiguration as Prince Charming at the end of the film. (Steegmuller, C:AB 457-58)
Finally, Sprigge and Kihm emphasize the link between Marais and the Bête by highlighting the make-up effects: “Jean Marais’s make-up for the Beast, devised so that he should not have to wear a mask, but have his own fair features transformed into the tragic fur face” (Sprigge and Kihm 166).

Cocteau analyzes the make-up effects, which required five hours of work each day to (re)create, in relation to Marais’s acting within the context of the film and to his star persona overall.

J’affirme qu’il faut avoir la folie de son métier et l’amour que Marais porte à son chien pour s’obstiner à passer de la race humaine à la race animale. Nos juges mirent le génie de l’acteur sur le compte d’un masque. Or, il n’y avait pas de masque et pour vivre le rôle de la Bête, Marais traversait dans sa loge les phases terribles qui conduisent le Docteur Jeckil à devenir M. Hyde. (Cocteau, Eadg 88-9)

Cocteau cites the wearing of the mask as formal proof of the dedication and work ethic associated with (the) Marais (persona). Moreover, Cocteau mentions Marais’s famous dog Moulouk, who often received as much attention as Marais
when out on walks in Paris. Since French culture holds pet ownership and kindness to animals in high esteem, Marais’s fondness for dogs surely adds an additional likeability factor to his persona. Cocteau’s citation also references another popular, cinematic (re-)creation: the Dr. Jeckil and Mr. Hyde\textsuperscript{1} dichotomy. Just as, earlier, when Cocteau visually anchored the image of Marais (as Avenant in the sheet scene) to the cinematic apparatus, now, Cocteau anchors the Bête to cinematic discourse.

David Galef summarizes this cinematic quality of the Bête.

The Beast, in all his fearsome make-up, is close to a visual lie. The artifice of the stage would be his undoing, whereas film can portray him against a backdrop of the world, authentic briers and soil. The Beast is therefore made real—and an erect, talking Beast is magic, if only by the grace of film. (Galef 99)

In symbolic reference to his own bank of privileged, artistic themes, Cocteau achieves his Bête while at the

\textsuperscript{1} The Robert Louis Stevenson novel, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), had been adapted for the screen no less than eight times before Cocteau made La Belle et la Bête. Many more adaptations have appeared since then for both film and television; the Internet Movie Database <http://www.imdb.com> provides an extensive list.
same time building upon Marais’s persona. For example, the symbolism of mirrors and flowers—which in turn can both suggest homoerotic Narcissism and Orphic passage into otherworldly, magic, and poetic realms—call upon Marais’s ability to incarnate both the Prince and the Bête and to his enthusiasm to play two different roles. Moreover, textually within the film, the alternations between the two roles, and the physical crossing between the two worlds in the diegesis, also reflect elements of the Cocteau/Marais collaborative style.

In the film, the characters go from Belle’s house to the Bête’s castle in three main ways. First, they can walk there—assisted by magically parting tree branches and automatically opening gates—or they can ride there after reciting a magic formula to the Bête’s trained horse, Le Magnifique. Alternatively, once mastering the Bête’s magic, Belle learns to switch worlds by putting on magic gloves or by passing through walls. Formally, sequences of crossing boundaries break from the traditional “qualité française” techniques that Cocteau employed in the opening scenes at Belle’s house. Instead, he uses high angle shots, slow motion, lateral tracking shots, fade-outs, special effects, and louder musical score. For example,
for Belle’s first passage into the Bête’s world, Cocteau reserves the film’s first use of slow motion. Within increasing proximity to the Bête, the laws of physics\(^2\) break down as the characters float up stairs and through hallways without moving their legs. The spectator notices these different techniques even more as Cocteau provides, in the opening scenes for instance, only hints at how to cross these boundaries. For example, the arrow through the window definitely obeys the laws of physics in that it nearly kills Belle’s dog, a symbolic creature linked to Marais in the film, as a domesticated b/Beast, and outside of the film, as a pet-owning star.

The trans-realm passages on the horse also reference Marais’s persona. Marais learned to ride horses during the war for his various movie roles. In certain films, like L’Éternel retour, Marais makes his first grand entrance riding a horse, with the real-life Moulouk, cast in the film as well, running along faithfully behind him. In La Belle et la Bête, le Magnifique visually references this aspect of Marais’s persona when Avenant uses the magic horse to reach the pavilion.

\(^2\) Cocteau more thoroughly develops his artistic spin on the laws of physics, space, and time in his final and most autobiographical film, Le Testament d’Orphée (1960).
Marais-cascadeur makes an appearance in the pavilion scene as Avenant and Belle’s brother climb to the roof and bust open a skylight. As Annette Shandler-Levitt notes, “they prefer brute force to enter Diana’s house” (Levitt 52). Next, and unlike Belle’s brother who shows fear in the face of the dizzying heights of the pavilion roof, Avenant bravely lowers himself down from a very high skylight. Hit by the arrow halfway down the rope, he changes into the Bête and falls to the floor. The former corpse of the Bête, now in the form of the Prince, springs up from the floor with Cocteau’s trademark reverse-motion trick, i.e. running a scene in reverse of an actor falling down backwards, a technique Cocteau uses even more extensively in Orphée. Then, the Prince and Belle fly off into the air hoisted off the set in harnesses to give the illusion of taking off. Marais’s stunt work articulates Cocteau’s visual trickery as Cocteau’s transitional effects, between the worlds of human beauty and animal ugliness, allow Marais to underscore his persona as cascadeur.

Besides the symbolic links between the two characters, and besides the actual physical mechanisms for linking up the two characters, the Bête and the Prince/Avenant share
another bond: the obvious awareness, on the part of most every spectator past and present, that the same actor plays both roles. Not coincidentally, and also not unknown to most viewers at the film’s release, the actor in question also plays two roles in Cocteau’s life: long-time partner and professional collaborator. Critics have interpreted these overlapping roles in various ways.

For example, in this rather lengthy citation, Gilson views Marais’s dual roles as emblematic of Cocteau’s project to cross a genre boundary between fairy tale and (epic) myth.

La voix, les regards, les positions, les mouvements, les déplacements du corps, et non les quelques mots qu’il peut dire, ont fait ce miracle, et ce masque, au sens humain du terme, épousant fidèlement les contours du visage de Marais, atteignant, dans l’animalité, une bouleversante ressemblance avec celui-ci, devenant d’une terrifiante beauté, à l’image même de la beauté du visage de l’acteur. Sans vouloir jouer sur le premier mot de l’expression, c’est par la Bête que Jean Marais a été monstre sacré, par force d’âme, parce qu’il est avant tout
tragédien, et tragédien qui peut se passer de texte et de gestes, parce qu'il avait su, sous la puissance de Jean Cocteau, sacraliser de mythologie un simple personnage plat de conte de fées.

Ce passage partial du conte au mythe est bien le caractère profond du film de Jean Cocteau... (Gilson 52)

By borrowing from Marais's popularity, both during and after the war, in classical and avant-garde theater, Cocteau exploits the paradox of a tragic, stage actor playing in a supposed children's film. As such, the range of characters that Marais can play helps Cocteau make a typical jump from one genre to another.

Another possible interpretation harkens back to Marais's role as muse. In a related comment, Levitt posits that, "the Beast needs Beauty—her purity and compassion" (Levitt 52). Cocteau, in both his life and art, also needed beauty and purity; and he found these qualities in diverse sources, such as in his self-reflective works of art, in opium, and in his lovers and/or friends, like Radiguet or Marais. By casting Marais in his film, as both Bête and Prince, Cocteau explores both the positive and
negative aspects of his desires for beauty and purity. Belle, then, would come to represent the mediating figure between the raw needs of the Bête, such as its desire to hunt and kill prey, and the civilized, artistic needs of the Prince. Indeed, Belle does complete a certain apprenticeship as the film progresses. She learns to manipulate the Bête’s magic and thereby to navigate the imaginary world of the film, which bears the signature of Cocteau and Marais’s relationship.

Such a reading exposes the film to perhaps deserved criticism as misogynist, especially within the context of the post-war reconstruction. As Noël Burch and Geneviève Sellier explain:

...la confrontation de la jeune fille avec son monstrueux géôlier qui doit obtenir son amour pour pouvoir devenir un homme semble une métaphore lumineuse de la mission assignée aux femmes à la Libération: se sacrifier pour que l’identité masculine, rendue méconnaissable par les horreurs de la guerre, puisse se reconstruire. (Burch and Sellier 243)

Burch and Sellier’s reading seems more applicable within the context of France’s political situation at the film’s
release than in the context of the Cocteau/Marais personal or professional relationship. The question as to whether, either consciously or unconsciously, Cocteau made an allegorical film remains an interesting one, especially given Cocteau’s systematic rejection of any kind of overtly political filmmaking. Any simple definition of Cocteau’s work as a function of its production period risks erasing the uniqueness of the artist’s vision and can lead to reductive readings, politically speaking at least, of Cocteau’s privileged themes. However, on the other hand, Day’s role does seem to serve to highlight the differences between the Bête and the Prince, i.e. the good and bad side of man, and to illustrate that those two sides demand reconciliation in order to achieve happiness, and more or less regardless of her wishes or needs.

With respect to the homosocial, and even homoerotic, nature of the film, the use of Day to mediate an exploration of the relationship between the good and bad aspects of men, or, for that matter, between the filmmaker and the actor need not immediately suggest additional misogyny on the part of Cocteau. In the first place, the morality of the time—and arguably of today as well—would certainly disallow any more overt representation of
Cocteau’s feelings for Marais as friend, lover, or muse. As such, the inclusion of the female character proves an a-priori requirement for any such film, regardless of whether or not Cocteau chose to adapt a traditional children’s tale, like this one, or a more male-centered story. Secondly, given Dyer’s comments above concerning appearances, gay sensibility seemingly does not immediately equate an apparently female figure on the screen with the real-life, lived experiences of persons biologically female. Instead, female, and for that matter male, figures may, in gay cinema especially—with its looser restrictions on traditional gender roles—remain merely discursive and/or plastic constructs, each with their own unique symbolic references, which could vary by filmmaker, to aspects of any real-life men and/or women. In other words, a female or male figure on the screen could easily correspond to a (plastic) quality appreciated by the filmmaker and, simultaneously, to an actual male or female—with the gender even switching if needed—subject position and/or real-life acquaintance.

Besides these personal and political readings of the dual Marais characters, other critics read the characters as sexually charged. Gaief, for instance, sees “sexually
suggestive” qualities to some of the scenes between Belle and the Bête noting, “[w]hat supplants the marvels of illusion is the magic of attraction and repulsion, linked with the bestial image” (Galef 101). Inherent in this dichotomy lies the true beauty of Marais underneath the false, i.e. magical or cinematic, ugliness of the beast. Indeed, Belle’s reactions to the Bête do change as she comes to know him better. For example, in the couple’s first shot/reverse-shot scene, Bête places Belle, who has fainted, in her bed in the castle. He looks down at her as she opens her eyes. Belle screams in horror; Day’s facial expressions mimic reactions to monsters in horror movies, e.g. eyes wide open, mouth agape, etc. Bête, in a rather kind and forgiving reaction to her disgust, says, “Belle, il ne faut pas me regarder dans les yeux.” Later in the film, in the couple’s second major shot/reverse-shot sequence, the two walk on the castle grounds and Bête becomes thirsty; Belle lets him drink from her cupped hands. Instead of filming Bête from below, in the position occupied by Belle, for this new scene, Cocteau films the couple from equal angles, but from a reversed position. As Bête asks Belle if she minds feeding him like this, the camera assumes a position at Bête’s eye level, but slightly
off to the right of Belle’s position. When Belle answers, the camera assumes the same eye-level position, but slightly off to the left of Bête’s position. This new, more equalitarian filming, reexamines traditional shot/reverse-shot as a method of establishing a love relationship between these characters, whose eyes glisten magically at one another. Here, the Bête—as the male character traditionally should—does not occupy a dominant position in the shot. Further, in the scene immediately following, Cocteau films both characters in a parallel manner, from a very low angle in a medium long shot, as they stand against a thick wall. Bête finally learns the truth about Belle’s secret love for the handsome Avenant. Moreover, the conversation during this scene fetishizes Avenant; this places Belle and Bête on somewhat equal footing as they show equal interest, although for different reasons, in him during their discussion.

This sequence suggests that the initial horror between the two will not (and of course, it does not) ever transform into a traditional love relationship. If Cocteau had applied a more typical shot/reverse-shot procedure, clearly and visually establishing the dominance of the Bête, perhaps the outcome would seem less clear.
Nevertheless, the side-by-side lovers, backs against the wall, both stare straight ahead and avoid touching one another. This mise-en-scène suggests the, perhaps fatalistically predetermined, impossibility of finding love together. The Bête’s make-up obviously highlights this fact as well, given that the human characters in most fairy tales do not generally take up with an animal lover.

Another reading of this situation points to the fact of Marais’s homosexuality despite the heterosexual role he plays. The myths of stardom would theoretically proffer, through the cinematic apparatus, Marais to women identifying with Belle, but the reality of life denies all but a fantasy relationship with the star. The Bête costume can also represent the stardom of Marais, a lifestyle restricting certain types of contact between stars and those fans captivated by the star’s persona and image.

As such, the Bête remains unattainable to Belle and the star image of Marais establishes his distance with the public. This situation’s locus within the Coctelian oeuvre renders the gap more pronounced. Gilson elaborates:

La Bête est personnage, et personnage de la dramaturgie et de la poésie de Jean Cocteau. La Bête est celle, celui qui doit mourir, par et
pour l’amour. De cette mort renaît le même être, avec le même visage, sous des apparences à peine différentes [...] et par là, La Belle et la Bête rejoint le cycle orphique de Jean Cocteau, et ses autres thèmes infrangibles: la ressemblance, la vérité, le mensonge... (Gilson 44)

The Bête as cinematic illusion promises nothing more than its own fleeting, elusive image on the screen. However, the figure, as Other, remains present in the imaginary world of Cocteau. Such a paradoxical figure of absence and presence also summons up Cocteau’s concern with looking in mirrors. While the image in the mirror, like the one on the screen, appears an actual, attendant representation of a real person, or a real self, in reality the image may only constitute an ephemeral otherness demanding visual attention for its very existence. An important part of Cocteau’s artistic lexicon, this consideration of the absent/present, self/other binary contributes to the filmmaker’s persistent marking of the entirety of his work as self-portraiture.
CHAPTER 8

THE SELF-REFLECTIVE MIRROR IN ORPHEE

Cocteau's cinematic chef-d'oeuvre, Orphée (1949), constitutes the second volume of the artist's Orphic trilogy, which consists of the original play Orphée (1926), and the filmic conclusion Le Testament d'Orphée (1960). While all three works bear the signature of Cocteau's persona, the play and the later film contain more overt references to artist himself. For instance, in the play, Orpheus's severed, talking head spells out Cocteau's name, real birthplace, and current home address; in the 1960 film, Cocteau stars as himself, or at least as his persona as artist, painter, and poet. The 1949 film, on the other hand, makes less explicit mention of Cocteau; however, Cocteau does use his own voice to read the prologue, to

---

1 This film—as do many others—appears with several different dates, depending on whether critics refer to its production, original release, and/or other key moments from the film's history. For Orphée, critics generally use the years 1949, 1950, and/or 1949-50.
narrate at times, and to broadcast messages over a radio as part of the plot. With Cocteau’s reduced visual presence in this work, readings of the film as autobiographical need to take into account even more the role of, among others certainly, the performers on the screen in the articulation of Cocteau’s self-reflective work.

The following paragraphs explore the interface between Cocteau’s self-examination and the presence of actors, such as Maria Casarès, Édouard Dermit, and especially Jean Marais, through analyses of key scenes and sequences involving mirrors from the 1949 film. After casting his signature star in the title role, Cocteau seemingly figures himself as Orphée through Marais’s image and persona. Accordingly, questions arise as to how the film asks viewers to see the mythic, title character. In addition, the film highlights the act of gazing through the metaphor of the mirror. Normally, when in front of the mirror, the gazer looks directly at her or his reflected image; as such the mirror allows the gazer to figure him or herself from the privileged position of the other. In this film, though, Cocteau pushes the process one step further by exploiting aspects of the star personae of, not his own image in the mirror, but rather that of the actors on the
screen. At the same time, he continues to control the gaze itself, through the camera, along with the metaphoric mirror of the movie screen, through the mise-en-scène and the plot.

The presence of the mirror, and of mirror images, arguably dominates the overall look of this film whose plastic, visual elements tend to overshadow the plot. The story itself, which Cocteau adapted from his 1926 play based on the Orpheus legend, simultaneously plays as a melodrama, an epic myth, and a fantastic, Coctelian cinepoem. In the melodrama, Orphée, a poet whose popularity wanes in the face of newer poets like Cégeste (Dermit), witnesses the latter poet’s death after a riot at a popular café. A Princess (Casarès), acting as Cégeste’s guardian, whisks him, along with Orphée, off to her villa and falls in love with Orphée. The next morning, Orphée returns home, driven by Heurtebise (François Périer), the Princess’s chauffeur, to his pregnant wife, Eurydice (Marie Déa), whom he begins to neglect as his obsession with the mysterious world of the Princess grows. The Princess, who represents the angel of death, enters Orphée’s room through a mirror each night to watch him sleep. Meanwhile, Orphée listens to radio messages, only audible on Heurtebise’s car
radio, broadcast from the realm inside the mirror by a revived Cégeste, who has become the Princess’s maladroit assistant.

Eventually, the Princess, jealous of Orphée’s love for Eurydice, takes Orphée’s wife into the world of death, i.e. the Zone beyond the mirror. Heurtebise helps Orphée enter the Zone and recapture Eurydice; however, in exchange for her life, he must never set eyes upon her again. Several days later, while listening to the car radio, Orphée accidentally glimpses her in the rear view mirror, and thereby causes Eurydice to return to the Zone. After suffering a gunshot wound from the Bacchantes—a literary society blaming Orphée for their beloved poet Cégeste’s death—Orphée again enters the Zone to find his wife. Inside, he faces his own love for the Princess as the authorities of the Zone punish her for her excess initiative in calling for Eurydice’s premature death. In the final sequences, the Princess sacrifices herself so that Orphée may return to live happily ever after outside of the Zone with his wife.

The film’s epic, mythical elements, imbricated within the melodrama, come through thematically as well as visually in shots such as the one of Orphée’s head.
reflected in the mercurial puddle as he awakens after his night at the villa. Moreover, such shots contribute to Cocteau’s clever conflation of the myths of both Orpheus and Narcissus. Finally, the Coctelian aspect of the work becomes apparent through the cinematographic techniques and special effects utilized to recount the myth. As seen earlier, Cocteau deploys his signature trick photography and camera angles in the context of a generally “tradition of quality,” or invisible, cinematography. As such, Cocteau highlights the mythic within the melodrama, and the Coctelian within the mythic. Such proves particularly the case in the scenes involving mirrors or mirror-like figurations.

In the first such sequence, Orphée visits a popular café to learn about the precariousness of his popularity among the younger crowd. Before the riot breaks out, Orphée starts to pass through a doorway to the terrace. As he approaches the door, the Princess walks past him and catches his eye; but she pays no attention to him. Next, Cégeste enters and the two pause in front of the doorframe. Cégeste, who has been drinking, makes an obscene sound and continues out of the frame to the right. Orphée’s gaze follows him—as it did with the Princess just before—until
Orphée himself exits through the doorway. Throughout this sequence, the camera zooms in from longer to medium shots. The medium shot of Orphée and Cégeste paused in the door lasts five seconds as the two stare down one another.

This sequence foreshadows scenes later in the film where the Princess and Cégeste enter Orphée’s room using his mirror as a portal. For example, in the bar scene, Marais remains clearly to the left of the door’s frame just as a gazer remains completely outside of the mirror into which s/he gazes. Moreover, this door/mirror reflects both Orphée’s aging and his death, themes that Cocteau develops as the film progresses with dialog such as: “Les miroirs sont les portes par lesquelles la mort vient et va. Regardez-vous toute la vie dans un miroir et vous verrez la mort travailler.” The Princess will eventually lead Orphée to his death; and Cégeste represents his lost youth and popularity.

The casting of Marais and Dermit in this scene stresses this last point. By the film’s release, Marais had gained enormous star power and respect through such films as La Belle et la Bête and, earlier, L’Éternel retour, as Steegmuller notes: “Marais was never thought of as Tristan or Patrice (the modern Tristan’s name in the
film), but always as Jean Marais” (Seegmuller, C:AB 455). Moreover, as Steegmuller continues, Marais fit perfectly within Cocteau’s visual thematics.

[Cocoteau’s] early drawings of “Dargelos” are striking prefigurations of Jean Marais; in this respect, Marais’s appearance in his life must have been a recognition of a preconceived physical type. (Steegmuller, C:AB 476)

Dermit—whose good looks rival those of Marais, or at least of a younger Marais—on the other hand, played in this film as a relative unknown. Years earlier, Marais had started his own career in much the same manner, as an unknown in Cocteau’s films. The shot of the two good-looking Coctelian types together in the doorway, almost pressing up against one another, also resembles many of Cocteau’s drawings from, for example, Le Livre blanc. However, while the images from the Le Livre blanc, explore the erotics of male-male, or same-same or self-self, encounters, the doorway scene carries with it a historical subtext underscoring the real-life differences between the two actors.

At the filming of Orphée, Dermit had become Cocteau’s newest protégé. Eventually this actor would become the
artist’s only heir, living with his wife in Cocteau’s house long after the artist’s death. As Steegmuller notes:

In connection with the film, it has been pointed out that the vogue for the younger poet Cégeste (played by Édouard Dermit) and the decline of Orphée (Jean Marais) is analogous to the roles of the two men in Cocteau’s intimate life; since the “adoption” of Dermit, Marais had been gradually withdrawing. (Steegmuller, C:AB 480)

Sprigge and Kihm maintain that Cocteau harbored a “desire to turn [Dermit] into a second Marais” (Sprigge and Kihm 188). Such statements seem to imply that Cocteau’s scene functions on two levels: the visual and the personal. First, playing upon Marais’s advancing age, the Cégeste character’s popularity underscores the public’s—and perhaps Cocteau’s—obsession with finding newer, younger stars to look at on the screen. Secondly, on the personal level, and especially given the grunting sound made by Cégeste, Cocteau may use this scene to react to his own critics of the day, who attacked his identity as a poet. As Evans notes,

Cocteau seemed especially sensitive to such criticism throughout his life, and the opening
scene at the Café des Poètes serves as a pretext for an extensive portrayal of just such a preoccupation. (Evans 109)

By playing off the reputations of the actors, Cocteau softens his own public image by casting the popular Marais, with recognized talent, as the older poet. In this case, the Cégeste character—not in the original play, but added for the film—could suggest Cocteau’s rejection of producing works simply to please a public consumed by each passing fad. Throughout the rest of the film, Cégeste’s main contribution seems to consist of his plastic beauty in that, for example, he proves himself an inept assistant to the Princess and has very few lines. Cocteau portrays Cégeste’s newer, more crowd-pleasing poetry as ranging from vacuous—Cégeste’s collection Nudisme consists entirely of blank pages—to derivative, adjectives which critics have also applied to Cocteau’s poetry. For instance, when Cégeste broadcasts messages over the car radio, lines such as “l’oiseau chante avec ses doigts” certainly must have struck post-war French audiences as reminiscent of Occupation-era, resistance code phrases broadcast regularly over the radio. Moreover, Dermit only lip-synchs the lines, which Cocteau dubs over himself, evoking (and
perhaps rewriting or rewording) the historical memory of the Resistance in his own distinctive voice.

Just after the door sequence, then, Orphée meets another poet at the café and asks him about the Princess and Cégeste. Cocteau includes an extreme close-up of Orphée’s ear as the other poet describes Cégeste stating, “il a dix-huit ans et tout le monde l’adore.” Orphée then asks why his own case seems hopeless; the older poet replies that a truly uninterested public would not bother to show such criticism. The extreme close-up, and subsequent high-angle shots of Orphée and the older poet serve several functions. First, they fetishize the obsession with Cégeste; secondly, the signature camera work denotes a Coctelian commentary on the dialog. To underscore the presence of Cocteau, who remains invisible behind the camera, the older poet includes a helpful suggestion for Orphée: “Étonnez-nous!” Early in his career, Cocteau had himself received, from Serge Diaghilev, this famous piece of advice when working for the Ballet Russe in 1917 (Sprigge and Kihm 65). A scene, later in the film, in the Zone, summarizes this “preoccupation,” to borrow Evans’s terminology, with critical acceptance. One of the judges wants to know about Orphée’s occupation,
asking “qu’apélez-vous poète?” To which, Orphée responds “écrire sans être écrivain.” Then, as if to stress the point of writing poetry using a caméra-stylo, Cocteau breaks the 180-degree rule—a favorite practice of his (Cocteau, Eadc 150-51)—and switches from a medium, frontal shot to an extremely high-angle shot from behind the characters.

In the next mirror sequence, as Orphée rides in the Princess’s car on the way to the villa, Cocteau further links himself to the title character. Evans advises that this linkage should not surprise viewers.

And, indeed, one does recognize via the hero Orphée a cinematic personification of Cocteau. But such an observation is by no means astounding, for Cocteau has always readily admitted that his film Orphée was but another portrait of himself and his complex identity as a poet. (Evans 105)

With the car stopped at a train crossing, Cocteau films Marais through the rear window. Framed by the outline of the window, Orphée remains in the center of the screen as the car moves forward across the tracks—yet another type of boundary crossing—into the mysterious world of the
Princess; at the same time, the radio broadcasts the film’s first poetic messages. In this shot, Cocteau posits Marais as cinematic object of the gaze by positioning him inside the mise-en-abîme of the window frame on the movie screen. Cocteau’s voice-over, reciting poetry, destabilizes the centrality of Marais’s image, establishing it as part of a binary, or symbiotic, or collaborative form of expression involving the actor’s face and the director’s voice.

At the villa, Cocteau provides another type of key to the film’s hermeneutics of the mirror in the scene establishing the love relationship between Orphée and the Princess, who represents his own death-image. During a conversation, the Princess sits at a dressing table topped by a round mirror, which recalls many of Cocteau’s drawings of perfectly round eyes. As the two discuss the events at the Café des Poètes, the shot foregrounds the back of the Princess’s head and shoulders; her face appears inside the eye-mirror. Orphée, standing off-screen, appears from the waist up inside the mirror. Suddenly, the radio in the room broadcasts, again in Cocteau’s voice, “les miroirs feraient bien de réfléchir d’avantage-trois fois.” Then, the mirror breaks.
By placing the couple in a rather bourgeois bedroom at the villa, this scene subtly mocks the melodramatic genre. First, Casarès’s stark beauty, in this film at least, lies mostly in her cold, statue-like exterior; this type of beauty contrasts directly with that of a typical female protagonist in a bedroom drama. Moreover, the presence of the Coctelian mirror also suggests breakages with the typical man-woman dyad of such bedroom scenes in most traditional melodramas. First, the Princess doubles her presence with the mirror, serving as gazer and gazee, while Orphée appears only once, inside the eye-mirror, as gazee. As such, the death-image assumes a central role in the mise-en-scène, and, by extension, in the film itself. Further, the mirror suggests the presence of Cocteau, as the film’s director, in that that his eye-mirror displays the scene “better” than the actual mise-en-scène, which only shows Casarès’s back and the dressing table.

The mirror shot then calls into question the actual camera position, off to the left of Casarès. Cocteau often remarked about the camera position when filming mirrors: “Avez-vous songé qu’il m’était impossible de prendre certaines vues, face à des miroirs où se refléteraient l’appareil et l’équipe?” (Cocteau, Eadc 126). In this
scene, the reflection itself—resembling a scene from an ordinary melodrama complete with famous movie stars—reminds viewers of Cocteau’s presence by his very absence in the mirror. As such, Cocteau highlights his role as a director looking—through his signature, round-shaped eye-mirror—at his own film with a main theme of (his own) death. Cocteau provides a subtle key for interpreting his mythic melodrama as a Coctelan auto-portrait when the mirror shatters, thereby calling attention to itself.

The next mirror shot occurs when Orphée tries to follow the Princess into the mirror at the villa; unable to pass through the glass, Orphée faints against the reflective surface. A fondu enchaîné leads to the famous shot of Orphée waking up the next morning with his head against a reflective pond on a sandy dune. The pond reflects Marais’s profile, famous not just because of Cocteau’s many drawings of it, in a Narcissus-like pose. As Walter A. Strauss points out, “Orpheus, the mythical figure, stared at nature, not at mirrors. Cocteau, with his mirrors, blurs the images of Orpheus and Narcissus” (Strauss 38). Keller reads the scene in a similar manner: “[f]or the duration of that shot, Orpheus is Narcissus. Later, with the help of Heurtebise, he discovers how to go
beyond his own image" (Keller 71). This shot—one of the most recognized from the film—evokes the collaborative nature of Cocteau’s self-portraiture. First, by combining two different myths in one single image, Cocteau underscores the act of a poet looking at his own image, i.e. persona. The Orpheus figure, along with the concomitant theme of death, creates the poetry while the Narcissus figure, enchanted by his own beauty, contemplates that very poetry. With Marais in the shot, the beauty of the Narcissus figure comes through thanks to the actor’s accepted good looks. Further, as from Steegmuller above, audiences see the star Jean Marais, along with his diegetic character, when they look at his image on the screen. These audiences also may know that Marais became famous because Cocteau put him in films.

This shot, then, points to Cocteau’s cinematic career as dependent upon Marais. Steegmuller has also noted that, “it was obvious to Cocteau that if he was to share Marais’s life he would be willy-nilly involved in the cinema” (Steegmuller, C:AB 453). Seemingly, then, any self-reflection by Cocteau concerning his own cinema would necessarily involve a study of the (image of the) star that he created. The shot’s special effects, typically
Coctelian in the creative and artisanal use of mercury as a substitute for less reflective water, also points to a collaborative style. For many effects, Cocteau tended to use *les moyens du bord* and thus demanded patience, and in some cases risks, on the part of the actors, and especially of Marais, who usually performed his own stunts. The mercury pool, requiring hours to create its smooth surface, provides an example of an archetypal Coctelian effect: simple in conception, dependent upon the actors to avoid looking hokey, and magical in the final shot. Because Marais had the physical ability to place his head near the pool without touching the somewhat dangerous liquid or disturbing its flat, silvery surface, the shot worked. Marais’s physical skills contributed as much to the scene as did his famous profile, (the likeness of) which Cocteau often drew in similar poses. Even the very fact of Cocteau’s figuring Marais in such a shot, treating Cocteau’s personal mythologies, poetry, and drawings, begs interpretation as a reflection upon the artist’s cinematic career as inextricably linked to his famous star.

The next series of scenes involving mirrors depict the various ways in which the characters pass through the mirror into the Zone, that creative realm beyond the
surface, inside the poet. The Princess, the most compelling figure of this world, as she represents the ultimate fate of the poet, along with Heurtebise, another famous angel-like figure from Cocteau's poetry, plays, and films, both pass easily between the two worlds. Cégeste and Orphée require training before they enter the Zone. As art can imitate life, both Marais and Dermit also had to undergo a similar kind of apprenticeship in order to share Cocteau's life. Both men learned to navigate the Parisian society and the fame that marked Cocteau's existence. In the film, Coctelian angels—symbolizing the artist's cherished themes, like death—initiate the poet characters into the Zone of poetic creation. For Cégeste, for instance, the Princess brings him back to life, using the trademark Coctelian technique of running backwards a shot of a person falling down, and tells him to hold on to her dress; in this way, she leads him through like a mother showing a child how to perform the feat. In Cocteau's life, Dermit represented more of son for the aging artist than a lover, especially given that Cocteau's bourgeois upbringing probably informed his descriptions of sexual relations as appropriate more for the young. In the film then, the maternal, or paternal to the extent that the
Princess can also represent Cocteau, initiation into the
Zone seems an oddly appropriate treatment for Dermit.
Moreover, in Le Testament d’Orphée, Cocteau and Dermit roam
through the Zone leading one another around using similarly
familiar, and/or familial, gestures.

For Marais’s character, initiation into the crossing
takes on a more homoerotic tone. If comparing with real
life, then, Marais’s initiation into Cocteau’s life also
bore a more erotic charge than did Dermit’s. In the film,
Orphée first tries to follow the Princess into the mirror
but cannot pass through the glass. Later, Cocteau uses one
of the film’s rare shot/reverse-shot sequences when
Heurtebise tells Orphée about the world beyond the mirror,
comparing its inhabitants to “abeilles dans une ruche de
verre,” (certainly reminiscent of “la roulotte” in Les
Parents terribles). Traditionally, shot/reverse-shot
sequences tend to help directors establish the
relationships of love and power between men and women;
Cocteau’s male-male sequence contributes to the film’s
homoerotic charge.

Next, as Marais dons magic gloves and starts toward
the mirror, Cocteau used a hand-held camera to film the
scene from Orphée’s point of view. As such, the camera
operator wore the gloves and walked up to a false mirror, actually just a portal into a second, reversed version of the bedroom set. Marais, next, on the other side of that portal, "en personne s'approche, jouant le rôle de son reflet" (Cocteau, Eadg 127). Here, the filmmaker brings to life the image in the mirror that, in the pond scene earlier, merely slept, reflecting its own superficial beauty without exploring beyond the surface. As Cornelia A. Tsakiridou notes, "early in the film, the mirror is a jail—Orphée is locked out of it, not in it" (Tsakiridou 94). Now, Orphée begins to penetrate and explore the creative Zone, which produces the flat images in the mirror, a symbol for the movie screen. In the bedroom scene, Marais's timing and stunt work again lead to the success of the crossing effect and Marais's image again suggests linkages between Cocteau as Orphic poet and Cocteau as cinematographer. As Orphée's hands cross the threshold of the mirror, Cocteau figures Marais within another of the film's more well-known images: the magic gloves penetrating the pool of mercury. Interestingly, Cocteau only uses the signature mercury effect for Orphée's initial contacts with the Zone, while the other characters
enter via fake, non-existent mirrors or by trick, or reverse, photography.

Once inside the Zone, the place where all mirrors lead according to Heurtebise, Orphée seeks to control his own fate through the allegory of trying to save Eurydice. Marais, a "casse-cou" (Cocteau, Eadc 134) in the film, unlike Périer, performed all of his own stunts, which included physically demanding climbs up and down walls. As such, the personalized Coctelian world of the Zone again relies on the talents of Marais to function; conversely, Marais relies on Cocteau to create a cinematic space where, while still stressing the more physical aspects of his own persona, he can serve as a Coctelian symbol.

Replete with such symbols, like Marais as cascadeur, or a handsome young man dressed as a vitrier—a reference to Heurtebise’s role in the 1926 play—the Zone has elicited considerable critical attention. Most interpretations, though, stress not just the Zone itself, but also the passages into it through the mirror. Such a reaction likely stems from the fact that, as Marais states it, "[Cocteau] invente sans cesse pour le miroir où nous devons pénétrer, de nouvelles méthodes. Surtout il emploie le
Evans sees the Zone in personalized terms:

Thus, when plunging into the mirror to seek his lost inspiration, the poet succeeds in penetrating his own self. All that transpires behind the mirror in Orphée, to the same extent as in Le Sang d'un poète, is actually happening within the poet. (Evans 118-19)

Keller, in apparent agreement with Evans, highlights the role of the reflection, as a form of the self, as related to death: "Orpheus enters the 'zone' through his own reflection in the mirror. He falls into himself, and by so doing has a brief meeting with death" (Keller 71). Gilson, on the other hand, somewhat downplays the role of the thematics of death.

For Orpheus, the primary attraction to the world of the "Zone" is not that it offers an opportunity to explore the kingdom of the dead or its frontiers, but the fact that it is a world from whence springs poetry, an errant zone of the spirit, of the absolute poetic state. (Gilson, IFP 86)
Such reactions point to the Zone as an artistically productive space foregrounding the mixture of Narcissus-like and Orphic identities.

Another trend in this film’s criticism posits the Zone as an idealized world, a blank canvass, where the artist’s imaginary enjoys free reign. As the director himself has stated,

L’Art Cinématographique est le seul qui permette qu’on les domine. Il est rare que les chambres communicantes soient construites sur le même plateau et rare qu’un intérieur corresponde à l’extérieur sur lequel il donne. Rare qu’on tourne dans l’ordre.” (Cocteau, Zadoc 138-39)

Cocteau underscores in practical, artisanal terms how he maintains control over the fantasies he scripts filmically. For Williams, “Cocteau presented a universe only he could see, a zone between the recognizable everyday world and whatever might lie beyond it” (Williams 321-22). As this citation suggests, Cocteau filled the Zone—as he did his films in general—with images from his own mind and which symbolized his creative processes. Along similar lines, Tsakiridou contends:
Like his Orphic hero, Cocteau plunges into the being of things that move him and partakes of it with delight. When they are lost, either by death or the passage of time, that delight remains and is strong enough to bring them back.

(Tsakiridou 94)

In this reading, the Zone, perhaps as a metaphor for the cinema itself, allows the artist to dream-script fantasies in an attempt to salvage memories under threat by the (artist’s imminent) death reflected in the mirror’s surface. These readings help account for lines from Cocteau’s spoken prologue, such as “c’est le privilège des légendes d’être sans âge,” where the director grants more staying power to his artistic production than to his own image on the surface of the glass.

This critical trend, relying partially at least on Metz’s psychoanalytical theories of the cinema as a site for collective dreaming through the imaginary signifier, also inherently points to the childlike qualities of such dreaming. Tsakiridou compares the scripting of the Zone to a child watching its mother dress, supposedly one of Cocteau’s early joys.
He watches through a mirror that brings her to him. The child is not a voyeur; he is watching the ideal spectacle that he creates and in his own way is creating art. The mirror is his cinematograph, the moving space where his mother becomes idealized. (Tsakiridou 91)

Keller also elaborates this point: “The passivity and secretiveness involved in watching the adult world played a large part in Cocteau’s attraction to film (in his equation of film and childhood)” (Keller 24). Indeed, Cocteau did use art, and particularly the cinema, to idealize—in the sense of creating ideal forms of people, or at least the images of people, that deeply affected his life, like his mother, Dargelos, Marais, and Dermis. Moreover, the idealized figure of Dargelos, for example, as incarnated by Marais, allowed the artist to restructure his altered memories of his classmate and express them through the creation of a stylized, cinematic iconography, in shots such as the mercury puddle, of Marais as movie star.

A third trend in criticism views the mirror passages in purely cinematographic terms. For Sabine Hillen and Nathalie Roelens, Cocteau
Cocteau, himself, often stressed the importance of this aspect of the cinema: "un film était propre à mettre en œuvre les incidents de frontière qui séparent un monde de l’autre" (Cocteau, Eadic 122). In this view of the Zone, as a metaphor for the cinema, the mirror can both reflect and connect different types of artistic productions and genres, such as, for instance, melodrama and mythology, a classic and modern tale, the real world and the imaginary, and, even, the spectators and the director. For example, in the round mirror shot discussed earlier, Cocteau’s film suggested the position of the director’s camera on the set.

The above three readings of the Zone, and of passages into it, seem to fall in line with the three different readings of the film, overall, mentioned above. The first trend reads the film as a study of mythic creation, the second as melodrama about lost memories, and the last as pure cinepoetry. However, all three readings can depend to
varying degrees on Marais’s image. For example, Marais’s looks, talent, performance, and star persona allow for a relatively believable visual representation of the mythic figures of Orpheus and Narcissus. As a Dargelos figure, Marais’s looks help perpetuate a Coctelian fantasy-memory. Finally, with regard to the purely cinema readings, Cocteau’s entire cinematic production, with the obvious exception of Le Sang d’un poète, sprang initially from the desire to make Marais a star. Furthermore, with the Zone and its mirrored doors representing at once a cinematic reflection and a passage between worlds, the mirror itself, the image as passageway, takes on central importance if not outright fetishization. Correspondingly, Marais seems to dominate that image more often than not, and he thereby assumes a central role as object of the gaze, literally informing interpretations of the worlds on either side which viewers see through him.

Another important question concerning the Zone examines the nature of Orphée’s interest in that world. On the surface, and in the plot, Orphée appears obsessed with both the Princess and the poetry. For example, once Orphée and the Princess declare their love for one another, Cocteau includes a mirror-like shot of the two, as
Tsakiridou has pointed out: “When they lie next to each other in the underworld, their faces unite as if the one reflects the other in obvious allusion to the myth of Narcissus” (Tsakiridou 94). Filmed upside down, the almost surreal shot of the two lovers stresses how mirrors often return a reversed image, rather than a true depiction of the gazer. Gilson accounts for the affair between Orphée and the Princess by elaborating upon the implied reference to the myth of Narcissus.

If Orpheus suddenly believes that he no longer loves Eurydice and that he does love the Princess, it is because he recognizes in the latter one of his possible forms and at the same time a means of attaining that form. (Gilson, IFP 86)

Gilson continues by pointing to the strength of Casarès’s performance.

Thus we believe in the Princess, and some credit is due to Maria Casarès—but it is Maria Casarès directed by Cocteau, full of contained fire, attaining life and violence of marble. (Gilson, IFP 90)
Casarès, since her “shaky” beginnings in *Les Enfants du paradis*, had grown into an important star. Now, for this film, Cocteau draws upon her ability to project a stern, almost cruel, exterior belying an emotional interior.

However, despite the mise-en-scène as mirror image of Orphée, and in spite of Casarès’s great talent and beauty, the actor did perform, as Gilson himself notes, in a Cocteau production; as such, the collaboration between the actor and the director also experiences Cocteau’s influence.

La beauté d’âme, que l’appareil enregistre comme toutes les autres vibrations (la preuve en est dans la différence entre un édifice photographié et un édifice cinématographié) est à mes yeux plus importante qu’un beau physique. La beauté de François Périer, qu’on ne vante pas dans les magazines, m’est aussi efficace que celle de Marais qu’on y exalte. Ils se rejoignent par la beauté d’âme. Jamais je n’eusse lié le sort de Maria Casarès à celui d’Édouard Dermit, sans la certitude que leur réserve, leur noblesse, leur feu interne, communiquaient. (Cocteau, *Eadt* 144-45)
Cocteau’s use of actors, to express his own ideas about beauty, as in the citation above, for instance, has lead some critics to conclude that certain images from the film expose the Orphée-Princess bond as merely superficial. As Stephen Harvey explains,

Most of Cocteau’s films speak obsessively of the consuming bonds between men and women, but since the erotic imagery is so bound up with the self—or its idealization—his celluloid love stories usually turn out to be particularly sexless.

(Harvey 202)

Harvey’s use of the word “sexless” makes more sense in reference to heterosexuality; for Orphée, like many of Cocteau’s other films, carries a highly charged homoeroticism.

In reference to the Orphée-Cégeste relationship, in such scenes as the café doorway, Harvey reads an attempt, on the part of Cocteau, to “translate homosexuality into a kind of mystical male auto-eroticism on screen” (Harvey 198). Harvey’s readings—in spite of their odd rejection of the outright gay imagery on the screen—suggest homosocial links between the Orphée-Cégeste scenes and the mise-en-scène of the Narcissus-like poses. In both, the two
actors, both male, both Cocteau protégés, and both with similar good looks, simultaneously allow Cocteau to reflect upon himself by figuring the two actors together, as reflections of one another. Further, Cocteau’s film also provides other subtle hints that Cégeste, and not the Princess—or perhaps along with the Princess—represents the primary object of the gaze, in the mirror. In the film’s final scene, for example, the Princess prepares to sacrifice herself so that Orphée may return to the world of the living. The following dialog ensues.

LA PRINCESSE: Vous vous ennuiez?
CÉGESTE: Qu’est-ce que c’est?
LA PRINCESSE: Excusez-moi, je me parlais à moi-même.

Here, the Princess subsumes the younger poet’s identity. In fact, near the end of the film, the act of sending Orphée back to the real world does require the combined efforts of the Princess and Cégeste, along with Heurtebise, another Coctelian angel.

Gilson points out that the Cégeste character did not exist in the stage play.

For it is an important nuance in the Orpheus of 1950 that Orpheus finds Cégeste at the source of
the messages of new poetry, and not exactly Cégeste himself, but simply another poet, young, another moment of poetry, perhaps a mere fashion. Is this a trap, is it a source of truth, the youth that Orpheus has yet to conquer, must ever conquer, which would be the perpetual becoming to stumble ceaselessly upon the immolated youth of Dargelos, Radiguet, Garros, Desbordes, as well as the youth of Rimbaud and Appollinaire? (Gilson, *IFP* 89)

As mentioned above, the radio messages actually use Cocteau’s own voice to link the director to the younger poet as another, alternate self. At one point in the film, the police Inspector character highlights the creative process necessary to produce the messages: “le jeune homme disparaît dans des circonstances tragiques; et sa phrase nous revient par l’entremise d’Orphée.” The messages first leave the Zone, through Cocteau’s voice and Cégeste’s body, then, the car radio, another portal into and out of the Zone, provides poetic inspiration for Orphée, a mythical Coctelian figure. For the process to work properly, Cocteau’s filmic expression of this poetry demands an obsessive bond between the Marais and Dermit characters as
intermediaries. In fact, the bond proves so obsessive, that it destroys the, already weakened, bond between Eurydice and Orphée, when the latter accidentally glimpses the former in the rear-view mirror while listening to the messages. As such, Orpheus ironically condemns Eurydice through a glimpse of, not her, but merely her image in the mirror.

Such a reliance upon the image of others to reflect upon the self seemingly marks Cocteau’s œuvre overall. Even the alternate selves need others, such as in the pond scene when Narcissus sees the self-portrait of Orpheus, all in the form of Marais. Walter A. Strauss sees evidence of a mix of the genuine and the artificial with Cocteau “constantly looking into the mirror of others” due to his “somewhat strenuous reliance upon others” (Strauss 29).

Gilson, by contrast, underscores Cocteau’s reworking of the images of others given the artist’s choice of genres: “through myth, all things, all thoughts, all meditation, all reflection, all questioning take on a deformation which yields the most excellent of all possible forms” (Gilson, IPP 94). As such, Orphée’s constant concern with and reflection upon the mythic Zone give Cocteau the opportunity to highlight various aspects of the performers’
personae, such as Casarès's icy exterior, Marais's star status and stunt-work, or Dermit's position as a "younger Marais."

Moreover, by linking his special effects and images to actors like Marais, either for the tricks to work or simply for esthetic beauty, Cocteau highlights his own oblique relationship with the mirror. Just as the camera cannot sit directly in front of the mirror, without ruining the shot, so Cocteau remains present, but just outside of the mise-en-scène in Orphée, preferring instead to ponder the reflections of his alternate, substitute selves. In articulating his own reflection, by drawing upon relevant or useful aspects of his stars' personae, Cocteau's cinematic world suggests multiple authorship and imaginary co-signatures.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS: IMAGINARY CO-SIGNATURES

The preceding chapters have attempted to account for the role of the actor, and particularly the star, alongside the director in relation to the authorship of films. In addition, the above discussions have suggested that the two series of films in question here—by Marcel Carné and starring Arletty and by Jean Cocteau and starring Jean Marais-display similar patterns of multiple authorship. The early films from each pair define directorial technique as the director and the star create star image by drawing from elements of each person’s background and by referencing their relationships together, both personal and professional. As the collaborations continue, both sets of films explore the constitutive boundaries of those relationships visually, through framing and editing, and performatively, through blocking and characterization. Finally, near the pinnacle of each famous partnership, the pairs contribute master works, distinguished now by
established directorial style and star personae, within the overall cinematic institution. Accordingly, these interdependent filmic articulations of authorship and star personae engage with classic tropes of the cinema, such as the gaze, mirrors, doorways, etc., in a self-referential manner through visual and historical allusions to the collaborations themselves.

Further, in proposing this interdependent articulation of star persona and auteurist directorial style, this study hopes to contribute to French film criticism’s various responses to the enormous influence of auteurist critics such as Bazin and Astruc. For example, in the seventies, Metz and others challenged auteurist theories by considering not just the on-screen content of film, but also the viewer’s reaction to the narrative within the overall apparatus of the cinematic institution. In the eighties and nineties, critics increasingly took into account the limitations of both auteurist and apparatus theory by introducing not just “the” viewer’s reaction to film, but different types of spectatorship and viewer reactions with regard to the many different elements of a film. Next, star theory more fully reintegrated the performer into criticism by examining the ways in which stars signify culturally even in the absence of a particular film.
Each of these types of approaches—textual, psychoanalytical, viewer-response, and cultural—has informed the present study. For example, auteurist criticism accounts for the viewer’s recognition of a directorial style, evident in similar subject matter, editing techniques, mise-en-scène, and so forth, in different films by the same director. This type of analysis also allows for reactions to movies based on knowledge of the director’s persona as well as her/his background, biography, and point of view. Next, institutional and spectatorship studies legitimize the effect of viewers’ reactions on readings of a film. New meanings and alternative analyses of a work arise as diverse audiences respond to distinct elements, including actors and stars, of the same film. These responses can stem from, among other elements of course, directorial style as well as the actor’s persona. Then, star theory, in turn, validates such responses to stars and star personae by situating them within the historical and cultural context(s) of a film’s production and consumption.

However, while not ignoring the topic, none of the above approaches sought to theorize a systematic account of the complicated and, at times, paradoxical interaction of an auteurist director’s influence and of a major star’s influence on readings of their collaborative works. Bazin
relegated stars to a passive position both within the frame and the diegesis as well as within the artistic expression of the director. Institutional theory did not concern itself with the star as, perhaps, most any image projected on the screen could support its tenets. Spectatorship investigates viewer reaction to many elements of film including director, genre, and star, but not necessarily, or primarily, imbrications of these elements with respect to authorship. And star theory considers the role of the star in producing meaning, but only partially makes inquiry into the overlapping, simultaneous influences of star personae and auteurist filmmaker.

This overlay of both directorial and star influences, on specific shots and sequences in a collaborative work from an established partnership, constitutes an example of an imaginary co-signature. Based in part on Koestenbaum’s “double talk,” or the erotically charged, felt presence of both writers when reading a co-authored literary text, the term “imaginary co-signature” takes into account that critic’s reading of artistic collaboration in general, but applies more specifically to the cinema. “Double talk” would not suffice for film analysis as many more than two voices, or contributions, present themselves in a film: the director’s style, the actor’s persona, the editor’s montage,
the set designer’s fictitious worlds, the musical director’s score, etc. Instead, for cinema, any image, sound, shot, sequence, scene, or complete film, carries the signature, or the mark, of all those who participated in its production. Since the director and the major star tend to manifest their presence throughout the majority of a film, and especially of a film from a series of collaborative efforts, their presences, or influences, often constitute the major signatures or, more precisely, the most influential imaginary co-signature.

This term, besides taking into account Koestenbaum’s work, also refers to the Metzian signifiant imaginaire. If, as apparatus theory suggests, cinema engages the viewer in a regressive fantasy back to when an infant first imagines, or defines, itself in relation to others, within the symbolic order, then these imaginary co-signatures would of course participate in the scripting of that fantasy. Moreover, the plurality of influences, or signatures, on a film could support the case for a more disparate and heterogeneous symbolic order, as represented on the screen at least, than (Lacanian) psychoanalysis normally posits. Accordingly, such a case calls into question the notion of any one single position of authority over the semiotic organization of that order, again, as represented on the screen at least. With
the cinema, then, long-term partnerships—and especially but not exclusively ones outside a normative model of heterosexual, male director and heterosexual, female star—emphasize sharing or negotiating the manipulation of the signs in a film, including the star herself or himself as sign.

The notion of imaginary co-signatures also draws upon previous literary scholarship into the use and connotations of signatures in general. In a famous paper, Jacques Derrida analyzes the operation of the signature.

Par définition, une signature écrite implique la non-présence actuelle ou empirique du signataire. Mais, dira-t-on, elle marque aussi et retient son avoir-été présent dans un maintenant passé, qui restera un maintenant futur, donc dans un maintenant en général, dans la forme transcendantale de la maintenance. Cette maintenance générale est en quelque sorte inscrite, épinglée dans la ponctualité présente, toujours évidente et toujours singulière, de la forme de signature. (Derrida, Mdp 391)

Derrida’s analysis concerned the role of the signature in the question of the primacy of one form of communication, for example spoken or written, over the other. In a filmic
context, though, these different forms of communication collapse together; viewers experience the written image, created with the caméra-stylo, along with sounds and speech at the same time. Further, the cinematic signature, like the hand-written signature, represents at once an absence, of the director and actor in the movie theater, and a presence, of the director’s cinematography, style, and reputation and of the actor’s image, both as light on the screen and off-screen persona.

For this last aspect of the signature, as a formalized trademark, or logo, of a Foucauldian-style “author function” (see Foucault, FR 108), literary criticism has also developed theoretical models. In one example, François Rigolot considers the connotations of Louise Labé’s signature.

La plupart des critiques s’accordent aujourd’hui pour reconnaître dans la poésie de Louise Labé l’intensité d’une voix passionnée—et moins la voix d’une amante véritable que celle de la persona avec laquelle la signataire, “Louise Labé Lyonnoize,” a su si bien s’identifier. Cependant il faut bien admettre qu’à une époque comme la Renaissance le discours littéraire ne peut
Rigolot explores the intertextual, historical norms and societal constructions of the time that informed interpretation of Labé’s signature on a text. For the critic, her persona consisted of a series of references to predominating codes in a rigorously formalized artistic arena. Contemporary, mainstream cinema also demands a similar codification of personae. For instance, Arletty’s image-signature on the screen must connote certain qualities, such as beauty, independence, sexual liberation, and social mobility, from one film to another, in order for her persona to affect readings of her character(s) in each individual film.

Filmmakers, then, can exploit this intertextuality. In selecting a performer for a project or a specific role, the director may appeal to a likely reaction to a star’s background, but obviously cannot control the star-spectator relationship completely. Serge Toubiana, in an interview with Claude Chabrol and Isabelle Huppert during their collaboration on Une Affaire de femmes (1988), cites the director’s claim that, when casting, “il faut respecter la personnalité de l’acteur” (Toubiana 6). Chabrol insists upon the artistic futility, in his opinion, of pushing an
actor to play a role not suited to him or her. Further, Chabrol readily admits that certain actors have a screen presence that can overpower the overall look of the film despite the authorial efforts of the director.

Ça arrive: les comédiens du “look” qui ont la nostalgie des grandes stars hollywoodiennes qui jouent beaucoup sur une apparence—ce n’est pas toujours soutenu en disant que la force du personnage mythique montré sur l’écran est finalement plus important que l’ensemble du film. (6)

Chabrol marks the limit between how a director can film a star and how a star can be photographed. Some stars, as the filmmaker points out, have such striking features about them, e.g. beauty, distinctiveness, celebrity, and the like, that on screen they create instances of themselves, or instances of star-gazing.

In such an instance, the connotative power of the star persona overrides the denotative power of the director’s mise-en-scène and montage. In other words, the star can draw attention to her or his own signifying along the paradigmatic axis in spite of, or perhaps in conjunction with or in opposition to, the character s/he plays along the film’s syntagmatic axis. For example, when Arletty pronounces words ending in the -ère sound, her distinctive
accent triggers an instance of Arletty, a moment of appreciation of her talent and fame, in a phonetic reference to the scene that propelled her to stardom. But, as this scene took place in a Carné film, the audience does not grant Arletty sole credit for the famous line; they realize that she merely interpreted it memorably. Nevertheless, in this example, the credit generally goes first to her then to the director. By contrast, when Marais, for instance, floats through the Zone in Orphée, or flies into the air in La Belle et la Bête, the audience first recognizes a Coctelian element, present in Cocteau sequences without Marais, and then an illustration of the actor’s noted physical stamina and athletic prowess. But even as co-signatures like these may exhibit an initial bias toward one or another of the collaborators, they still remain linked to both director and actor.

For instance, when Marais presses his face against the puddle in Orphée, the outline of his silhouette denotes his character within the Coctelian universe. Nevertheless, this same shot of Orpheus, or of Jean Marais the actor rather, over the mercurial puddle also represents a signature for both Marais and Cocteau. The visible good looks signify an aspect of Marais and the pose signifies an aspect of
Coeau. All the while, the simultaneous Marais-ness and Coeau-ness of the shot links the personae of the two.

This dual (or multiple) authorship represents a uniquely cinematic phenomenon, emphatically manifesting itself through a chronological reinforcement of the above processes, of dual authorship, in each successive work in collaborative arrangements between auteurist directors and their acteurs fétiches. Accordingly, the images, on- and off-screen, of the performer and the signature images of the filmmaker, or their imaginary co-signatures, build upon one another over time both textually and in the mind of the viewer to create durable links between the personae of the two artists involved in the partnerships. In extreme cases, critics begin to consider the partners together more often than separately, which, as also seen in literary theories of collaboration, begs the question of authority over expression. For instance, the personal relationship between Coeau and Marais tends to generate as much commentary, in discussions of their cinematic contributions to French culture, as do the films they made together.

However, less personal and more textual collaborative efforts can also engender similar commentary. In an example from American cinema, film scholars and fans more often than not mention actor Divine in discussions of director John
Waters’s works and vice-versa. Their friendly, though at times a bit distanced off-screen relationship—somewhat like that of Carné and Arletty—brought them together to make their early films, which then linked the two inextricably. Waters built his career filming Divine and Divine built his career starring in Waters’s movies. In another example, analyses of Alfred Hitchcock’s films often stress the importance of a lead female actor, such as Grace Kelly, Janet Leigh, or Tippi Hedren, or of his collaborations with producer David O. Selznick, or with costume designer Edith Head.

Further examples of such famous collaborations surely merit, and have merited, discussion in French, American, and other national and/or marginal(ized) cinemas, as do collaborations between directors and producers, actors (non-stars) and directors, screenwriters and directors, set designers and directors, and other combinations of authorial influence. Hopefully, this study of collaboration, and others like it, can emphasize the point that film scholars have ordinarily only tended to suggest: collaboration, more than a mere practical concern, represents a unique manner of film production deserving of its own theorizations. After all, auteurist directors may indeed write in images, as Astruc and others contend, but, as in the films from above,
they often write in the highly symbolic images of their favorite stars.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


"Jean Marais Website." Online. Internet. 17 Nov. 2000
<www.netcomuk.co.uk/~lenin/Jean_Marais.html>.

Jeancolas, Jean-Pierre. "Beneath the Despair, the Show Goes
On: Marcel Carné’s Les Enfants du paradis (1943-5)." In
French Film: Texts and Contexts. Ed. Susan Hayward and


Anne Carrière, 1994.

Jones, James W. "Pink Triangles." Gay Histories and
Cultures: An Encyclopedia. Ed. George E. Haggerty. New

Keller, Marjorie. The Untutored Eye: Childhood in the Films
of Cocteau, Cornell, and Brakhage. London: Associated
UP, 1986.

Kihm, Jean-Jacques, Elizabeth Sprigge and Henri C. Béhar.
Jean Cocteau: l’homme et les miroirs. Paris: Table
Ronde, 1968.


Koestenbaum, Wayne. Double Talk: The Erotics of Male

Labrune, Gérard and Philippe Toutain. L’Histoire de France.

Seghers, 1965.

Lange, Monique. Cocteau prince sans royaume. Paris: J. C.
Lattès, 1989.

Lev, Peter. The Euro-American Cinema. Texas Film Studies


