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The primitive mirror and the films of Jean Cocteau

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The Ohio State University, 1994

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THE PRIMITIVE MIRROR AND THE FILMS OF JEAN COCTEAU

DISSERTATION

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

By

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Introduction

The topic of this dissertation was inspired by Jean-Luc Godard’s comment in his hommage to Cocteau in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, "Bref encore, dans tous ses films et dans *Orphée* en particulier, Jean Cocteau nous prouve inlassablement que pour savoir faire du cinéma il nous faut retrouver Méliès, et que pour ça pas mal d’années Lumière sont encore nécessaires."¹ As the quote suggests, the link between the primitive cinema and the films of Jean Cocteau requires a broad examination of the two


There is a long tradition of artists paying hommage to predecessors who greatly influenced their work. To cite a few examples from the French cinema: Cocteau, Godard, Renoir, and Truffaut.
groups of works. Rather than imposing an interpretation or function for the primitive cinema with regard to Cocteau's cinema, each film is read closely and individually providing a textual analysis which shows the full extent of the influence of the primitive cinema. The result of this technique yields a panorama of influences on Cocteau's cinema.

His first film, *Le Sang d'un poète* (1932) relies heavily on the primitive cinema as a referential body of texts. The young artist in the film makes a visit to a site closely tied to nascent cinema, L'Hôtel des Folies-Dramatiques. The address to the primitive cinema is direct and overt. This is the case as well for *La Belle et la Bête* (1945), his second film, which contains reproductions of several key aspects of certain primitive films or film types. The two stage adaptations made during the war, *Les Parents terribles* (1947) and *L'Aigle à deux têtes* (1948), bear less explicit marks of their primitive influence, but no less important ones. Each is concerned with the transfer from stage to screen and makes recourse to the primitive cinema to resolve narrative difficulties. *Orphée* (1949) bears the fewest overt marks of

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influence from the primitive cinema, so deeply are they rooted in the discursive strategy. Cocteau's final film, *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960) returns to the techniques employed in *Le Sang d'un poète*, making explicit once again Cocteau's debt to the primitive cinema.

A justification for the continued use of the term "primitive" seems in order. Many have thrown off the designation of the earliest period of filmmaking, 1895-1907, as "primitive" because it seems derogatory. Others have kept the term. Turning to the definition of the term, one finds

a: not derived : original, primary  
b: assumed as a basis; esp. axiomatic

2 a: of or relating to the earliest age or period : primeval  
b: closely approximating an early ancestral type: little evolved  
c: belonging to or characteristic of an early stage of development: crude, rudimentary

d: of, relating to, or constituting the assumed parent speech of related languages

3 a: elemental, natural  
b: of, relating to, or produced by a relatively simple people or culture  
c: naive.3

While the paternalism finally emerges in this as in many definitions of the term, its connotation remains something

that existed before, something primary, original, ancestral, characteristic, even primal according to one definition. And it is in that sense that the primitive cinema is being treated. Without trying to create an essential cinema, studies such as Noel Burch's *Life to those Shadows* rewrite the history of cinema using modern historiographic methods. Accordingly, the primitive cinema no longer exclusively points the road to modern narrative practices but employs certain discursive techniques, however rudimentarily. Some of these techniques evolved into the Institutional Mode of Representation, others simply existed and may or may not have been picked up again by the avant garde. To name two texts which draw together works from many of the new film historians and set at the crossroads of film history and narratology as does Burch's study, John Fell's *Film before Griffith* and André Gauldraut's *Ce que je vois de mon ciné*...

One of the difficulties overcome in these sorts of studies is the application of a modern view to a primitive film. One must relearn time and again that what looks odd to us, for reasons which are at the heart of these new studies, was quite readable (lisible) to the primitive spectator. A further layer is added to the equation of this study in that Cocteau was a primitive spectator. The implications of a modern filmmaker choosing to reenact
primitive techniques, how he goes about doing that, and finally why, must also be assessed. What consistently emerges is an effort to situate the spectator in a position approximating a child’s, and sometimes a primitive spectator’s as well. Cocteau thus replicates his original relationship to the cinema.

As suggested when the definition of the term primitive was initially raised, the possibility of misapplying a modern view to a primitive work is great. An essential view of the primitive film work can emerge or simply replace the old view which read primitive films as forerunners of modern narrative techniques. In the hope of reading Cocteau’s works fairly, especially his references to primitive works, I returned to other works of the era which sought to study the primitive, namely Freud’s works, but also Bergson’s. Freud’s interest lay in that which is primitive in us all and how that primitive component of the self emerged or expressed itself. In the search for the primitive, its expression, and the meaning of that expression, Freud’s and my task bear remarkable resemblance.

Many modern artists and movements bear the mark of Freud’s influence. The Surrealists immediately come to mind. Cocteau’s project differed from that of the Surrealists. Although he shunned the designation
"surréaliste", Cocteau's works bear marks of surrealist influence, such as the revival of melodrama in *Aigle à deux têtes* or the animation of statues and body parts in *Le Sang d'un poète*, *Orphée* and *Le Testament d'Orphée*. However, analysis of the gesture behind the works reveals a different project. In the Surrealists' appropriation of the primitive cinema, they passed through the work of Sergei Eisenstein and his montage techniques. The surrealist project sought from cinema the juxtaposition of disparate objects and locales as the definition of Lautréamont indicates. While Cocteau does exploit the primitive cinema in this way, his project most consistently draws upon the primitive cinema for a more primal pleasure, the sheer scopic pleasure of looking. Like a child, Cocteau's cinema records the process of discovery, of recognition and documentation.

This is the first sustained study of Cocteau's entire cinema. To date topical surveys and thematic studies only touch upon Cocteau's films. The only exception is Arthur

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5For example, Marjorie Keller, *The Untutored Eye: Childhood in the Films of Cocteau*, Cornell, and Brakhage (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986) examines Cocteau's films only with regard to the themes of children and childhood. Even René Gilson's study for *Le Cinéma d'Aujourd'hui* collection, *Jean Cocteau* (Paris: Cinéma d'Aujourd'hui, 1964), lacks a con-
Evans' *Jean Cocteau and his films of Orphic identity* which focuses only on the three films which meet this thematic criterion.\(^6\) In fact, a recent essay collection published in the *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles* on Cocteau doesn't have an article dedicated exclusively to his cinema.\(^7\) Recently a study in the *Noms du Cinéma* collection examined the links between Cocteau's life and his films, the most common form of study of his films.\(^8\) Many works on Cocteau's cinema come in the form of interviews.\(^9\) A work for *L'Encyclopédie Universitaire* doesn't devote even a chapter to Cocteau's films, instead they're mentioned when thematically appropriate.\(^10\) The thematic/topical approach seems the most popular even when narrowing the scope to *The Visual Art of Jean Cocteau*, William sistent critical focus or sustained analysis.


Emboden covers Cubism, realism, the effects of opium and so on. His focus covers topics from Cocteau’s personal life to aesthetic preoccupations and interests.\(^{11}\)

As many of these books reflect, the sheer diversity of Cocteau’s oeuvres is distracting. His interests crossed many generations and movements from Cubism and Surrealism to existentialism. Because he worked in many media, the temptation becomes to look for themes that transcend these boundaries. Hence every work seems to have a chapter about his addiction to opium as it seemed to have a striking impact on his creativity whatever the medium. However, when examining the cinema exclusively certain consistencies within that medium emerge.

Most clearly the influence of the primitive cinema stands out when looking at Cocteau’s films. As early as 1964 and as late as 1989 Godard and Claude-Jean Philippe, respectively, noted its impact. Jean-Cocteau was a contemporary of the cinema and most importantly, a child when the cinema was in its infancy. He was born in 1889, the cinema in 1895. While he was productive as a poet, novelist, playwright, plastic artist, and thus considered a dabbler, Cocteau returned time and again to the cinema. Interestingly, he came late to the cinema, relatively

speaking. *Le Sang d'un poète* was made in 1932, when Cocteau was already 43 years old. He made his last film, *Le Testament d'Orphée*, mere four years before his death in 1963.
Chapter I
Film's Life-Blood

In *Le Sang d'un poète*, Cocteau establishes the paradigm for his later cinematic works. It stands as a treatise on cinematic expression, especially its source and therefore, for our interests, the relationship of Cocteau's cinematic works to the primitive cinema. *Le Sang d'un poète* is an exploration of the blood of cinema, of its life-blood as well as the poet's.

Claude-Jean Philippe begins to outline the complex relationship of *Le Sang d'un poète* to the primitive cinema in his work *Jean Cocteau*, in the *Noms Du Cinéma* series.¹ He quotes Cocteau's response to queries of the film's creation which is a story of its first inspirations as

they were related to Charles de Noailles, the film’s financier:

Ecoutez, voilà ce que je vous propose: faire un dessin animé avec des personnes vivantes, comme on fait des tableaux vivants dans les foires, trois personnes qui jouent la Passion de Jésus-Christ... Je vais faire des dessins animés avec de vraies personnes: je vais trouver des gens qui ressemblent à mes dessins, et puis je vais les faire vivre comme si c’était un dessin animé.

Philippe concludes about this passage: "Cocteau est attaché par toutes ses fibres à l’enfant qu’il fut autrefois aux alentours de 1900, lorsque le cinématographe était encore forain, et lorsque les ‘Passions’ filmées étaient commentées par des ‘bonimenteurs’. Il se souvient aussi du cinéma feuilletonesque des années 10 qui marqua si vivement sa sensibilité de jeune homme". He goes on to point out that the titling between "episodes" (Cocteau’s term) also refers to the primitive cinema. However, the reference to and source of the primitive

2 ‘Bonimenteur’ is what he claims is half the function of Cocteau’s voice in the voice-over, the other half is "oracle". p. 28.

3 Philippe, pp. 24-27. The ellipsis is not mine; there are illustrations on pp. 25-26 that run this discussion over so many pages.
cinema is much more far-reaching than Philippe's points seem to indicate. Clearly Philippe recognizes this in his use of quotation marks around Hôtel des Folies-Dramatiques, which is a clear reference to primitive cinema's exposition in Paris at a peep-show arcade by that name. As Godard remarks in 1964 in his "Le Chiffre Sept" hommage to Cocteau in Cahiers du Cinéma, "Bref encore, dans tous ses films et dans Orphée en particulier, Jean Cocteau nous prouve inlassablement que pour savoir faire du cinéma il nous faut retrouver Méliès, et que pour ça pas mal d'années Lumière sont encore nécessaires." Le Sang d'un poète establishes not only Cocteau's indebtedness to the primitive cinema but the complex relationship between cinematic expression and its history, or better its source and origin.

The earliest cinema served as both a part of Cocteau's development and the film's formation, whereby a one to one correspondence would clearly be too simplistic. Rather the primitive cinema functions on many levels, at times

4See Keller, Marjorie. The Untutored Eye: Childhood in the Films of Cocteau, Cornell, and Brakhage (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986). In her chapter on Cocteau (chapter 1), Keller explores "the Cinema of Cocteau's Childhood".

simultaneously, in providing a source, a jumping off point, a counterpoint and a counterculture. Through a close reading of Le Sang d'un poète all these functions will become clear. For Cocteau the cinema was but one means by which he chose to express himself and it is the implications of that choice that he exposes in Le Sang d'un poète. He explained numerous times that he wanted to express things that could only be done through the cinematic medium.6

The film is divided into four titled episodes: "Premier épisode: La main blessée, ou les cicatrices du poète. Deuxième épisode: Les murs ont-ils des oreilles? Troisième épisode: La bataille des boules de neige. Quatrième épisode: La profanation de l'hostie." The protagonist is a young artist coiffed in a peruke but otherwise dressed in modern garb who, after trying to erase a speaking mouth in his drawing at the opening of the film, finds it embedded in his hand. At the behest of the statue onto which he places the mouth, the artist passes through a mirror and, in the second episode, visits the Hôtel des Folies-Dramatiques. Therein he peeps through keyholes and finishes by committing suicide and

turning into a statue. The third episode tells of a snowball fight during which the statue of the poet is destroyed and a schoolboy is hit and falls to the ground. In the fourth episode, a close-up reveals blood flowing from the young boy’s mouth. It is from the boy’s corpse that the artist will draw the winning ace of hearts while cheating at a card game with the now animate statue from the artist’s room. A guardian angel resurrects the boy and removes the winning card from the artist’s hand. The artist again commits suicide while wealthy spectators in a loge applaud. The film ends with a short scene of the statue making her way to immortality.

Having provided the plot with as little interpretation as possible, let Cocteau too summarize the film:

On ne peut pas raconter un film pareil. Je pourrais en donner une interprétation qui m’est propre. Je pourrais vous dire: la solitude du poète est si grande, il vit tellement ce qu’il crée, que la bouche d’une de ses créations lui reste dans la main comme une blessure, et qu’il aime cette bouche, qu’il s’aime, en somme, qu’il s’éveille le matin avec cette bouche contre lui comme une rencontre de hasard, qu’il tâche de s’en débarrasser, et qu’il s’en débarrassera sur une statue morte-- et que cette statue se met à vivre-- et qu’elle se venge, et qu’elle l’embarque
dans des aventures atroces. Je pourrais vous dire que la bataille des boules de neige, c'est l'enfance du poète, et que, quand il joue cette partie de cartes avec sa Gloire, avec sa Destinée, il triche en prenant sur son enfance ce qu'il devrait puiser en lui-même. Je pourrais vous dire ensuite, qu'ayant essayé de se faire une gloire terrestre, il tombe dans cet 'ennui mortel de l'immortalité', auquel on songe devant toutes les sépultures illustres. Et j'aurais raison de vous dire cela, mais j'aurais tort aussi, car ce serait un text écrit après coup sur des images." 7

Cocteau's interpretation demonstrates how his film is both simple and complex. It is seemingly simple in its meaning but complex in its presentation of that meaning. His words also provide some cautions for interpretation, especially with regard to the relationship of history, his or cinema's, to his creation and the creative process it seeks to illustrate. Keeping that caution in mind, Cocteau's reclamation of the primitive cinema sheds light on the relationship between creation, creative process and its sources.

There are a series of four shots which constitute a prologue to the film. These shots, like the opening of many modern literary works, serve to announce the film, its themes, aims and narrative technique. Taken together they form a "blason" of sorts. The term blason is used specifically in this prologue and functions here much in the same way it did in the sixteenth century, as a detailed description of a person or object.\(^8\) Strictly codified, the blason evokes certain ideas, techniques and content. It is primarily poetry which minutely describes, in praise or satirically, Woman. By evoking the blason, the character of the statue, to whom Cocteau refers as "la Gloire" of the poet, becomes the Woman whose praises and/or satire are sung. Thus the blood of the poet is his glory and the whole struggle faced by the poet with regard to recognition and literary production is introduced.

The film opens on a shot of the young artist, masked in heavy white powder, a plaster right arm raised perpendicular to his body and draped in a light fabric while fanfare-type music plays. The film script, written by Cocteau, calls this gesture hieratic.\(^9\) The sacerdotal nature of the gesture, Cocteau’s invitation into the film,


intimates at the reverence with which he undertakes this film. He displays reverence for his work, its seriousness, its importance, rivaling that of the sacred.

The film will also depict a certain irreverence for the false reverence of things that demand it. For example, there are many references in the film to the early 1800s as a time when royalty and the populace vied for expression and control. Royalty represents that which allied itself with God through the Church and also represents, in my usage here, the literary forms that demand like treatment. Thus I group such artistic exclusivity with other references to Authority in the film, where respect is demanded not earned. The function of these references to the Romantic era is to underscore Cocteau's goal of derision of this sense of superiority, whatever the source, and the seriousness of that derision. This returns us to the reference of the function of the blason as a form of satire.

10 Without lauching into it here, there are many works, or parts of works that explore Cocteau's relationship with the "intelligensia" of his time. This "elite" group never received his work well and must be read as part of the larger reference to those who demand reverential treatment. See just about any introduction to his work in cinema. A more recent example is William A. Emboden, The Visual Art of Jean Cocteau (New York: International Archive of Art, 1989). As well, Cocteau's own diaries express his resentment of the treatment shown him by some groups of his peers.
There are three cuts back and forth between a doorknob turning as though to be opened and three titles announcing:

1) Tout poème est un blason. Il faut le déchiffrer. Que de sang, que de larmes, en échange de ces hanches, de ces gueules, de ces licornes, de ces torches, de ces tours, de ces merlettes, de ces semis d'étoiles et de ces champs d'azur! 2) Libre de choisir les visages, les formes, les gestes, les timbres, les actes, les lieux qui lui plaisent, il compose avec eux un documentaire réaliste d'événements irréels. Le musicien soulignera les bruits et les silences. 3) L'auteur dédie cette bande d'allégories à la mémoire de Pisanello, de Paolo Uccello, de Piero della Francesca, d'Andréa del Castagno, peintres de blasons et dénigmes.11

Clearly the turning doorknob makes reference to an effort at understanding, at deciphering and it also suggests entrance into another place or world. A lot of the film seems told in a world of a different time frame, like that of a dream. Like a dream, a blason is a condensation of sorts. The list of what is exchanged for blood and tears starts from the lowest form of toil and aggression and rises through innocence and light to the highest reaches

11Cocteau, pp 14-15.
of man and beyond to the reaches of the universe. It is written in the form and vocabulary of a blason (e.g. merlette is technical vocabulary from the blason). The blason is thus a reference to the form. The second title refers to the discursive style, of which more later. And the references in the dedication to Pisanello, Uccello et Francesca intimate at Cocteau's goal; each of these artists forged a personal vision within the confines of, or in relation to, an artistic movement, especially with regard to perspective.\textsuperscript{12} Thus, though the object "blasonné" is a known figure, its representation is personal, its message to be deciphered in terms of the artist's vision. It doesn't tell a story so much as convey a message or understanding, a realistic document of an unreal event—a sort of aggregate portrait.

With this reference to masters of another age and the earlier discussion of Cocteau's attitude toward Authority referenced to the early 1800s, a mention of the meaning of the word "poète" from the title is required. Cocteau draws the term from the Romantic era when Poet merited the magiscule, a general term which might today be called "the

\textsuperscript{12}Uccello, as Paolo di Dono was called for his particular ability to depict winged creatures, was considered by Apollinaire a source of Cubism. Francis Steegmuller, \textit{Cocteau: A Biography} (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1970), p. 334n.
artist." It incorporates a sense of mission given it by the likes of Vigny, Musset and Hugo, a sense of including all art and artistic creation ("La Préface de Cromwell"), justifying in part Cocteau's dabbling in all media. Like the Romantics, Cocteau has recourse to the Middle Ages and Renaissance and especially to artists who, in addition to forging a personal vision, worked in a variety of media. Thereby, the term Poet raises Art to include the cinema, adding another justification for his recourse to the primitive cinema in discussing "le sang d'un poète".

The second intertitle makes reference to the fact the author is "composing a realistic (or realist) documentary of unreal events." In a way this is a definition of cinematic expression. The primitive cinema has, in the past, been simplistically dichotomized into Lumière documentaries versus Méliès magic films. In Cocteau's intertitle we read a less simplistic interpretation of primitive cinema, one that underscores Godard's appreciation quoted above: both place primitive cinematic expression on a continuum which recognizes the staged aspects of Lumière's documentaries and the spontaneous playfulness of Méliès' magic films. Cocteau arrives at a sort of harmony which allows the qualities of fantasy to be documented and the documentation to be fanciful.

Something never to be lost sight of with Cocteau's works is a certain playfulness which harks back to his
dislike of things that demand respect rather than earn respect. Like the Romantics' call, Hugo's specifically, for a mixture a high and low, so Cocteau modernizes the call: in fantasy and playfulness, the serious is depicted; in the quotidian is the lofty (a bastardization of "bas et sublime," from "La Preface de Cromwell"). A sense of playfulness is something embodied in both Lumière's and Méliès' cinema. How that playfulness translates Cocteau's serious message without alienating the spectator raises the question of narrative technique.

The effect of play was first seriously studied in the same period as the primitive cinema. The coincidence is not merely chronological. Both the primitive cinema and the study of play represent meeting points for science, technology, the human, and personal expression. Both seem efforts to recoup the individual from the huge strides and changing reality created by progress, specifically scientific inquiry, innovation, and discovery. Bergson wrote Le Rire, a study of the laugh as a human mechanism, in 1910. Contemporaneously, Freud undertook to study humor in an effort to explain the psychic mechanism at

work in the human when humor is exercised. The moving picture camera was also initially viewed as a scientific tool. Although not explicitly seen as a scientific study, the process of documentation of the human mechanism lies at the source of the cinema of Lumière and Méliès. Bergson and Freud can be used to explain, through their theories on the laugh and the joke respectively, how both Lumière and Méliès serve as the logical source for Cocteau's playfulness on screen and explain Cocteau's recourse to the cinema for just such expression. For at the source of Cocteau's cinema lies a sense of the process of recognition and documentation and the process of discovery, the same concerns and fascinations embodied in the primitive cinema. Cocteau turned to the films of


16 There are many anecdotes of Cocteau's creative process where he adapted the circumstances to the text. Philippe notes "Loin de dissimuler les accidents du tournage, Cocteau les fait donc servir à son 'réalisme de l'irréel'". Philippe, p. 36. He recounts how Enrique Rivero, the man who pays the poet, had been shot by the husband of his mistress and how Cocteau, fascinated with the scar, signed it with his personal star and
Lumière and Méliès to recover the simplicity of these processes in his own work.

What all of Lumière’s films have in common is their fascination with the human and its mechanism, "the materiality of a simple action," to quote Bergson. This reflects a precept to humor: "une distraction fondamentale de la personne." This distraction lets in the mechanical through habit and automatism and, according to Bergson, the laugh is simply "du mécanique plaqué sur du vivant."

Méliès’ tie to the comic is much clearer since he made expressly comic films, and when not comic, magic. Magic functions within the domain of the comic in that it also

utilized it in the film.

17Bergson, p. 20. Lumière recorded an extremely varied selection of observations depicting everyday life of his era. To give a sense of the range here are a few: workers leaving a factory, a baby’s meal, the demolition of a wall, a train arriving at the station, military drills, McKinley’s inauguration and slapstick gags.

18Bergson, p. 19.

19The translation of the phrase "Du mécanique plaqué sur du vivant" poses a number of problems, not the least of which is the translation of the word "plaqué." The verb plaquer literally translates as to veneer for wood or to plate for jewelry or to plaster for hair, thus to apply superficially, that is onto or on top of, but such that it sticks, giving a concrete sense to the word.
involves the mechanical "pasted" on the living. Magic is unreal events made to seem real.

In *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, Freud points out that the pleasure of jokes, like the pleasure of aesthetics or art, comes from a recognition of the familiar. Although not the only condition for humor, both Freud and Bergson would agree with Freud's observation that it ..."arises in the first instance as an unintended discovery derived from human social relations". Applied, for example, to Méliès' magic films which often involve the human body, the human body constitutes both the living and familiar, that is, the clichéd reality of a common social perception. His travel films present a scientific (therefore seemingly realistic) voyage to an unfamiliar place where the unexpected occurs in a clichéd setting. Both Méliès and Lumière are fascinated with the human, the natural, and their materiality (if only through their opposites).

The playfulness in both Lumière and Méliès films draws on different but not dissimilar sources of what is funny according to Freud. In *Jokes*, he distinguishes between jokes and the comic whereby the former transgress uncon-

20Freud, p. 121.
21Freud, p. 189.
scious inhibitions and the latter is a preconscious transgression. This distinction recognizes an important difference between the Lumière and Méliès films. Lumière’s films record the naive, a precondition of the producer of the comic, whereas Méliès’ films transgress inhibitions and thus function like dreams, unconsciously. It is the relationship of the producer of the joke or comic which determines the nature of the transgression. In both cases, the recipient of the joke or comic must put her/himself in the place of the producer, thereby establishing a state of understanding.

The necessity of this collusion between recipient and comic or joker explains Cocteau’s recourse to humor, since his playfulness works on the preconscious and the unconscious level to achieve different pathways to the unreal (or is it the real?). By drawing on both, Cocteau allows himself transgressions of both sorts in his quest to undermine the arrogance of the sources of those inhibitions, Authority. Jokes allow transgression of social codes without the overt confrontation that might alienate spectators. Jokes "paralyze the inhibition arising from rational criticism", in much the same way as dreams.22

22Freud, p. 185 for the quote. There is an entire chapter dedicated to the relationship of Jokes to dreams, Part C, Chapter III, pp. 159-180.
With the comic, the receptive person recognizes the naïveté of the producer, that is, the producer's lack of inhibitions. By reinacting, or reactivating these mechanisms on the part of his own spectators, Cocteau colludes with the primitive cinema to create that same bypass of inhibitions on the part of his spectators.

Cocteau's first goal is to establish a receptive audience for his work, a certain state of understanding. A term that continues to recur in critical works on Cocteau is "child" and its related vocabulary. Recall Philippe's quote linking the primitive cinema to Cocteau's film: "Cocteau est attaché par toutes ses fibres à l'enfant qu'il fut autrefois aux alentours de 1900, lorsque le cinématographe était encore forain...." A tripartite link between the child and Cocteau's film(s) is suggested. First, there is the primitive cinema dating to Cocteau's childhood. Secondly, there is the use of the comic which draws on a naive producer and the joke which draws (indirectly) on infantile repression. Finally, the link between Cocteau's history with the primitive cinema

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24 Philippe, pp. 24-27.
and his recourse to its narrative strategies is in part coincidental. That is, Cocteau personally relates the primitive cinema to a period of his own naïveté, in all the positive senses of the term, which he seeks to recreate in his audience. For the same reason, it is probably intentional.

The child’s relationship to the comic influences the process of reception Cocteau creates in his film and thus contributes to the narrative process. Children bear a remarkable resemblance to characters in the narrative: "a child only produces a comic effect on us when he conducts himself not as a child but as a serious adult [naïve], and he produces it then in the same way as other people who disguise themselves."²⁵ In this quote, there are two references to the similarity of the actor to the child: the serious adult, for seriousness or lack of appearance of dissimulation is key to being a convincing actor and people who disguise themselves, a partial definition of the actor. The most important and productive link, for our purposes, is Bergson’s insight which is quoted by Freud, "the specific characteristic of the comic which we are in search of in an awakening of the infantile-- to regard the comic as the regained 'lost laughter of child-

²⁵Freud, p. 223.
Thus the mental process in the receptive person must approximate that of the child. Freud goes on to outline the "various comic possibilities." We remarked that the comic difference was found either:

a) by a comparison between another person and oneself, or

(b) by a comparison entirely within the other person, or

(c) by a comparison entirely within oneself.
In the first of these cases the other person would appear to me as a child; in the second he would reduce himself to a child; and in the third I should discover the child in myself.

As we will see in the close reading of the film, the poet places himself in all three of these positions. Therefore, Cocteau forces the spectator to engage with the film in an empathetic manner, as Freud outlines in these three cases.

26Freud, p. 224.

27By the way, at least to Freud's thinking, his analysis to this point runs parallel to Bergson's. It is only now, by insisting that comic pleasure not be recollected pleasure but a comparison, that their thinking parts company.

28Freud, p. 226.
Through this discussion we understand that Cocteau's recourse to the primitive cinema allows a rediscovery both for himself and his spectator. It also allows him to bypass inhibitions, be they derived from rational thought or upbringing. Thus Cocteau can introduce new ideas or reintroduce old ideas to an audience that may be less than receptive by the use of playfulness. This playfulness requires a suspension of inhibitions, something bypassed, in different ways by both the comic and jokes, by reevoking the child in us all.

The primitive cinema is called to mind by the final image of the prologue, shown after the music has stopped playing, of a giant smokestack falling. The smokestack breaks and starts to crumble in slowmotion. "Documentaries" like the destruction of the wall by Lumière come to mind. The starkness and simplicity make the image all the more striking such that when you see the completion of the tower's destruction at the close of the film the connection is immediately made. The meaning is clearly that the film takes place in a "heartbeat," a very short segment of time. This returns us to the dream reference, for dreams too are shorter than the story they tell makes them seem. As well, the paradigmatic structure of the blason is called to mind, neatly tying the prologue, a seemingly disparate set of images, together.
The four episodes which comprise *Le Sang d’un poète* depict four aspects of artistic expression, or as Cocteau announces in the third title, four "allegories". The first, titled "La main blessée ou les cicatrices du poète", tells how the artist’s work is an open wound, in other words, the story of artistic creation. How it leaves him open to pressures from all sides. The second episode presents a series of vignettes of what composes artistic creativity. The artist makes his way through the mirror and down the hall of a hotel. In each room he observes through the keyhole the components of artistic creation presented allegorically: politics, drugs, himself, morality, and sexuality. The presentation of this episode by its direct reference to the primitive cinema links and shapes the vignettes, as does the title: "Les murs ont-ils des oreilles?" by making direct reference to spying. "La bataille des boules de neige," the third episode, presents a social allegory of creation drawing on childhood memories. Finally, "La profanation de l’hostie" explores artistic reception and recognition, and a final, romantic lament that the artist and his work are seldom appreciated or understood. In titling each segment an episode, Cocteau evokes the theatrical definition of the word: "Action accessoire rattachée plus ou moins naturel-
lement à l’action principale." Hence the title of the film, Le Sang d’un poète, the episodes present allegories of what courses (through) the poet’s blood.

The first episode depicts the opening of the wound which sheds the artist’s blood. Although the artist opens the wound by his own creation, by his own hand, as it were, he is immediately linked to the soldier, specifically of the last victory of the ancien régime. Cocteau’s voice speaks the text while the image track presents a young man drawing at an easel. The author’s voice announces: "Premier épisode: La main blessée ou les cicatrices du poète." Then, the sound of cannon fire silences for the second voice-over. "Tandis que tonnaient au loin les canons de Fontenoy, dans une modeste chambre, un jeune homme..." Throughout the entire film, references to the period of the ancien régime are made: the cannons of Fontenoy, a Louis XV style wig, a friend dressed in Louis XV period clothing. Less to establish an historical period than to create an historical tone, the reference to the ancien régime evokes the last bastion of absolute authority and, by contrast, the revolutionary


30 Cocteau, p. 16.
nature of Cocteau's artistic gesture. The poet sheds his blood in the battle against absolutism.

The wound itself is opened when, during the creative process, the poet tries to erase with the palm of his hand the speaking mouth of one of his drawings. While the poet is working on a series of sketches, a knock comes at the door. The fear, "l'épouvante," at the knocking causes the artist to erase some of his work.31 Thus, from the outset, it is the reception of his work that causes the artist to erase or hide his work, whereby the wound transfers to his hand.

After the horrified reaction to the wound and panicked escape of the visitor, the artist hangs up his peruke, locks the door, and attempts to wash away the wound only to realize that it is a mouth and it is alive. Upon further inspection, the artist is revulsed and tries to shake off the wound. It remains in place and begins to speak, asking for air. The artist kicks out a pane of glass from his window to oblige the speaking mouth. He then embraces the mouth full on the lips in what becomes an empassioned kiss. The artist falls into a chair and runs his hand along his neck and then down over each nipple in an erotic embrace which ends off-screen as he slides his hand below

31Cocteau, p. 18. The word is Cocteau's from the original film script.
his waist. Thus what begins in fear, passes through a state of revulsion, and ends in autoerotic passion. Artistic creation evokes diverse passions, all of which paint the artist outside the social sphere. Like a child, he naively follows his instincts and their vicissitudes.

Opening the final scene of the first episode, Cocteau announces, "The next morning..." as a dissolve reveals the sleeping artist. Birds, a train whistle, and a rooster are heard. An intertitle announces, "Le dormeur vu de près ou les surprises de la photographie...," followed by a second one bearing Cocteau’s distinctive moniker: "ou comment j’ai été pris au piège par mon propre film." A close-up then reveals a plaster cast of Cocteau’s head asleep next to a plaster hand replica of the artist’s. The eyes, drawn on to the mask, "open" and the mouth mumbles in its sleep, like lovers drunk with passion. The artist is then seen awakening and sneaking across the room to the statue onto which he violently attaches the mouth while Cocteau’s voice recalls, "Il est déjà dangereux de s’essuyer aux meubles." As the removal of the poet’s hand reveals the mouth on the statue, the mouth continues in Cocteau’s voice, "N’est-il pas fou de réveiller les statues en sursaut après leur sommeil séculaire?" The

32Cocteau, p. 28.
artist smiles broadly as he realizes the mouth is no longer in the palm of his hand.

The first episode demonstrates how the work is part of the artist, a wound and a gift. The wound is a source of repulsion and fascination, fear and excitement. The artist at once loves and fears what it represents. The wound bears resemblance to Christ’s on the cross. Cocteau’s reference to Passion Plays in his initial description of the project reinforces this tie. The tableau format resembles that of the film in general. The composition of various scenes, which he calls allegories, whose order, relationship and outcome, like those of passion films, are already known to the public. The Romantics too often used biblical references which served as allegories to the present day, including the situation of the poet.

However, the reference to the Christ figure does not explain entirely the character of the artist. Rather it


There has been little luck in recreating an entire Passion film from beginning to end. One could conclude that the question is somewhat irrelevant, that is, that a matching of actors or quality of decor is not relevant. Rather, the various scenes made each year were added to programs regardless of the "match" they made to previous scenes owned.
is another dimension in the portrait Cocteau paints. Just as there is a sort of aggregate time frame which includes the references to the ancien régime blended comfortably with the modern setting of the film, so there is a sort of aggregate artist which combines the character depicted on screen and Cocteau, the artist. Part of the composite artist includes plaster casts of various body parts, specifically a hand and a face. These aggregate depictions reveal Cocteau's playfulness while composing the film. Although unsuccessful in Le Sang d'un poète, they reveal an effort at experimentation with the cinematic medium. Cocteau tests the elasticity of time and character given the potential fluidity the medium permits.

Literalisations also interest Cocteau. The question of the literalization of Bergson's formula, "du mécanique plaqué sur du vivant," comes to mind with this scene. The scene itself seems to follow the steps: "une distraction fondamentale de la personne" allows the mechanical to attach itself to the living. There is also a pleasure derived from an unintended discovery from human social relations-- specifically his reaction to the mouth. First he tries to rid himself of it and he ends by sexually experimenting with it. In his childish effort to rid himself of the wound, he becomes caught up by it. Thus, Cocteau admits "how he became caught up in his artistic crea-
tion" which is demonstrated by a literalization of the artist's self-love. While most readings would see the title about getting caught by his own creation as a reference to the statue quoting the poet's works back to himself, catching the artist with his own words, there is no reason why it can't serve both scenes. There may well be a thematics of the artist caught in his own work, literally, figuratively, sexually, emotionally, thematically. Thus Cocteau portrays a certain "arroseur arrosé" of an artistic variety.

Cocteau drew from Méliès' example. In his magic films Méliès sought to recreate the tricks he performed on stage. At least initially, his films were reproductions of his magic acts replete with the velour curtain backdrop and other tools of a prestidigitator. In fact, rather than exploit the camera's ability to arrest time, Méliès simply performed the exact tricks, relying solely on his magic skills, before the movie camera. It was only later that Méliès took full advantage of the particular qualities of the movie camera such as stop action, the insertion of still photography, and other "tricks" of the medium. What Méliès did create on screen was a reality that was far from entirely human. He used props, drawings, people, and casts to perform his tricks, just as he had on stage. The public seemed to enjoy them, at least
for a while, as much as the live act. Méliès had simulated reality sufficiently well, or the audience accepted this half-reality enough, to return for more and more.34

And yet, one of the most prominent reasons why Cocteau's film is less well respected is precisely because of his intercuts of casts and masks.35 They are seen as frivolous, unnecessary and unrealistic. While they may seem gratuitous, they are often a reflection of Cocteau's experimentation with the medium of film. As well, they reflect Cocteau's playfulness. For example, over the wash basin where the artist attempts to wash away the mouth, there hangs a wire mask in the shape of Cocteau's head. Intercuts are made of the mask spinning undoubtably making a pun on the expression "avoir la tête qui tourne," which is precisely the state of the young artist. A different mask is intercut to evoke the Janus-like masks that symbolize the theatre. The mask consists of a white face with tears on one side and a black face with only the outline of the main features on the other. A third mask, of


35See Aston Doré, "Cocteau and His Times: An Intellectual Backdrop" and Stephen Harvey, "The Mask and the Mirror" in Jean Cocteau and the French Scene, ed. Aston Doré (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), pp. 47-80 and 185-208, respectively, as more recent examples of these criticisms.
sorts, is the pipe cleaner sculpture of the cart driver. Again the potential for puns is myriad, including a pun on punning.\textsuperscript{36} Although the puns may seem frivolous, they call attention to the line Cocteau treads throughout the film between literal and figural meanings. That line is best transgressed in cinema where a blurring of sorts can be achieved and sustained, as he suggests in his statement: a "documentary of unreal/istic events".

The laughter which marks the transition from the first to second episode is another indication of that same line between literal and figural. The artist childishishly relishes his triumph of ridding himself of the mouth, only to have the mouth turn on him, so to speak. The statue asks if he thinks it so simple to get rid of a wound, to close the mouth of a wound. She suggests that his only recourse is to enter the mirror. When the artist responds that one cannot enter mirrors, she recalls to him that he wrote that one could and that he didn't believe. Thus the artist's own work is keeping him honest and true to his word, forcing a literal reading of his own text of what could only be logically read as figural (the entrance into

\textsuperscript{36}The third meaning of "charrier", cart driver, is to make fun of or pull one's leg. \textit{Le Petit Robert}, p. 291, 3rd def. of charrier: v.t. se moquer de lui, abuser sa crédulité, mystifier. v.i. exagérer, plaisanter.
a mirror). The poet angers and begins to speak: "Je...."
The statue cuts him short with a slow, 'hieratic' voice suggesting he "try, always try...."37 The choice of the term hieratic is again Cocteau's, displaying the seriousness and merited reverence for the discussion. Thus, although at times his puns seem gratuitous, they merely indicate a necessary playfulness that should in no way be viewed as banalizing the message.

Twice so far in the film a certain playfulness has been displayed: puns and childlike trickery. Although they call for different sorts of humor, both enlist the empathy of the spectator. A third sort of childlike humor is engaged in the trip through the Hôtel des Folies Dramatiques which comprises the second episode. To begin the artist's passage, he must be chided by his own inspiration. The statue repeats "essaie" though the artist clearly doubts his own words on the matter. This call for trust in his own words displays another aspect of artistic production. His own work is the source of inspiration in a childlike trust of which he wrote and will lead him back to that source.

As Cocteau's voice announces in a voice over: "L'intérieur de la glace aboutissait à l'hôtel des Folies-

37Cocteau, p. 33.
Dramatiques." The corridor itself, into which the artist enters, is called "borgne" by Cocteau. The term, when refering to a window, means that it lets in light but affords no view. Thus the corridor, like the keyholes it contains, is a one-way mirror. The journey down the corridor simulates a dream, the keyholes are the mind’s eyes, the visions are memories.

Before the poet even enters the hallway, an Annamite in European garb descends the hall in the direction of the camera, stops at the only door without shoes before it, knocks, listens, knocks again, speaks Chinese through the door and then disappears before leaving the frame. By setting the scene for the episode in this way, Cocteau casts a particular tone on the reading of the episode. Just as in English we might say "it’s Greek to me," so the French would refer to the Chinese language. Thus this is an episode of sight more than words. The language of the scene is obscure, foreign, strange. As well, Cocteau was known to suffer bouts of addiction to opium, the source of which is China. Furthermore, the Annamite represents a figure commonly known to be successful at eluding the authorities. Thus the scene is cast in a drugged haze,

Cocteau, p. 36.

out of the reality of the workaday world, peopled by marginals. As in a dream, it is beyond the reach of Authority.

The artist moves up the hall as though swimming. Movement is restricted, difficult. Like in a dream, the artist is not completely free to move about. Music plays only during shots of the artist in the corridor. This further distinguishes the two spaces on either side of the keyholes. The visions or dreams cannot be narrated or punctuated.

The first keyhole into which he peers reveals a Mexican before a firing squad while a clock ticks off screen. After the execution is completed, the camera cuts to the artist at the keyhole while in voice-over Cocteau announces: "Au petit jour le Méxique, les fossés de Vincennes, le boulevard Arago, une chambre d'hôtel se valent." A cut returns us to the scene of the firing squad and reverse motion brings the victim back to standing. Another pair of cuts brings us back to the artist struggling to see through the keyhole and then a repetition of the execution itself. The voice over announces a political motivation for writing. "Le Méxique" refers to the 1860's collapse of Maximilian's attempt at control. "Les fossés de Vincennes" probably refers to the induction center located there during World War I; for there were
literally no trenches located there, only the figurative one of the induction center. "Le boulevard Arago" evokes the Paris Commune. These varied references to political conflict point to one of the reasons, especially in this era, for creating texts, politics and political conviction.40

When the artist arrives at the next keyhole, the screen is blackened while the voice-over announces "les mystères de la Chine." The next cut returns us to the artist with his ear on the door struggling to listen while from inside voices of a man and woman speaking Chinese are heard. The artist bends back down to the keyhole. A reverse shot revealing a keyhole mask to indicate point of view shows the preparation of opium for smoking. The voice-over says: "Chambre 19: plafond céleste." The shot of the keyhole mask returns to display the introduction of the opium into the pipe. The only sound is that of suck-

40Cocteau makes an interesting statement about politics and artistic creation in his interviews with André Fraigneau. "Car à cette époque, la politique était une politique des lettres, des arts, sans attache avec la politique proprement dite. C'est une grande différence avec l'époque actuelle. Le Sang d'un poète était pour moi un acte de cette politique (Fraigneau's emphasis) et s'opposait à la politique surréaliste, alors toute-puissante parce qu'à peine déclarée comme telle. Ce qui complique les choses, c'est que nous admirions les mêmes valeurs et que nous combattions au même niveau...." Jean Cocteau, Entretiens autour du cinématographe (Paris: Pierre Blafond, 1973), p. 42.
ing at the pipe; small wafts of smoke rise. A shot of the artist reveals him climbing the door to see or hear better; voices speaking Chinese are again heard. As mentioned, Cocteau fought his addiction to opium throughout his career, but the battle was never more acute than in the years prior to the making of Le Sang d’un poète. In addition to the direct reference to opium as a source of "inspiration," there is the reference to Chinese as the consumate "foreign" language and, most important, there is a third reference to "ombres chinoises," a projection technique predating the cinema using shadows cast on the wall. This technique creates a sort of twice removed image. Not only is it an image cast on the wall but it is a shadow of an image, or derivative of an image, thereby further removing the scene from "reality." Like drugs and truly "foreign" languages, "ombres chinoises" create a scene far removed from reality but kin to the cinema and the creative process which conjures it.

The music starts again as the artist moves to the next door. But rather than repeat his labored movements, there is a cut to him at the next keyhole. Again the reverse of a keyhole mask is provided, however this time revealing the literal reverse of the artist’s eye, rather than what is going on inside the room. This repeats the theme of passing through mirrors, of looking into oneself, however
this time through the "gateway to the soul" as poets called the eye in the 16th century. Thus what is in one’s sight or mind or soul becomes added to the list of sources of creation.

At the following door, the shot begins on the shoes outside the door, as it did at the first door. The camera pans up to the artist at the keyhole and then cuts to reveal a small girl sitting before a fireplace through a keyhole mask. The music ends and the mask enlarges until out of sight. A matronly looking woman with a whip enters the frame. Clearly the woman is scolding the girl but only the sound of the sleigh bells which encircle the girl’s chest, ankles, and wrists can be heard. The woman appears to demand that the girl stand, then she hoists the child onto the mantle. The girl stands as the camera closes in so that only she and the matron’s whip are shown. Each of the girl’s following movements are preceded by a cut to the artist at the keyhole: as the matron enters the frame the girl squirms up the wall; the matron’s feet as she obviously tries to catch or stay under the girl. Then, the camera pans to reveal the matron’s movement to pick up the whip from the floor and move towards a step ladder. It continues to pan up the matron’s body as she orders the girl down and begins to climb the ladder. It reverses direction as it pans across
the room and up to the girl on the ceiling ringing her wrist bells at the matron. A close-up shows the girl sticking out her tongue at the matron and then thumbing her nose at her. At the cut which reveals more of the girl, music and bells are heard as the girl makes her way with difficulty across the ceiling on her back. The cut again returns to the artist struggling to his feet and on down the hall to the next door.

This scene refers to one's upbringing and the artist or child's relationship to it. Quickly the child moves beyond the reach of the matron. Although the matron continues to try to discipline the child, she remains outside her grasp. The child not only successfully eludes the matron but succeeds in thumbing her nose at the matron in clear close-up, one of only two in the entire segment. Again Cocteau explores the relationship of artist and child, as he does from several angles throughout the film. Like the child, the artist hears the whip of tradition (lessons) or morality (the Oliver Twist style) snapping but continues to move beyond its grasp. The reaction to all this yelling and haranguing is to throw it back at Authority. This childlike defiance to the standards of tradition is another deep-rooted source of inspiration.

At the foot of the next door, the artist finds one woman's and one man's shoe. The shot through the keyhole
is again indicated by the keyhole matte. The image
to the artist in the course of this peep is pun-
cuated by drum rolls. In a Méliès-like style, piece by
piece, in chalk or using human appendages, the image of a
man laying on his side appears. A cut to the shoes cor-
responds to Cocteau’s voice-over announcement: "Dans la
chambre dix-neuf se donnaient les rendez-vous désespérés
d’Hermaphrodite". The cut back to the artist must "be
sensual" according to the script.41 Returning to the half
human, half drawn image, changes in the figure are made,
punctuated by more drum rolls and a few cuts to the artist
at the keyhole. Stars, a wig, a female torso, and drapes
are added; clothing appears helter skelter. Finally the
hand reaches down and removes a cloth (previously unseen)
covering the genital area which reveals a sign warn-
ing: "DANGER DE MORT". The hand then touches the hair
sensually. There is another cut to the artist from
behind. Returning to the scene, a woman’s voice whispers
"N’éteins pas," then the image fades to black as a man’s
voice says "si"; the woman’s voice says, in the darkness,
"non...laisse." Water is then heard running.

Clearly sexuality is the inspiration to which Cocteau
refers in this segment. The figure is a hermaphrodite,

41Cocteau, p. 47.
endowed with both male and female genital organs. The hermaphrodite represents the ideal union. The perfect union also yielded the love-death legend. Death is closely linked to sex; a slang term in French terms an orgasm "petite mort". The "danger de mort" sign raises the question as to whether it is sex or the desire to look that risks death. It would seem that in raising the curtain to identify gender, there is a danger of death. The figure of the hermaphrodite introduces a fluidity in the lines that separate gender. As well as having organs of both genders, this presentation has both real and unreal appendages, suggesting transvestitism and transexuality. In art, the ideal union is possible. However, perfection is an illusion, it must be created.

The final segment of the trip down the corridor begins with the artist's head featured in the lower left corner of the frame, the wire head from the first segment spinning slowly above, and a revolver held out before the mask. A woman's voice seems to read directions: "Mode d'emploi. Saisir la crosse du revolver à pleine main. Oter le cran d'arrêt..." The artist rises and takes the revolver and goes to stand at the back wall to the right.

42Parker Tyler, Screening the Sexes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p. 216. This is a reference to the succession of kings.
of the mask and turns to face the camera. From the moment
the artist looked up from the keyhole, the scene is
starkly overlit, casting clear, strong shadows throughout.
The voice continues to recite the operation of the
revolver which the artist follows. After shooting himself
in the temple, fanfare music from the first episode plays,
then a laurel wreath appears around his head and blood
pours from his temple. More and more fabric appears
draped over the artist's shoulders. As Cocteau's voice
announces "La Gloire", the artist seems to awaken and
reach for his head. He feels the wreath and rips it off
while proclaiming in an angry voice: "merde, merde
merde...j'en ai assez, assez". He walks away, back up the
hall, trying to catch his breath. He passes before the
pipe-cleaner statue and turns back toward the camera. As
he passes back through the mirror in a reverse of the shot
of his original passage, the voice-over announces: "Les
mirroirs feraient bien de réfléchir un peu plus avant de
renvoyer les images."

Five tableaux comprise the series of the Hôtel des
Folies-Dramatiques. The refused suicide scene sub-
sequently frames the tableaux. In the earliest period of
cinema, predating modern narrative techniques, the keyhole
format was used to present different tableaux. The scenes
prior to or following the tableaux provide context and
narrative continuity. The initial scene introducing the tableaux announced that the artist was entering the Hôtel des Folies-Dramatiques, thereby announcing the tableaux format. By placing a second person in the corridor, Cocteau provided the sense that this was a physical place and that the artist, like the character of the domestic in the primitive keyhole films, was peering into actual rooms. The final scene of the refused suicide recasts perception of the trip down the hall into a search for evidence which leads him to suicide.\(^{43}\) However, this reading is refused by the artist as false. After Cocteau appears to close the reading of "sources of inspiration" with his announcement of glory, the poet exits the set. Thus in a reverse of the scene of Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show where a spectator, so enraptured by the scene, tries to enter the projection screen, Cocteau's artist walks out of screen. However, to do so he could not dismiss the space of L'Hôtel des Folies-Dramatiques; he had to pass back through it. Recall that Cocteau has gone to great lengths to distinguish between the "reality" of the corridor and

the otherness of what lies on the other side of the keyholes. By playing on the figural and then on a literal interpretation of the space he created, the walk back through the hotel literalized the space thereby transforming the figural journey through the cinematic past.

Adding to the sense of timelessness, the tableaux format, with its lack of apparent narrative continuity, simply provides a series of episodes. There is little notion of the passage of time except when watching the artist make his way, with great difficulty, up and back down the corridor and at the closing scene of the episode. The final scene, forming a transition to the following episode, takes place after the artist has returned through the mirror. In his effort to nullify the import of what took place in the hotel corridor, the artist draws attention to the time spent there, causing recognition of the passage of time.

The nullification is completed by the destruction of the statue of Glory. After returning through the mirror, the artist shakes his fist at and angrily circles the statue. Finally he picks up a mallet and destroys it. The artist ends covered in plaster looking quite like a statue himself. Cocteau's voice tells us "À casser des statues... on risque... d'en devenir une... soi-même" while the image track provides a shot of the ruins of an appart-
ment building with a statue sitting at its foot. At the word "soi-même" a close-up of a statue of the artist appears. The camera dollies back to reveal stairs to the left and continues to back up as Cocteau’s voice announces "encore la gloire, toujours la gloire." A small square is revealed as the voice announces the third episode: "la bataille des boules de neige."

The sequencing of the shots of the third episode clearly indicates the work of memory. The images appear somewhat disparate in their order. Essentially there are two groups of schoolboys. The younger group is seen roughhousing, having a snowball fight and strangling one of the group with a muffler. The older group is a pair of boys awkwardly lighting cigarettes and getting embroiled in the horseplay. Closeups of one of the younger and one of the older boys, designated as Dargelos, establish a sort of relationship. Dargelos takes up a snowball with a rock revealed inside and hits the younger boy on the temple. The latter falls to the ground. During the snowball fight, the statue of the artist is destroyed, as though itself made of snow.

Cocteau explains in various interviews and by another telling of the Dargelos scene in Les Enfants Terribles that the young boy is himself and that he greatly admired Dargelos from afar and desired but never dared seek
Dargelos’ attention. He also makes clear that the two scenes are distinctive, that in this film the scene is the work of memory. Clearly, what drives the creative process, as shown in this episode, is highly personal. It can be retold for myriad purposes and reasons, each original and functioning exclusively within the context of the text in which it is recounted. Although the glory that comes from recognition and understanding is important, it is the telling that triumphs, not the end result.44

Many have read this and other scenes in Cocteau’s cinema as an indication of Cocteau’s sado-masochistic fantasy.45 Such a reading remains within the thrust of this argument. The masochistic aesthetic, based on Gilles Deleuze’s work as elaborated by Naomi Greene, emphasizes


the valorization of dreams, aesthetics and formalism. The poet is persecuted by an all-powerful but unknowable law. The tie to this and the hermaphrodite scene illustrates Deleuze's observation, "Du corps à l'oeuvre d'art, de l'oeuvre d'art aux Idées, il y a toute une ascension qui doit se faire à coups de fouet". In both scenes the body played a central role in the work of art: the hermaphrodite was the work of art, and the boy/artist physically suffered for his art and his desire. Something of the unknowable law and artist's persecution seems revealed in the final episode.

The final episode, "la profanation de l'hostie," tells of a work's reception; it picks up where the third episode left off, the public side of glory. "L'hostie" can be read as the artist's offering to the public, that great god of recognition that leads to the promised land of glory. The fourth episode is told in steps. First there is artist profaning the host by cheating glory. The artist is seen stealing the winning card from the corpse of the fallen boy, that is using the source of inspiration as a short cut to recognition. Thus, the artist too can

46 Another work helpful to the study of sadomasochism is Gaylyn Studlar, *In the realm of pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the masochistic aesthetic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

47 Cited in Naomi Greene, "Deadly Statues", p. 895.
profane the host, so to speak. But his evilness is foiled by the guardian angel who retrieves the boy and the card, causing the poet to commit suicide.

The poet's suicide is a second offering of a host and it too is debased. The public, featured in loges above the stage where the card game takes place, applauds the artist's suicide and begins to murmur. This turns Glory back into a statue and she begins her "journey which leaves no trail". Before setting out she takes the mantle (of glory?, of tradition?, of classicism?) from the friend in 18th century garb who was standing casually by the former statue's pedestal before the card game in cape and mask as though at a "bal masqué."

She exits the scene and emerges through an elaborate door flanked by busts of Diderot. The sound of porters' whistles marks the approach of a bull which the statue escorts. The horns of the bull are really a lyre, the bull has disappeared. The statue with a globe before her and the lyre behind pass through the frame. From directly

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48 A footnote in the film script quotes Cocteau at his 1932 presentation of the film as saying "...c'est le poète qu'elles applaudissent. Les poètes, pour vivre, doivent souvent mourir, et dépenser, non seulement le sang rouge du coeur, mais ce sang blanc de l'âme qu'ils répandent et qui permet de les suivre à la trace. Les applaudissements ne s'obtiennent qu'à ce prix. Les poètes doivent donner tout, afin d'obtenir le moindre suffrage." Cocteau, p. 77, note 56.
above, the camera reveals the statue laid out on the floor surrounded by fabric, the lyre and globe beside her as Cocteau’s voice explains: "Ennui mortel de l’immortalité." The word "end" is spoken as the smokestack, from the first images of the film, completes its fall. And, finally, a fade to a black screen where FIN is written.

The final scene is a metaphorical trip to immortality. The bull represents fecundity, since its horns form a lyre, artistic production. The work which got la Gloire to this eternal resting place now earns her the mantle of tradition or authority. Her resting place takes her back in time to a place framed by Diderot’s legacy, another great artist who challenged the canon of his time. Authority, like tradition and morality, are undermined throughout the film. The cheap trick used at the end to gain immortality is mocked like the quick road through suicide. Cocteau seeks to take on all aspects of the artist’s life, creating an almost encyclopedic (another reference to Diderot) document of the artist’s struggle with and after creating a work.49 Through his desire to speak to every aspect, Cocteau is drawn to the fluidity of cinema that allows a layering in time, space, character and decor.

49Not to overlook his challenge to the canon, as it were, in his "Eloge de Richardson."
The role of the primitive cinema in the film is multi-fold. It provides narrative techniques such as Passion Films and keyhole films, both of which suggest diverse tableaux joined in different manners. It suggests a narrative point of view which Cocteau calls "borgne"—a mirror into the soul. It provides a narrative innocence which in the tradition of Méliès suggests trickery at every level: stop action, substitution of objects for humans and their appendages, velour backdrops suggesting a magic show and intertitles providing the skeleton of the plot without belying the story. In the Lumière tradition, this suggests an innocence of point of view, the sense of documentation of an insider knowing where and when to look.

The primitive cinema also suggests a moment in Cocteau's life, an innocence of a very personal nature which he sees reborn in every work. The innocence of the encounter of the poet with his wound or gift, the myriad reactions to it, all primal, all honest. It is with those eyes that Cocteau tries to tell of his own childhood at the snowball fight as opposed to the heady, artistic discourse guided by art in all its staidness of the trip through the hotel. This latter technique is rejected overtly within the narrative and discursively by his refusal to provide a positive vision at the end. Though
Glory finds her place within Authority and Tradition, the artist was last seen cheating, at cards and at suicide. The final note of the film returns us to the narrative of the earliest cinema in the clip of the completion of the falling of the smokestack.

The primitive cinema represents a certain narrative innocence, a means of telling which allows subversion of linearity. It can be outright, as the falling tower clips and the use of the tableaux, or it can be through a layering and fluidity which creates a sort of visual blason. The artist is thus mired in tradition as represented by his friend and his own peruke, cornered by opposing forces of inspiration, a child and an adult as witnessed by his reaction to the wound, a dandy and a cheat out for recognition at all cost, as seen in the card game or his own man as he insists at the end of the trip down the hotel corridor. This portrait is at once irreverent and sacerdotal, serious and playful, frustrated and free, satirical and innocent.

It required both sides of these dualities innocently, angrily joined and clashed to present Cocteau's message that he shall create but by that creation undermine. In order to render his work acceptable, palatable to the pub-
lie, Cocteau must charm them. With an innocence held high like a mirror, he seduces his spectators. The pleasure of his text is the pleasure of a joke, it lies in the familiar. He shows us new combinations of old, familiar ploys and objects. And with those ploys, he undermines the tradition or authority from which they dictate truth or meaning. The statue is Glory, earned over time, readily recognized. She is the aggregate of all his work, quoting him back to himself. Yet she misleads and deceives the artist, sending him backwards rather than forward. With this one layered character in this one layered scene, Cocteau tells of Glory and knowledge, of tradition and cheating, of creativity and dishonesty, of trust and belief and belying your own inspiration.

Thus the primitive cinema has another function which lays at the meeting place of time, history, tradition, creativity, honesty and innocence. It is one of Cocteau’s first places of storytelling and of magic when both he and the medium were young and green, where documentation at its simplest and magic at its zenith found their expression. It is both a medium and a time period. A medium that allows a fluidity, the joining of disparate and even

50 Francis Steegmuller’s biography of Cocteau chronicles Cocteau’s charming of Tout Paris, especially in his early years, chapters 1, 2 and 3.
contradictory components. It is a period of innocence and discovery. It is to this crossroad that Cocteau returns to recreate a time when all was possible and therefore all could be told, at once in the time of the falling of a tower, of all that goes into the making of an artist, his work and his glory, that can be seen and understood, criticized and celebrated— an unrealistic event realistically documented.
Chapter II

Primitive Scenes, Inevitable Pleasures

La Belle et la Bête, filmed during the Nuremberg Trials, stands in stark contrast to the political realities of 1945. The remaking of the Beaumont fairy tale provides a relief and an escape for the audience, if not the artist.¹ Cocteau could not help but recognize this contrast.² This recognition goes part and parcel with Coc-


²Jean Cocteau, Diary of a Film: La Belle et la Bête, trans. Ronald Duncan (New York: Dover Publications, 1972). Note for example Cocteau’ comment "Penicillin and the atom bomb are now the height of fashion. But like all fashions, they will pass. And the word "penicillin" will, to those who read these notes one day, produce the same effect as the word 'panorama' in Père Goriot. And the atom bomb will become just a squib." p. 111.

It should also be explained that the only readily available version of this work is in English.
teau's film aesthetic summarily provided in the comment: "a fairyland without fairies".3

The curiosity which the filming drew outstripped the publicity causing Cocteau to wonder if our object wakes some memory in the public mind. Perhaps they haven't quite forgotten their childhood and aren't so blasé after all? If only we can get at this essential childishness we shall be all right. What we're up against is the incredulous reserve that adults have.4

Childishness, childhood memory, incredulous reserve, each of these terms refers to an aspect of the film centered on the child. Childishness in the context of the above quotation refers to Cocteau's aesthetics, to the style he sought in making the film. The childhood memory seems a collective social memory, at once individual but common to many, the likes of which include references he makes in the Diary to Méliès films, to Christmas, to Doré's illustrations of Perrault and to shop windows, to name a few (pp. 159, 164, 138, & 173, respectively). The incredulous reserve is the meeting place of Cocteau's

3Cocteau, p. 149.

4Cocteau, p. 172. Henceforth page numbers from this work will be cited in parentheses.
aesthetic and this common memory. If successful, his style will tap the common memory to erode the reserve or bypass it.

At several instances in his diary of the film, Cocteau attempts to clarify that elusive term "aesthetic." He explains that he seeks to avoid the picturesque(33) by creating a style that is not realistic but appropriate(103). By downplaying the artistic and exploiting the documentary(87), he hopes to create a style which, quoting Goethe, "finds the truth behind the truth"(121). He seeks to create the "reality of childhood," the supernatural within the limits of realism(149). This requires a simplicity of plot(62, 190) and a mathematical precision of presentation(121). The details of this achievement will be examined through this chapter following the chronology established by the film itself. Examples will be given of common memory and how Cocteau uses references to the common memory to circumvent the incredulous reserve through his aesthetics of childishness.

Freud explains both the incredulous reserve and the common memory in his essay "The Relation of the Poet to Daydreaming" (1908).5 Admitting that it seems that

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adults have given up play, Freud asserts that in lieu of play they create daydreams.\textsuperscript{6} Ashamed of them, people conceal daydreams and cherish them as intimate possessions.\textsuperscript{7} This embarrassment forms part of what Cocteau calls adults' incredulous reserve.

Another side of this reserve emerges at the reception of a work. Freud suggests that if a daydreamer were to reveal his fantasies, they would leave us cold or even repel us. However, if a man of literary talent presents his daydreams, we experience pleasure.\textsuperscript{8} Freud imagines two reasons for the difference between the pleasure evoked by a poet's daydreams and the discomfort of hearing a common man's fantasies. However, the reason for these distinct results, Freud couches as a secret, a secret whose power lies at the very source of the repulsion itself and its being overcome.\textsuperscript{9} Freud concludes, "perhaps much that brings about this result [release of tension] consists in the writer's putting us into a position in which we can enjoy our own daydreams without reproach or shame" and suggests this to be the source of new and complicated

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{6}Freud, p. 124.
  \item \textsuperscript{7}Freud, p. 125.
  \item \textsuperscript{8}Freud, p. 133.
  \item \textsuperscript{9}Freud, p. 133.
\end{itemize}
research.10 The incredulous reserve acts therefore as the source of discomfort and the source of pleasure depending on who recounts the daydream to us.

The common memory is tied up with literary creation. Freud posits that "imaginative creation, like daydreaming, is a continuation of and substitute for the play of childhood".11 There seem to be two sources of creative work: reality, which the child fashions when at play, and "ready-made material," "derived from the racial treasure-house of myths, legends and fairy tales."12 This latter source resembles Cocteau's common memory. Freud asserts myths as "distorted vestiges of the wish-fantasies of whole nations."13 Fairytales clearly provide reference to basic themes about truth, honesty and goodness. In fact, Cocteau evokes such themes in the opening of his film.

*La Belle et la Bête* opens with an invocation to the audience for a child-like trust in what they will view and the assertion that children believe what they are told. Thus Cocteau suggests:

10 Freud, p. 133.
11 Freud, p. 132.
12 Freud, p. 132.
13 Freud, p. 132.
They believe that a rose plucked from a garden can bring drama to a family. They believe that the hands of a human beast will smoke when he slays a victim, and that this beast will be ashamed when confronted by a young girl.

Especially in the aftermath of World War II, collective wish-fantasies such as these might well manifest the deepest desires of France. The call which closes this initial invocation for "a childlike simplicity" matches an offer to speak the magic words of childhood's "open sesame": "once upon a time." The rhetorical slight of hand which Cocteau effects suggests, requests and then offers probably one of the most potent phrases of collective memory in "once upon a time."

To make his story palatable to adults, Cocteau changes the Beaumont tale slightly. Lynn Hoggard extensively outlines the changes, especially their psychological and mythical dimensions. By introducing the character of Avenant, Cocteau offers an alternative to the father versus Beast choice of the original tale. Quoting Bruno Bettelheim's *Uses of Enchantment* which recognizes Beauty

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and the Beast as the most stark fairytale representation of the oedipal transfer from parent to lover, Hoggard notes that "the addition of a boyfriend, by positing an alternative to father and the Beast, mutes the earlier story's oedipal tones" (125, 127). Other changes in the family composition include a reduction in the number of family members to two sisters and one brother.

Cocteau also eliminates the fairies and the ensuing "moralizing geography", as Hoggard terms it.

Instead of a world split between good fairies and corrupt cities, we have in Cocteau's treatment the world of the real, represented by the father and his children in their country house, and the world not of fairies but of the imagination or the surreal, ... a primordial place where everything lives and wants to become. Rather than fairies, Cocteau has "multiplied the magical elements that allow for movement from one world to the other, adding to the truth-telling mirror and the rose of the original story the talismans of horse, glove, and golden key". Not only do they allow for movement, but

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15Hoggard, p. 125, p. 127.
16Hoggard, p. 126.
17Hoggard, p. 127.
concretize and thus make more credible the movement of characters from one realm to the other and thus streamline the plot. For example, Beauty can slip away on the horse without the awkwardness of obtaining her father’s consent as in the original version.

The concretization of the keys of passage also plays into Cocteau’s aesthetic. In addition to making the plot more credible, giving a concrete representation to an abstract concept such as the passage between two realms makes the magic more palpable, seemingly more real. As a physical proof of the Beast’s powers the manifestations of his magic make the events surrounding them seem inevitable.

This sense of the inevitability of events, of destiny, is reinforced visually. Whereas the scenes filmed at the country house generally feature quick cuts and standard editing techniques, those filmed at the Beast’s castle are slow and deliberate. Oftimes the camera will cut to a location into which characters then enter. This reenactment of the primitive camera’s fixity and other practices recall the primitive cinema. Techniques from the primitive era do not exclusively refer to the Beast’s domain; however scenes which take place there often recall the magic films of Méliès. Other primitive practices emerge as the film progresses. Turning to a close reading of the
film, the various uses of, and effects of those uses, the primitive cinema will emerge within the context of the story.

As with many films, the opening scene recounts in detail the plot as it will emerge. Opening with a man’s back to the camera, he stretches a bow to release an arrow towards a target hung on the façade of a country house. He, the brother, Ludovic, comments that the shot is no good and steps aside so as to let the next man have a shot. The second man pulls back on the bow while the first exclaims "your foot, your foot." An arm reaches out just as the arrow is released. The angle of the camera follows down the length of the arm of the second man and traces the trajectory of the arrow. A cut to a dog curled up on a pillow anticipates the arrival of the arrow which sticks in the floor inches from the dog. The second man, whose face is not revealed until a later scene, is Avenant, Belle’s jealous suitor who, at the end of the film, goes to Diana’s Pavilion where the Beast’s treasure is stored. He hopes to rob the Beast but instead is shot by an arrow by the statue of Diana and killed, thus releasing the Beast from his spell and transforming him into Prince Ardent who then spirits Belle away to his far-off castle in the sky.
There is, in this scene, a two-fold sense of destiny. First, it anticipates the ending, although not the ending with which one is familiar from the de Beaumont tale. Secondly, the trajectory of the arrow is anticipated as are many other movements in the film. Normally this technique is used in reference to the Beast's domain. This particular scene takes place in the realm of the real but anticipates a scene which will occur in the magical land of the Beast. Thus there is some cross-semination from the domain of the Beast which only serves to further heighten the sense of inevitability, of a magical predestination.

Somewhat extreme in its quickness and sound, the first full scene of the film demonstrates the techniques which come to typify the realm of the real. As the arrow lands before it, the dog jumps up yapping and continues unabated for a few seconds. Meanwhile, the camera pans up to reveal three women, the three sisters, two of whom are being dressed in rich clothing and the third stitching them up as a servant would. The two well-dressed sisters begin to speak shrilly, berating the men outside who ask only after Belle. This triggers further piercing remarks as the sisters set off down the stairs and out the door on their way to the Duchess's. Quick cuts and sharp angles typify this scene, reflecting the quick moves and shrill voices of the characters.
The following scene pushes these techniques to an extreme, rendering it comic. As the women go to leave, they find their servants fast asleep in various locations--in the sedan-chair, in the hayloft, etc. They continue their infernal squawking at the servants, at the brother, and at the animals of the barnyard who have also made themselves at home in the sedan-chairs. The sisters' voices blend with the mocking tones of the brother and the animal sounds as they did with the dogbark previously. The scattering barnyard animals and servants along with the shrill voices contrast sharply with the pretension in manner and dress of the two sisters.

In stark distinction to the opening, the introduction of Belle and her suitor, Avenant, is beautiful. The filming, like the characters' movements, are slow and graceful. The humble surroundings match Belle's humble appearance, her head wrapped like a cleaning woman's, her dress simple and unadorned. Her voice is soft, her enunciation crisp and fluid. Belle is polishing the floor humming, her reflection clear, when Avenant reaches across the frame to pull the arrow out. He lifts her to her feet and suggests that she should not serve. A dialogue reflecting Belle's humbleness ensues framed in tight close-ups. Finally, in a close embrace matched by a close shot of the two, Avenant asks for Belle's hand in mar-
riage. The response clarifies the characters: as she says she will not leave her father, he grabs her to embrace her, sexually, aggressively. The brother hears the scuffle and enters. He in turn is punched by Avenant in a shot which runs the length of his arm like the opening shot of the arrow. Avenant's character is clear: he is handsome but aggressive and selfish; Belle is as humble and gracious as she is beautiful— the very incarnation of her name.

The final scene of introduction completes the characters' presentation and the basic plot delineation necessary to comprehend what follows. It shows the father returning with some local creditors. It seems that one of his ships has literally come in and that the creditors have agreed not to bankrupt him. They all sit down at a large table in the great room before the fireplace to toast the news. Ludovic, Belle and Avenant gather around the father's chair. They create a Vermeer-type portrait of the family evoking a recognizable cultural trope and tapping a social memory. A shot of the toast isolates the father and Belle in the center of the frame with Ludovic and one creditor cut to the side by a candlestick and Avenant and another creditor cut to the other side by the pitcher. This shot is deliberately held; it foreshadows the following scenes whereby Belle and her father are iso-
lated and mistreated for their goodness and Avenant and Ludovic, driven by avarice, force the family further into ruin. Not only does it visually announce the scenes to come but bears a remarkable resemblance to a technique common to the primitive cinema.

Noël Burch in his history of the primitive era refers many times to one of the first sources of film subjects, the picture postcard.\textsuperscript{18} Although not exactly a picture postcard, this scene and others that follow bear a striking resemblance to Vermeer paintings, in style if not literally. These scenes, like the paintings they evoke, have a frontal perspective, lack the depth of field of Renaissance perspective and are filmed from a fixed perspective, characteristics one consistently finds in the earliest films. These scenes strike at our cultural memory. They also serve deliberately to foreshadow the story that follows making this reference significant and purposeful.\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{19}Cocteau goes so far at times as to make comments in his diary such as, "This film must prove that it's possible to avoid camera movement and keep to a fixed frame"(50). Although in the context there is no reference to the primitive cinema per se, there is a deliberate effort on the part of Cocteau to go against "them," those who make films professionally and thus help establish the institutional mode of representation, as Burch calls it.
The spell and charm of this portrait-like family scene is broken by the return of the sisters. In their characteristic tone, their shrill voices announce that they were turned away at the Duchess's. They presume, in a manner as ridiculous as their conduct, that those gathered at the table are drinking to their misfortune. Their selfishness contrasts starkly to Belle in the scene of her introduction and to the framing of Belle and her father announcing their future exploitation by the sisters, brother, Avenant, and the creditors.

In a final reinforcement of the contrast and to provide transition from the introduction to the heart of the story, the next scene shows the father setting off for the port to reclaim his wealth. As he leaves, he asks each of his daughters what they would like as a gift. The sisters ask for a monkey and a parrot, none too ironically, and Belle asks for a rose since none grow there. The father rides off to the cackling of the sisters and a great fluttering of handkerchiefs on their part.

Two short scenes announce the financial demise of the family. One shows the brother signing a promissory note for his debts for which his father's furniture will be taken if Ludovic proves insolvent. The other shows the father learning that the creditors at the port took all
his wealth, leaving him beholden to the creditors of the previous two scenes. So, without the money for a room for the night, he is forced to set off across the forest in the dark.

Crossing the forest, the father dismounts before a stand of bushes. In a shot reminiscent of a Méliès set, the bushes part revealing a path leading to a door. The background appears flat and painted, though it proves to be otherwise as the scene unfolds. As the father enters the Beast's domain, the lighting delineates only the central space like that of a proscenium arch, like a Méliès set. Although not consistent throughout the scene, this lighting is repeated at key moments. In keeping with the reference to Méliès, the camera at times remains fixed and backgrounds appear painted and flat.

The flatness which characterizes moments in the scenes at the Beast's domain is typical of the primitive era of cinema. As Burch explains, it is best typified by the work of Méliès. "For Méliès the perceptual flatness of the picture on the screen was the only cinematic 'truth'." Other practices which represent Méliès' belief include the use of a rolling trolley so that movement in depth is not perceived as such, a single shot scale-- the long shot,

20Burch, p. 165.
frontality, and the tableau which eschews Renaissance perspective. All these techniques come to bear during this scene or succeeding ones. Although this is not the exclusive mode of presentation, it is sufficiently infused within discourse as to evoke this era of filmmaking and Méliès' films in particular.

The reason for these references goes back to the aesthetic of childishness. Cocteau seemingly seeks to evoke this era of cinema so as to touch off some collective primitive memory common to those who attended the cinema during the era of primitive cinema. By repeating the aesthetic of Méliès which insists on the flatness of the image, Cocteau recreates the magical aura of Méliès.

Once inside the Beast's castle, candelabras magically light to show the father the way to the great room. Although the camera pans to reveal their lighting, the presentation of the candelabras on a black velvet background and clearly using trick filming methods announces the magical realm resembling Méliès' of days gone by.21

In the great room, the father settles in while faces

21In fact, Cocteau commented upon viewing the rushes of the candelabras, "Reminds me of Méliès, Robert Houdin or Le Sang d'un Poète".(Cocteau, p.159)
imbedded in the mantle observe his every move. The animation of the set, the flat background, and arch-shaped mantle repeat techniques common to Méliès'. When the Beast is heard roaring, a cut to the arm of the chair reveals a beast's face investing the decor with his power and presence.

After resting, the father goes outside to retrieve his horse and leave for home. He calls out to no avail and makes his way back to the barred door from the opening set. A rose, starkly lit, catches his attention. As he plucks it, the Beast steps out seemingly from nowhere, filling the screen. The camera captures the dialogue that ensues in a shot-reverse shot mode typical of modern film. However, the angle approximates that of a child's height, placing the spectator literally where she hopefully placed herself figuratively through the Méliès references. The Beast makes clear that either the father or one of his

22 Noël Burch discusses the infantile fascination with the fragmented body in the primitive cinema. This is particularly relevant in our discussion of the magic film, of which Méliès is the forerunner. Citing Madeline Kleine, Burch suggests it is a manifestation of infantile aggression. Aggression or simply a desire for omniscience, in this case, the Beast's castle seems a storehouse of body parts. Burch, p. 269.

23 Noël Burch underscores the 'crammed' appearance of the primitive tableau where there seems a surfeit of signs rendering the image difficult to read. See the chapter entitled "Passions and Chases", Burch, pp. 143-161.
daughters must return as his prisoner to compensate for the theft of the rose. He offers his magical horse, The Magificent, to lead the father home and his captive back. The horse knows the way by simply uttering, "Va où je vais le Magnifique, va, va, va." The concluding shot of the scene, repeating the opening, has the same bushes magically part so that the Beast can presumably observe the father's departure.

Ending the scene where it began, except for the physical presence of the Beast at the end, separates and closes this highly anticipated portion of the film. By affecting a certain closure on the first scene at the Beast's castle, many things are accomplished. The physiognomy of the Beast, never presented in the Beaumont version, is set off and contained. The spectator is all the more relieved after the tense and frightening scene between the father and the Beast. Thus Cocteau narrativizes the relief of tension of which Freud spoke. It also clearly separates the two domains, placing the burden of realism on the magical object, here the horse. While the horse is less threatening physically, it marks the reality of the father's dilemma. It also opens the way for the abuse of magical powers. Once the secret of the horse's movement is revealed, anyone can use him. And that is how it comes to pass.
The journey home is not depicted. The following scene opens in medias res with the father recounting his adventure before the fireplace. His children and Avenant are gathered around him in another Ver Meer-like family portrait. The primitive aspects of the scene, the lack of Renaissance perspective, the fixed, frontal camera, and the flat background, give way when discussion becomes heated over who should return to the Beast's. Avenant comes to strike one of the sisters in a shot that captures the length of his arm as his hand attains its victim. In the scuffle and the subsequent transport of the distraught father to his room, Belle slips away and rides the Magnificent back to the Beast's castle. The repetition of Méliès-type techniques intimates that the family is still under the Beast's spell. The violence of Avenant's strike at the sister contrasts with the subtlety of the Beast's demeanor and representation. What the Beast achieves is done by threat and by working on the conscience of his victim, not attained by force.

Belle's destination and destiny are prefigured in the only two fixed shots of her hasty departure: First, she clings to a wall whereupon is mounted a teathering ring for horses in the shape of a beast; second, the following shot is through the bars of a gate. These two subtle inclusions make Belle's destiny seem all the more
inevitable. In fact, the camera which captures her departure awaits her as though it is her destiny to take her father's place. It must be granted that this destiny is literally written in advance. Everyone knows the tale and Cocteau plays upon that knowledge to "normalize," to render more credible, his telling of the tale. It is like reading a map and checking the road signs while driving on a superhighway; there's no doubt as to where you are or your destination, but verification is reassuring. Belle's arrival at the Beast's castle is marked by the now standard shot of the parting branches placing it within the iconography of his domain.

Aside from the opening shot through the bushes, Belle's arrival at the Beast's castle differs greatly from her father's. It is comprised almost entirely of trick shots using the camera, as opposed to tricks involving mainly the decor. Belle enters the castle in a slow-motion run which leads her up the stairs to a hall of billowing curtains. The camera is fixed at the far end of the hall while she is pulled on a dolly towards the camera. This technique is reminiscent of Méliès in that he often filmed shots of characters changing size or dimension using the same technique.24 However, the bil-

24Burch, p.165.
lowing curtains belie the flat character of the decor
typical of Méliès. Upon her arrival at the bedroom door,
it speaks to her: "Je suis la porte de votre chambre."
The mirror similarly introduces itself. Whereas fright
set the tone of her father’s arrival, Belle is welcomed by
the castle.

However, the tone turns to fright and the techniques
revert to those of the previous scenes once Belle is
established in her room. After being greeted by the mir­
ror, there is a cut to a close-up of the mirror such that
the frame is barely visible at the edges of the image.
The reflection remains black and then her father’s image
appears beckoning her from his sickbed and then the mirror
shows black again. Shocked, Belle looks left, a cut fol­
lows her gaze to the bed. The fur cover moves towards
her, off the bed. A reverse shot shows Belle jump up and
run out the door. The camera moves to a shot of the front
doors and remains stationary as she passes through the door
and out of the frame down the stairs. The camera is
repositioned at the bottom of the stairs to capture her
descent. It pivots, barely perceptibly, to the right
ahead of her to include the barndoor. The doors open to
reveal the Beast and he steps forward to fill the screen.
A quick cut shows Belle faint and then another cut posi­
tions the camera behind a window. This position behind
the window repeats the earlier angle during the confrontation scene between the Beast and the father. The view is not only partly hidden but the angle approximates that of a child and reflects the fright elicited by the scene. The double depiction of fright through Belle's fainting and the position behind the window reinforce the spectator's and recall the primitive spectator whose invulnerability was not assured.25 The camera remains in that position while the Beast approaches Belle and then lifts her to carry her back to the castle. The camera repeats its strategic positioning in advance of the arrival of the characters and remains stationary until they pass out of the frame as the Beast carries Belle back to her bed. The only variation is a quick pair of shots which call attention to the trick that Belle's costume changes to a beautiful gown as she passes through the door of her room in the Beast's arms. The stationary camera and reference to the primitive voyeur directly evoke the primitive mode of representation; something Cocteau seeks in order to place the spectator in a more child-like receptive state for these keys scenes in the Beast's domain.

25Burch, p. 156.
To return for a moment to Lynn Hoggard’s analysis, recall her comment about the downplay of the oedipal drama by the inclusion of the character of Avenant. Contained in the scene just described is a certain display of sexual fear and a reference to the transfer of affections. Belle precipitously enters the Beast’s domain, registering no explicit fear. It is only at the insert of her father that the magical tone subsides. First we see the father calling out to his daughter, then her eyes shift to the bed whose fur coverlet seems to come towards her. It is during this moment that fear first registers on her face. The possible readings run thus: she realizes that she has made the "ultimate sacrifice" (of her virginity) for her father; she realizes that her father is helpless to protect her from the Beast and his affections; she is actually running fearlessly towards her sexual awakening and suddenly realized it; she has left the protection of her father only to confront the beastly desires of sexuality. Although the addition of a suitor mitigates the oedipal drama, the references to Belle’s sexual awakening are not erased. The fact is that she cannot avoid the sexual nature of her relationship with the Beast. The circularity of this scene underscores their intimate destiny, for the Beast carries her across the threshold and back to her bed.
The scene also intimates at the sexual anxiety of the Beast but casts their union as an epiphanal moment. On the way back to her room, a long shot captures the Beast carrying his bride to be up a flight of stairs. The only source of light comes from a window at the top of the stairs. Their silhouette becomes lost in the light, suggesting the heavenly nature of their union. It also prefigures the final scene of the film when they fly together towards Prince Ardent's kingdom. As well, the transformation of Belle's dress to one that resembles a white wedding gown as the Beast carries Belle across the threshold of her room suggests a marriage. After laying Belle out on her bed, the Beast hovers over her until she revives. The close-ups of the Beast and then Beauty softly lit and from each other's point of view reflect a beauty born of love. As Belle awakens, she gasps, a cut to the Beast shows him backing away from the bed repeating, "il ne faut pas me regarder dans les yeux." Thus the Beast reels, in his turn, at the extreme intimacy and his imminent union with Belle.

After the Beast promises to see her only at seven when Belle dines in the great room, the next scene shows Belle dining. The techniques recall the primitive mode used to depict the father's visit. A fade-in to one of the faces in the mantle as the clock strikes seven opens the scene.
The camera then remains stationary and focused on Belle at the table. Without moving, the camera captures the Beast's entrance and positioning behind Belle's chair as they converse. The first movement of the camera is to take up position approximating a child's height as the Beast moves around to the other side of Belle's chair. The second movement follows Belle's gaze after the Beast, maintaining the low angle. The discussion reveals the Beast's view that Belle is "master" of the house and all she desires will be provided. It also reveals Belle's view of the Beast as a beast who is trying to show the goodness of his soul which is more than most men achieve. Before leaving the Beast explains that he must ask the same question before leaving her each night: "Voulez-vous être ma femme?" She refuses and he regally marches back out through the gate.

This scene repeats the practices established early in the film at the father's visit, namely the fixed camera and the animation of the castle while the visitor remains unaware. The continued integration of techniques such as these, reminiscent of the primitive era of filmmaking, touch upon the collective social memory of the adults viewing the film. Presumably the goal is to help their view approximate that of a child. The low angle approximating a child's point of view is linked in this scene to
Belle's viewpoint, something never done with the father. It reinforces Belle's innocence and purity of heart. As well, the linking of the two points of view provides a reading of the scenes through Belle's response. But most striking, in this scene, is the contrast to Avenant's marriage proposal. There is no violence, fear or aggression. Rather than brute force, the Beast relies on patience and decency.

However, this is not the case with the following scene. Belle is revealed in a nightgown at the head of the stairs, a roar is heard. She appears frightened and returns down the hall, peering around the corner then hiding herself behind a statue by her door. Again the camera makes few changes in position to capture this movement rather allowing Belle to come towards it for key close-ups which reveal her fear. The camera takes up position behind Belle to show the Beast's entrance. He is distracted, looking at his smoking hands as he passes quite close to Belle's hiding place. A close-up reveals Belle's fear, then the camera retakes its previous position behind Belle to show the Beast push open her door and enter her room. When he cannot locate Belle, he goes to the mirror and asks. The mirror reveals Belle coming out from behind the statue and listening at the door. The Beast's paw then passes over the mirror, wiping away the
image. Belle enters and confronts the Beast, asking what he is doing in her room. He stammers and makes up the excuse that he's brought her a present; a cut to his hand on the vanity shows in reverse action pearls forming into a necklace. A reverse shot of Belle moving to the door and standing aside as she asks him to leave is held until he passes through the door. At the end of this scene Belle seems more the figure of a scolding mother, a sense initiated by the positioning of the camera behind her at the Beast's initial approach. There seems in this scene a recognition of the vulnerability of the voyeur, resembling that of the primitive spectator.  

The alternating tempo of violence and gentleness accelerates as each scene in the development of their relationship is shorter than the last. In the next scene, Belle is shown crossing a wooded area and coming to a door. A lapping sound is heard and she places her ear to the door. She pushes it open and a shot from her point of view shows the Beast in long shot lapping water from a

26 Noël Burch explains that the invulnerability of the voyeur could never be reconciled with the co-presence of the object looked at and the observer in the earliest cinema. The spectator seemingly hiding behind the skirts of the Belle provides testimony to that vulnerability, a vulnerability which plays into Cocteau's childlike aesthetics.
pond. The final shot shows Belle close and back away from the door.

The techniques reminiscent of the primitive cinema have given way to a more purely institutional mode of narration. Stationary camera angles capturing scenes in long-shot remain but are now integrated with clear point of view shots. The low angles of a child’s point of view yield to Belle’s point of view as the spectator is insinuated into the discursive techniques. Fear has given way to curiosity and calm. The alternation of violence and gentleness represents the two forces which rule the Beast. However, unlike the depiction of Avenant’s aggression, the camera never takes up the direction of the violence like the arrow shot or slap. The camera remains exterior to the Beast, taking up position in approximation with Belle’s.

As discursive techniques integrate the spectator’s view with Belle’s, so the spectator, like Belle, seems to come to terms with these two forces. In the following scene she recognizes that his beastly nature is distracting him and chooses to overlook it. While walking and conversing like the king and queen of the realm, the Beast becomes distracted by a rustling in the woods. A close-up of his twitching ears is followed by an intercut of a deer cutting through a wooded glen. Another close-up and his
comment "excusez-moi, ce n'est rien" seem to indicate his internal struggle for self-control. Finally he gathers himself and they resume their regal promenade. Again the Beast's step falters. When Belle asks his trouble, he suggests that he is thirsty. Belle offers a drink of water from her hands. A close-up shows him lapping water and looking up at Belle. She admits that though she is not disgusted by his beastliness, she wants to leave. She makes that request explicit in the following scene.

In the only abrupt change of scene while in the Beast's domain, a cut reveals Belle pacing before the mantle as the clock strikes the half hour. A shot of the clock also reveals the Beast's entrance in the reflection of a mirror. Belle quickly drops to her knees and begs to see her father. The Beast admonishes her for begging and asks that she be his wife upon her return, pointing out that her prolonged absence would kill him. They then go for a walk during which the Beast asks if another has proposed to her. She explains that she had refused because she didn't want to leave her father. The Beast then asks his name. At the mention of Avenant's name, the Beast turns and runs off into the forest with no warning or explanation. This moment provides a foreshadowing of the ending, one invented by Cocteau and thus not anticipated by the spectator whereby the characters of the Beast and Avenant combine to become Prince Ardent.
Seeming to continue the alternating pattern of depicting his beastliness and then his efforts at civility, the Beast appears in the next scene at Belle’s bedroom door covered with blood and smoking. The shot through her bedroom door, taken from a low angle so as to emphasize his size and power captures one of the most frightening roars of the film. Confronted by Belle, he hisses at her to close her door as her look burns him. Belle appears less jarred by the roar and grotesque appearance than would be expected. Rather she admonishes the Beast as a mother would a child, tossing her wrap at him and telling him to get cleaned up and go to sleep. Belle’s reaction leads to the conclusion that she has come to terms with the Beast’s character. This scene is provided for another reason; a comparison of the next three scenes reveals their function.

From this scene of beastliness, we turn to another to underscore their similarity. It reveals the usurer coming to take the father’s furniture. He suggests to Ludovic that he explain to his father what is happening and why. Still lacking the courage and decency, Ludovic can only admit what he’s done when asked point blank by his father. So as not to allow the usurer too much decency, a second segment of the scene shows Avenant asking him if he is going to leave the bed for the dying father. The
moneylender replies that he does so as a matter of course. The beastliness of those left behind is clear, they are impervious to the father's suffering.

To establish another parallel between the father's and Belle's suffering, this scene is immediately followed by the Beast at Belle's bedside, asking if she is ill. She explains that she is sickened by her father's suffering and must return to him. The Beast helps her up and takes her to the balcony of her room where he shows to her and explains the magical powers of Diana's pavilion. He gives her the key to his treasures and explains the four other secrets of his powers-- the rose, mirror, horse, and glove. The latter allows Belle to return home. In exchange, she promises to return in one week.

The Beast's trust and generosity are contrasted to the sisters' selfishness in the last scene of this segment of the film. In fact, Belle makes direct reference to their selfishness, something she refused to do in one of the opening scenes when she discussed her sisters' conduct with Avenant. After putting on the magical glove, Belle is transported, by cinematic trickery, to her father's room. Therein she speaks kindly of the Beast and cries in pity for him. Her tears turn to diamonds. Belle offers the diamonds to her father telling him the Beast would want him to have them but not her sisters. This scene
demonstrates that Belle’s appreciation of the Beast has grown.

Through this and Belle’s reaction, the spectator is placed in a more sympathetic position with regard to the Beast. Though the Beast may behave like a beast, he has higher moral standards than the other members of Belle’s family, except the father. This shift in alliance is felt first in Belle’s growing indulgence towards the Beast and then in the clear demonstration of his moral decency. The secrets of the Beast’s power which he shares with Belle come to bear a narrative burden of representing trust, decency, and loyalty, characteristics the other characters are clearly demonstrated to lack. Thus, in addition to rendering more credible the passage between realms, these manifestations of the Beast’s powers take on a moral weight important to representing the depth of the transgression Avenant will commit at the end of the film.

The paralleling of scenes based on their moral content remains the prominent narrative technique throughout the rest of the film. The moralizing landscape to which Lynn Hoggard refered gives way to a character-based moralizing more in keeping with the traditional narration of the fairy tale.27 As Belle is visually aligned with a puerile

innocence, her presence serves to represent childlike innocence and purity. Her reaction helps read the Beast’s internal struggle for goodness. The remaining portion of the film by juxtaposing scenes allows a reading of each character as a representation of a certain moral epithet.

In stark contrast to Belle’s finery and the tears of diamonds, the following scene opens with Ludovic fetching water from a stream and then descending, in long-shot, an alley between sheets hung to dry in the wind. The theatricality of this moral reversal is underscored by the theatre-like setting created by the sheets. A return to the quick cuts typical of scenes of Belle’s family matches the sisters’ shrill voices as they complain of their new life of household chores. Avenant, too, is present, shirtless and masculine as he is captured by the camera chopping wood through the screen of linens. He and Ludovic appear to accept their fate to labor and responsibility to care for the father in order to continue their lifestyle, whereas the sisters protest vigorously. To underscore their ridiculousness, the scene ends as Belle approaches with her father and the toilers pop their heads over the sheet appearing more like puppets than people.

A short scene of magic contrasts the sisters’ lack of moral fiber to their father’s and Belle’s. Admiring
Belle’s necklace, one of the sisters reaches out to accept it from Belle as a gift. The following close-up of the necklace shows it charred in the sister’s hand. As the father picks it up and pins it back on Belle it is restored. In the father’s words ring a comparison to his gift of the diamonds: "ce que la Bête t’offre est à toi." The sisters do not merit such a gift whereas Belle and her father do.

The next two scenes offer more review of the plot and especially the circumstances of Belle’s confinement in the Beast’s home. As though to place them as an aside, the scene opens literally when Avenant lifts back a sheet like the curtain of a theatre and returns it at the end of the scene. The second scene seemingly takes place in the theatre’s wings, in a lean-to off the barn. A surfeit of details repeat and reaffirm each character’s character and the conditions of Belle’s return. Both lend a simplicity to the story and prepare the final segment of the film at the Beast’s castle.

Avoiding the temptation to recite each scene, I will review certain ones that seem to touch upon a collective cultural memory of sorts. One particular scene which interrupts Belle’s recitation shows the two sisters alone in the house. One sister suggests that the Church would be mighty interested in the sorcery of the transformation
of the necklace. To underscore the reference to the
Inquisition, a second short scene between the two sisters
bears remarkable resemblance to a Spanish portrait of the
same era.28 The sisters are also the characters
responsible for the incursion into the Beast's realm; it
is they who prepare the way.

Motivated by greed, the sisters undertake to steal the
various keys necessary to rob the Beast, and thereby
Belle, of the treasures. They also enlist Belle to betray
the Beast by playing upon her decency to dupe her. In the
following scene, they rub their eyes with onions and tear­
fully beg Belle to stay longer. This distraction provides
the opportunity to steal the key to Diana's Pavilion.
Later they are shown egging on Ludovic and Avenant to
steal the Magnificent in order to get to the Beast's realm
and delay Belle's departure.

The moral struggle within Avenant is simpler than the
Beast's and is summed up in a simple scene between him and
Belle. Chased from the house by her sisters' cruelty,
Belle falls prey to the waiting Avenant. The scene is

28Cocteau makes explicit the reference in his
diary of the film. "A perfect Spanish portrait as
violent as a caricature. The actress's little doll­
like head was framed under the cone of a high wig, tied
with red ribbons, set with diamonds and boned, coned,
waved, curled and furled till it stood like a fantastic
submarine plant." Cocteau, p. 98.
visually and verbally dominated by Avenant. He stands behind Belle in the moonlight, lighted such as to underscore his physical beauty and strength. The camera dolly's in to capture his heartfelt outpouring in close-up. Clearly still aggressive but motivated by love rather than pure greed, Avenant asks for the Beast's secrets so that he may go and kill the Beast in order to set her free. He imagines that the Beast has charmed her, implying a spell that keeps her from doing the Beast harm. Still selfish, Avenant admits he can not imagine that the Beast suffers as he does since he does not come to fetch Belle. As the speech progresses the camera cuts to Belle's face which is obscured by darkness. As she raises her face to what little light illuminates the scene, the torture his words impose shows clearly on her face. Expressing the ineffable of conflicting loyalty and love, she runs from the scene.

Avenant's aggression is juxtaposed to a certain femininity on the Beast's part. Although a hunter and killer of helpless deer, as is shown in an earlier scene, the Beast clearly struggles with his aggression whereas Avenant accepts and exploits his, as shown in the last scene. A fade-in from Belle's face expressing the unexpressible to the Beast, equally tortured and non-verbal, provides an introduction to the comparison. The
Beast stands against the same piece of furniture from which Belle departed at the start of this segment. Although located in Belle’s room, the piece looks strikingly like an altar, right down to the candlesticks that stand at either end. The Beast paces, looking downhearted and lost. Whether it is just that there are so few scenes of men waiting for women or that his gestures are particularly effeminate, the Beast’s movements reflect a certain femininity. As he paces, his hand lingers over pieces of furniture Belle once touched. His movements are slow and graceful. Once he crosses to Belle’s bed, he looks down at where she has lain. Slowly he grasps at the fur bedcover, the same one that came towards Belle in her first moments in her room, he pulls the bedcover to his face and brushes it against his cheek. Finally he clutches it to his breast, curling his wrists to nestle it firmly against him. The deep-felt religiosity of the moment is deliberately underscored by the centering on the altar. Equating Belle’s and the Beast’s hearts, the circularity of opening and closing of this segment with a scene at the altar is not lost.

As if the contrast needed further emphasis, this scene ends with a cut to the two sisters who are sending off Avenant and Ludovic to the Beast’s domain. At the timely arrival of the Magnificent, the sisters are gathering bows
and arrows to arm the two interlopers and reviewing the magic words which make the Magnificent go. Inside a pouch on the saddle, they discover the magic mirror. Astutely one sister interprets its function: "C'est pour dire: regarder la laide figure d'une jeune fille qui manque à ses promesses. Tu vois, il n'est pas aussi bête que ça."

After sending the men off to fight the Beast, the sisters take the magic mirror inside, looking into it, for one it shows a monkey, for the other an old, wizened hag. Disgusted, they deliver the mirror to Belle who is dressing for her return to the Beast.

With this transition, the film moves quickly but smoothly to its ending. As if to anticipate their final union, the final segment of the film opens with Belle taking the mirror and placing it such that she can lie down on the bed and look into it. After reflecting her tortured face, the mirror shows the Beast weakly calling her name. In a gesture that repeats the Beast's when he was caught, ashamed, in Belle's room after a hunt, Belle reaches out and seems to wipe away the vision. She hastens to put on the glove and be transported back to her bed at the Beast's. In an odd interlude, Belle realizes she's forgotten the key to Diana's Pavilion, returns for it only to find it gone, and again returns to the Beast's. In a reverse of the scene of her arrival, Belle jumps from
the bed and crosses the castle and its grounds searching for the Beast, calling out to him. She finds him dying by the pond where she once spied him drinking. She throws herself over his body despite the hissing swans which seem to protect him. Working quickly, desperately, she slips the glove on him and admits that she is the monster. Resuming the pattern of moral contrast, at these words, the camera cuts to Avenant and Ludovic at the foot of the Pavilion of Diana.

In keeping with the stationary camera typical of the Beast’s domain, four camera positions capture the scene up to the break-in to Diana’s Pavilion. At the first look at the treasure and the statue of Diana, there is a cut to the Beast dying and Belle begging him to try to live. From the close-up of the Beast’s dying face, the camera cuts to a shot of Avenant and Ludovic breaking the glass roof of the pavilion from the statue’s point of view. A reverse shot shows Ludovic’s view as he lowers Avenant into the pavilion. A cut back to the statue’s point of view reveals her turning and pulling back the bow to fire an arrow at Avenant. Unlike the opening arrow shot, this time the camera angle does not repeat that of the shooter, which gives the spectator a representation of the full force of the aggression as before. A cut to a medium shot of Avenant’s back as he is lowered into the pavilion
anticipates the arrow striking his back. Shock registers on Ludovic’s face, then a close-up, using a time-lapse technique, depicts Avenant’s transformation into the Beast. A cut to the Beast’s claws in Ludovic’s hands and their subsequent release precedes the final shot of the Beast crumpled on the floor of the pavilion. To further exploit the parallel editing technique, Ludovic’s shock gives way to Belle’s.

Belle gasps and backs away from the camera, asking "où est la Bête"? A reverse-motion shot shows Prince Ardent rising from the ground where the Beast previously laid. He graciously bows and explains that he was transformed into a beast as punishment because his parents didn’t believe in fairies, a spell only broken by a loving look. By way of further explanation, he provides the moral of the story—love can make man a beast and an ugly man become a beautiful man. This explains his resemblance to Avenant. Hesitant, Belle comes to embrace the Prince and the fly up and away to his kingdom where, he tells her, she will find her father and her sisters will wait on her. His final question asks if she’ll be afraid, to which she responds that she likes to be afraid with him.

The final reference to fear recalls the earlier intimations at their final union. Belle accepts the union by admitting the fearful nature of a sexual liaison but
also her reassurance that she will enjoy it. The transfer of affections from father to lover is completed in the final words of the film. Rendering explicit Belle's and the Beast's apprehension at their union throughout the film evokes Freud's observations about incredulous reserve. Whereas his statements were made about storytelling as a way to overcome that reserve, they shed light on this curious inclusion of direct references to their union in the Cocteau film. Recall that a daydreamer could not reveal his fantasies without evoking displeasure whereas a 'man' of literary talent yields pleasure when doing so. Certainly sexual union remains a source of apprehension common to all. Depiction of that apprehension and its final resolution would result in the same release of tension as the literary expression of other anxieties overcome.

Freud admits that he doesn't understand how artists achieve a release of tension whereas a daydreamer provokes tension. However, he intimates at the answer stating "perhaps much that brings about this [release of tension] consists in the writer putting us into a position in which we can enjoy our own daydreams without reproach or shame."29 The statement about enjoying our own daydreams

seems a direct reference to our common memory, as Cocteau terms it. Cocteau not only draws upon our "racial treasure-house of myths, legends and fairy tales" but common experiences such as the primitive cinema.

By tapping our memory of common primitive practices, Cocteau touches a chord in our childhood. The primitive cinema has a double link to the child in us. The first link is that the original spectator of La Belle et la Bête, like its director, was a child during the primitive era, thus Cocteau is drawing directly on childhood memories. The sources of the primitive cinema are linked to its earliest projection sites, especially the theatres which normally showed magic shows. It is from Méliès' magic films that Cocteau seems to draw the bulk of his techniques in evoking the primitive era. Secondly therefore, Cocteau evokes the primal fantasies of us all—the fragmentation of the body, the primal sense of vulnerability of the spectator.

By equating the spectator's point of view with Belle's in the scenes within the Beast's domain, Cocteau reenacts the copresense of voyeur and the scene observed, as it was originally depicted in voyeur films of the primitive

30Burch, p. 73.
era. The animation of the decor with various body parts, such as the faces in the mantle and the arms holding candelabras, recalls the infantile fantasy of the fragmentation of the body. Whether this is to evoke the latent aggression or threat which the Beast poses as a potential suitor to Belle or simply a manifestation of the anxiety evoked by Beast’s loss of his human form and thus the child’s potential consumption by the castle as an extension of the Beast matters little. Both possibilities contribute to anxieties evoked otherwise in the film.

While primitive practices are evoked in the Beast’s domain, overall the institutional mode of representation predominates. The integration of other primitive practices, the frontal fixity of the camera, the visual flatness and crammed appearance of the decor, the "coming to life" of paintings, and explicit use of trick shots, serves a variety of functions. The fixity of the camera serves to create a sense of destiny, of inevitability. Underscoring this is the concretization of the means of passage between the two realms. Rendering the magic of the Beast’s powers concrete eliminates the need for certain explanations for the reasons or possibility of the passage and makes those powers seem more real. The

31Burch, p. 156.
crammed appearance of the decor plays into this in that the Beast's arsenal seems limitless. It also forces the characters to perform a reading of the decor through their reaction to particular aspects of it. Laying the weight of interpretation on the characters allows the later shift to a more traditional use of characters to bear the weight of the story. The father and Belle seem attuned to the Beast's domain because of their particular characteristics of decency, goodness, loyalty, etc. Thus they are free, upon their return to the realm of the real, to explain and interpret the other characters.

The flatness of the decor, like the crammed appearance of the decor, plays into the sense of destiny in that any object seemingly can come to life, that the answer is already there in a latent form waiting to erupt or be called to action by the Beast. In fact the Beast's initial appearance to the father and Belle seems an eruption from the decor. So too does the Pavilion of Diana which comes to life at the end of the film to punish Avenant for his intrusion. Added to this list are the rose and the mirror, both of which seem to emerge from the crammed decor to take on powers for the Beast and for others who choose to use them. This, like the paintings which come to life, draw on one of the first pleasures of cinema, motion.
Objects and paintings coming to life exploit a childish pleasure. They evoke the fantasy that all is living and animate. The pleasure comes from the thought that one can simply look at a picture or object and bring it to life. This is one of the pleasures of Méliès' magic films. It is also exploited in the early films that bring picture postcards to life.

Thus, although not the prominent mode of narration, the primitive techniques integrated into Cocteau's discursive arsenal serve his aesthetic goals. Primitive references tap a common memory which evokes the child in each of us. By reenacting practices from that common memory Cocteau more easily overcomes adults' incredulous reserve. He achieves the release of tension which "consists in putting us into a position in which we can enjoy our own daydreams without reproach or shame," as Freud describes artistic pleasure.
Cocteau considered *Les Parents terribles* his best film.¹ With little change from the play, Cocteau places his play by the same name on screen. André Bazin makes an example of this film in *What is Cinema?* to prove that cinema can adapt plays without compromising the film

medium, as Cocteau demonstrates, by exploiting its particular resources.²

Bazin begins by retracing the history of filmed theatre. He starts at the very beginning of cinema with Méliès who saw cinema as an opportunity to further the "evolution of conjuring" (78). He passes next to the music-hall comic, another character from the earliest period in filmmaking. Pointing out that "the economics of a gag are governed by the distance between the stage and the audience and above all by the length of the laughs which spur the actor to protract his effect to the point of its extinction," he concludes that the stage forced the comic to exaggerate (78). The screen allowed "Charlie [Chaplin] to attain mathematical perfection of situation and gesture whereby the maximum effect is obtained in the minimum of time" (79). It gave new life to the dying art of slapstick. Cinema removed the restriction of time and space imposed on the stage.

Bazin's point is that filmed theatre did not begin with sound but with drama. Recognition of what comprises drama becomes the key to adaptation and is inextricably

²André Bazin, What is Cinema? trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1967), Vol. 1, p. 87. See chapter entitled Theater and Cinema, pp. 76-94. All further references to this work will be given in the text. It should be explained that my copy of this work is in English due to availability.
tied up with the medium in which it occurs. Thus the choice comes to this: "The film is either the photographed play, text and all, in which case we have our famous 'filmed theatre'. Or the play is adapted to the requirements of the cinema and we are back with the composite... and it is a question of a new work" (83). Filmed theatre, used in this context, is clearly a derogatory term. Successful adaptation of a play recognizes and exploits the theatrical nature of the text adapted, creating "a dialectic between cinematic realism and theatrical convention" (87). Bazin cites Olivier's Henry V and Cocteau's Les Parents terribles as examples whereby the cinema intensified, rather than multiplied the theatrical, bringing to light details the stage left untreated (87-91).

Cocteau's success in Les Parents terribles, according to Bazin, is three-fold. It rests on its respect for decor, characters and the spectator as they work in the original play version. "The respect of the camera for the stage setting, its concern being only to increase the effectiveness of the settings and never to attempt to interfere with their relation to the characters of the play" (90). Thanks to its mobility, "it is the camera that is responsible for the real unity of time and place" (91). Editing is resolved by a recognition that "the camera is, at last, a spectator and nothing else. The
drama is once more a spectacle. It was indeed Cocteau who said that cinema is an event seen through a keyhole" (92). The sensation of looking through a keyhole is precisely the one evoked when watching this film.

The film penetrates a family drama based on its idiosyncratic relationships. The plot is driven by the closed nature of this family. What strikes the spectator immediately upon viewing this film is the sense that she is invading a private world: as Cocteau puts it, "mettre mon oeil au trou de serrure."³ He goes on to say that he wouldn’t allow his film to be changed as actors do costumes. Instead of displaying the work, as he will in Aigle à deux têtes, "je la ramasse, je la concentre et je coupe les innombrables 'traditions' des artistes..."⁴ These statements betray a tension between cinema and theatre. One wonders what is specifically cinematographic in the film, Les Parents terribles, and, furthermore, how Cocteau achieves that in a work that is considered quite theatrical.⁵ The first shot of the film provides the source of that answer.

³Cocteau, p. 56.
⁴Cocteau, p. 55.
⁵See the previous discussion cited by Bazin or Roger Lannnes’ comment that Parents is Cocteau’s theatrical chef-d’oeuvre. Cited in René Gilson, Jean Cocteau (Paris: Cinéma d’aujourd’hui, 1964), p. 53.
Les Parents terribles opens on a shot of a pair of eyes looking out of a scuba diving mask; the mask and eyes fill the screen in a tight close-up. It is a jarring shot, breaking traditional cinematic narrative codes. Yet such an opening shot is not unheard of in the cinematic tradition, one simply must travel back to the earliest films to find an example. Therein one will find many examples. In fact, Elena Dagrada argues that for a spectator of the earliest films such a shot is extremely familiar. Since the first spectators viewed films through the mechanism of a peepshow, mutoscope, kinetoscope, or whatever format or name it was known by, a mediating mechanism, such an opening shot attests to its commonality.

Grandma’s Reading Glass, made by Smith in 1900, opens with an eye looking out of a circular matte. As many as half of the films of the era 1900-1907 may contain mattes indicating point of view. In fact, the opening shot of the eye was initially sold as a separate film, Corner of an Eye. Dagrada goes on to show that the films of the 1900-07 era are the first attempts at narrativizing these point of view shots by providing a second shot of a person.

handling an optical instrument, a telescope or magnifying glass, for example. To narrativize the shot, a diegetic spectator is designated, a character within the film who looks. Thus, a shot of an object in close-up so as to reveal its movement, probably considered normal from the very outset of cinematic expression, comes to be given an anchor within the film in the form of a character. This provides a rather different view from what modern "common sense" might yield.

Today’s filmgoer rather easily recognizes a point of view shot, even when it opens a film and therefore seems unanchored initially within the diegesis. One would assume that the character predated the point of view shot, in a logic that asserts the concrete before the abstract. However, not only is this not the case, but it leads one to wonder about the evolution of point of view in the 1946 film, Les Parent terribles. By the 1930’s, a code similar to that which modern viewers take for granted was in place. Yet with this opening shot and practices Cocteau exercises throughout the film, he clearly goes against cinematic tradition. His references to the pre-narrative era of 1900-07 which began to narrativize point of view are deliberate and put the spectator’s position within the film into question.

The shot, with or without matte, that reveals an object in motion reflects the basic pleasure of cinema,
recording movement for movement's sake.7 The implications of such a shot afford an understanding of the jarring cinematic techniques which recount the story of Les Parents terribles. The opening close-up and later extremely tight framing of characters which typifies this film make the modern spectator uncomfortable precisely because such shots break the realistic narrative illusion. They recall what Tom Gunning calls "the cinema of attraction" whereby "an attraction aggressively subjected the spectator to 'sensual or psychological impact'".8 This forceful impact is exactly what Cocteau sought for his film.9

In adapting the play for the screen, allusions to the theatre reveal the importance of that heritage. The cinema of attractions dates to the period when films were part of vaudeville, their primary place of exhibition.10

7Although many have remarked upon this fact, in the context of the present discussion Elena Dagrada underlines the point. Dagrada, p. 21, especially.

8Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction" Wide Angle 8, no 3/4, pp. 63-70. The term itself was originally coined by Eisenstein, thus explaining the second set of quotation marks.

9On page 45, Cocteau calls Parents "plus audacieux que Sang". On page 55, he explains that he wanted his players to keep the gross theatrical gestures of the stage rather than the modified play required of film actors, even if they risked blocking the camera.

10Gunning, p. 66.
The vaudeville spectator contrasts with the "stupid voyeur" of the traditional theatre who remains "static." The "exhibitionist confrontation rather than diegetic absorption" which characterizes the earliest cinema corresponds to vaudeville techniques of many unrelated acts filled with direct address. In fact, there are explicit references to vaudeville in the film, Les Parents terribles.

Another practice related to the early period of filmmaking is the reaction shot: A further step in narrativizing the shot of the object looked at by providing not only a diegetic character who looks but a reaction shot whereby the character acts out, or responds to, the object looked at. While this reaction shot is redundant according to modern codes of narrative, its redundancy emphasizes its importance. That step whereby the character within the film responds to the exact same image viewed by the spectator reinforces their link to the image. While Cocteau does not use a reaction shot in the same sense of the


12Gunning, p. 66.

13I am indebted to Elena Dagrada’s article "Un regard indiscret - le plan subjectif aux premiers temps du cinéma". This argument is a paraphrase of page 23 in particular.
term, *Les Parents terribles* is recounted to a great extent through the reaction shot. This is another way in which he maintains a sense of the cinema of attraction.

Let us turn back to the film for specific instances which illustrate Cocteau’s effort at exploiting techniques similar to those of the earliest cinema, of the cinema of attraction, to jar the spectator from her cosy, safe position as "stupid voyeur." By forcing the spectator out of the role of passive observer, she is made aware that she is viewing a story. Certain practices adapted from early cinema emphasize spectacle over narrative.

One of these practices is the peculiar use made of reaction shots in *Les Parents terribles*. During a conversation, the codes of a well-made film call for a shot reverse-shot presentation of each character in turn as they speak. Cocteau, in instances of conversation, uses the reaction shot whereby one character’s voice is heard from off-screen while the other character of the conversation is revealed receiving the information in tight close-up. This technique is exploited to such an extent that Cocteau ends up using the shot reverse-shot in reverse. As a result, he is always presenting the recipient of dialogue in a back and forth rhythm keeping the speaker out of sight.

Without an overview of the plot, specific examples of Cocteau’s different cinematic techniques quickly lose
their impact. The plot, in fact, is quite simple and based entirely on characters and their interplay. A father, mother, her maiden sister and the couple’s son live in a small, poorly lit apartment from which they rarely venture. The mother’s affection for the son is stifling; Yvonne, or Sophie as she is called by her son, has long since forgotten her husband, Georges. Georges is a backyard inventor who was once engaged to his wife’s sister, Léonie. "Léo," as she is affectionately called, is the slighted lover who long ago sacrificed her own happiness for her sister’s.

The conflict comes when the son, Michel or Mik, doesn’t return one night to the "caravan," as they lovingly refer to their home. The mother, so blinded by her affection, won’t even admit to realizing her son’s absence. The sister must explain to her that he’s probably found a woman. Come to find out, the woman is the same one the father took on as a mistress and to whom he lent money borrowed from the maiden sister. The father, prompted by Léo, forces the girlfriend to disappoint Mik by saying that there is a third lover whom she feels obliged to marry. Regretting the cruel effect the news has on the son, the sister, father and finally mother come to agree they must put things right to end the son’s suffering. They choose to lie again to cover the first lie.
During the reunion scene, the mother slips off and commits suicide, making an even bigger scene as she comes to regret her mistake.

The themes which emerge from this plot coincide with the cinematic practice of drawing on primitive film techniques which emphasize spectacle over narrative. The jarring of the spectator through the initial shot of the eyes looking out of the scuba mask sets up the thematic of peering in on a forbidden scene (recall Cocteau’s comment of putting his eye to the keyhole to make the film). The very tight shots which characterize this film reinforce the sense of intruding on a private scene. The plot plays upon the closed nature of the family for its conflict and resolution.

Two other scenes from the beginning of the film reinforce this sense of intruding. The first comes shortly after the opening shot of the father in the mask when he goes to his wife’s room and finds her near diabetic shock. The discovery scene is shot from a perspective approximating a ceiling light fixture. The dizzying height of the camera draws attention to the spectacle of the mother’s suffering, the spectacle she seeks to create. A standard angle of the scene frames the characters so tightly that there seems to be no room in the scene for a spectator. This sensation is reinforced by the position-
ing of the camera beyond the realm of human possibility in the previous shot.

Moving the mother to her bed, the scene of the father, mother, and Léo is also shot from such a close position that the father and Léo frame the shot with the mother’s filling the center of the screen. The two-shots of the conversation which ensues are taken from so close that a point of relief is required. On the mantle is a bust of a fashionable woman. The camera comes to rest on that bust while the conversation goes on around it. The distance from the statue and the fact it remains stationary while characters buzz in and out of the frame provides a visual and psychological relief for the spectator. One wishes to be that static, removed object rather than a bystander caught up in action, always seemingly in the way of the action, action which one seems to have no business viewing. Thus the private nature of the drama, its dramatic overplay, especially by the mother, and the extreme camera angles create an acute sense of intrusion on the part of the spectator, of witnessing a spectacle that is none of our business. The statue, by contrast, establishes a relief from that awkward position.

Another cinematic practice which reinforces the specularity of the early scenes is the reaction shot. The scene immediately following the previous one sheds light
on the effect of such a technique. While the sister reveals that Mik has undoubtably spent the night at a woman’s house, a transition in technique is effected. The revelation is depicted in tight two-shots, so tight that all that is revealed are the cheek or mouth of the speaker in a frame otherwise filled with the face of the other. Again the camera pans to the statue to provide relief. To keep the characters tightly filling the frame, the camera slowly pivots after them. The circling of the camera adds to the dizzy sensation of the overly close shots.

Finally the claustrophobic sense is alleviated as the camera captures the reaction to the news of Mik’s "infidelity." The camera, rather than film the conversation between the two sisters in a typical shot reverse-shot format, remains stationary, relatively speaking, on the two siters. The mother’s reaction is captured from the front while the sister speaks from an obtuse angle that reveals only her cheek. The sense of respite is eclipsed by the feeling of being excluded from half of the conversation. The speaker is not revealed. Instead, only the one who receives the words is shown, creating another sort of spectacle. The reaction shots seem a study in how much and simply how the news is received. The mother’s suffering, real and not self-inflicted this time, becomes the unerring source of vision. Again the spectator is intruder.
Mik's confession, which builds upon the previous scene with little respite, draws together practices of the reaction shot and the peering shot, if I may turn the phrase. The peering shot looks upon a scene from an extreme angle or framing such that the spectator has no sense of anchor, of where she might fit physically so as to be able to observe what the camera is showing. In fact, there is an acting out of this lack of space when, before beginning to tell his mother the truth, Mik goes to the bedroom door and jerks it open. Léo falls into the room from her eavesdropping position on the other side of the door. Thus, those caught eavesdropping are too made a spectacle of, rendering the position of spectator all the more uncomfortable. There is no room for eavesdroppers within the scene as there is no room for spectators.

This sense of intrusion plays upon another aspect of the primitive spectator. Noël Burch points out in his history of the primitive narration that the invulnerability of the spectator was not assured by primitive film practices. Rather, before the institutionalization of the shot-reverse shot pattern, the copresence of the voyeur and the object viewed was standard. The primitive voyeur was always present within the diegesis and
thus plausibly could always be caught looking.14 This is the sense created by Cocteau in reenacting this primitive practice.

The confession scene begins with an extremely tight two-shot of mother and son from which the camera finally backs enough to make it a standard close-up. Next, the shot-reverse shot technique is used but based upon reaction rather than speech, as was described previously. At the height of the avowal, the segment begins with another extreme close-up of mother and son cheek to cheek. The son then shifts position so that his chin rests on her head and the frame includes only his mouth confessing and her eyes reacting. This final shot epitomizes earlier practices of both the reaction and the "peering" shots.

These scenes which culminate in Mik's admission of "betrayal" make a spectacle of the family and members' relationships. In fact, to this point, all seems to be in service to the mother who stages her own, uncomfortable dramas. Although the spectator has the sensation of having no place in the drama, of being an intruder, it is rather the mother who loses her place. Visually the mother progressively becomes eclipsed in these scenes as

the psychological claustrophobia becomes too great. The last shot described literally eclipses the mother, the son rising above her. Ultimately, the film is, in a way, about the eclipse of the mother in a more real sense as her love is blotted out by the lover's, Madeleine's. That is the story that begins to be told after the confession scene. Until this point, the film has largely been exposition, spectacle that demonstrates the terms of the relationships, rather that narration which tells a story.

The short transitionary scene which introduces Mik's confession clearly lays out another important aspect of the film. While the family talks of Mik's whereabouts, the camera reveals him entering the room. Quick turns of the camera capture various tight shots of the family, father, mother and son. Finally the camera comes to rest on the four of them. Speaking of Mik's whereabouts and his sudden appearance, the swirlying camera and then the tight steady group portrait summarize a series of interconnecting terms into the opposition, order/disorder.

The opposition of order/disorder can be teased out to reveal three different thematics related to this original opposition. The discussion of Mik's whereabouts while he arrives in the background of the deep-focus shot raises the theme of coincidence and chance. Coincidence is important to explaining away certain absurdities of the
plot such as the fact the father and son share the same lover. When this fact comes to light in the following scene, the term "vaudeville" is used by the characters to understand the coincidence. The reference to vaudeville there and at other moments underlines the spectacular, the cinema of attractions.

The opposition is important to the identity of the various characters as they are placed along the continuum of order/disorder. Beginning with the scene where Léo forces her sister to recognize the reason for Mik's absence, the contrast between these two characters is subtly introduced. It comes to be a joke between Mik and Madeleine, as he is very sloppy and she neat. This opposition between characters comes to represent a moral characteristic whereby the neat can adapt to difference and change, or disorder, whereas the sloven cannot. Pushed further by the need to accept change is the bourgeois moral sense of the order of things, of the need to set things right. Ultimately the slovenly are eclipsed by the neat. This is in large part the struggle of the film, the struggle of order and disorder, of narrative and spectacle.

Léo comes to act as a sort of "bonimenteuse" for the
vaudeville that takes place on screen.\textsuperscript{15} It is she who is responsible for weaving meaning from the seemingly disparate acts. In addition to helping characters understand or realize what is happening, such as the mother comprehending Mik's absence, it is Léo who untangles the web of coincidences and makes them into a narrative. When the father comes to explain to Léo that he and Mik share the same lover, Madeleine, it is Léo who takes it upon herself to set things right. This creates another tension between narration and spectacle, for at each reference to these absurd coincidences the term vaudeville is raised, calling attention to the spectacular nature of the event. The spectacular comes to be overwritten by Léo's efforts at narrativizing the coincidental events.

Visually, it is during the scenes of Léo's "choreography" that the spectator is given the slightest space from which to observe. During the father's confession of sharing the same lover, although shot in a tight two-shot, there is a third object which alleviates the sense of being an unwelcome eavesdropper. The two charac-

\textsuperscript{15}The bonimenteur is the announcer at vaudeville shows, a master of ceremonies who links the acts, introduces them and narrates the episodes of the silent films projected between acts. I have come to glean the sense of bonimenteur from its use by Philippe in his analysis of \textit{Le Sang d'un poète} and from the dictionary definition as charlatan.
ters are separated by a lamp. As well, the angle of the camera is quite low, so that rather than be intimidated or dizzied by the angle from which the characters are depicted, the camera looks up at them. The confession moves to the kitchen. Therein, the camera remains almost entirely stationary throughout the scene such that the characters have just enough room in the frame to move about without leaving the shot. Granted there is little excess room, but again the spectator is given a sense of some space.

At Madeleine’s house, during the great scene of confrontation, the spectator is again given room, space within the frame from which to observe. The rooms are well lit, unlike those at the "caravan", or apartment. Everything is put away; there is no sense of clutter. Characters are revealed in plan américain, from the knees up rather than tightly framed in close-up or extreme close-up.

Prior to the scene at Madeleine’s, Léo must get each of the characters to agree to go to Madeleine’s apartment. There are three short scenes which lead up to this agreement. The first provides contrast to the conversation between Léo and Georges. From a position directly above, it reveals the mother, "Yvonne", and Mik stretched out on the bed in such a way that they initially appear as
lovers intertwined. There are several cuts between the sister and father and the mother and son, both couples are shown to be rather intimate, though none to the extent of the initial bedroom scene. The camera then anticipates Léo leaving the kitchen to meet the mother as she emerges from Mik's room to tell his story. The sisters are shot in tight two-shot whereby the father is represented only as a pair of hands on the mother's shoulders, returning us to the uncomfortable technique which has characterized the film thus far. The final scene shows a lessening of the claustrophobic camera angles as the father and mother walk arm and arm back to Mik's room where the four characters agree to go to Madeleine's. The framing of the conversation provides enough room so that the slovenly nature of the surroundings reveal the similarity of mother and son. These scenes which lead to the "caravan" agreeing to go to Madeleine's alleviate the tension of the tight shots which have characterized the house thus far. As Léo taunts, teases and reasons them into accepting the confrontation (the dictionary definition of 'bonimenteur'), so the framing of shots reveals a shift in dominance to a more traditional framing of scenes.

As Léo comes to the role of bonimenteur, so the film is provided a narrator, a person who explains and arranges the parts of the story in an orderly fashion. The emo-
tional reactions of mother, son and even father give way to less flamboyant gestures and thus a less spectacular demonstration. However, this is hardly the end of the story, there remains meeting Madeleine, the confrontation of Madeleine and the father, the resolution of that conflict and the mother's suicide. Thus anticipation and suspense abound.

There is in fact a sort of acting out of this transition to narration and Léo's role in it. Arriving at Madeleine's apartment before the parents, Léo sets about the choreography of the confrontation between Madeleine and the father. As Léo has come to convince the father, he must dictate to Madeleine her role in avowing a third lover. To do so, they must have an isolated place to speak or Mik will hear the ruse and remain incredulous. Thus after scripting the scene, Léo comes to Madeleine's to find the staging and props necessary to enact her narrative. It cannot be a spectacle, for neither the mother nor son must learn the truth. To her luck, Léo finds a garret workroom where she can sequester mother and son while her scene takes place.

There is nothing unusual about the way that this little scene takes place. What is remarkable is the fact that it is shot according to the codes of a well made film. Unlike the rest of the film which takes place
inside the "caravan" using the techniques discussed to this point, this segment presents a seamless narrative, shot in a well lit location, with little to no arrest in the narrative flow. Even the climax, when Madeleine faints upon disclosing to Mik the "third" lover, is relatively undramatic and in no way slows the narrative progress of the film.

Remorseful at the effect of the false confession, the Aunt remains behind at Madeleine’s to arrange another meeting, this time at the family’s appartment. No further disclosure of her plan is provided. That must wait until it is played out before the camera, ensuring suspense. Upon returning to the appartment, the aunt comes to avow her love for the father and that she has arranged another meeting with Madeleine to set things right. The father in turn admits to the mother that there is no third lover, but that he is an invention and therefore they must set things right. The framing of these scenes affects a transition between previous practices and those introduced during the scene at Madeleine’s.

Initially upon entering the father’s room for Léo’s confession, the framing is relatively standard for a well made film. However, as the discussion heats up, the framing tightens. The more open shots reveal a certain amount of clutter which reinserts us in the mode typical of the
apartment and the opposition order/disorder. Previous practices of tight framing and the use of the reaction shot are entirely restored during the father’s confession to the mother of the hoax of the third lover. In fact, his confession is shot entirely from behind in a three-shot which reveals only the Aunt and Mother. The use of the reaction shot in this way facilitates the return to the mother’s room where all the previous techniques are reinlisted.

A contrast is created in the final scene of the film. On the one hand, the reunion of Mik and Madeleine takes place in Léo’s room and, on the other, is the mother’s suicide in her own room. Both are staged, both create a spectacle. However, how they are choreographed reflects the character who created the scene. The outcome is also determined by their position on the continuum of order/disorder. How they are filmed follows the prece­dents of the film as well.

Léo’s reunion scene is all prearranged, and though founded on another lie, falls into the camp of the "order of things." That is, according to morality, it sets things right. The spectacle is simple: Madeleine stands before the mantle as Mik enters the room. At his first glimpse of her, he faints to the floor. The camera remains stationary, in deep focus to capture Mik from the
knees up as he passes through the door and Madeleine at the mantle. There is no change of angle when he faints and therefore is too far from Madeleine to capture her reaction. The practices established in Madeleine's apartment reign during this scene.

For the mother's suicide the pattern is typical to the apartment, especially her room. It begins as soon as she agrees to Madeleine's visit. The father, mother, and aunt crowd around the mother's bed while they decide how to proceed— a hoax since the aunt has already seen to it. They hear movement in the apartment as Mik emerges from his room for the first time since returning from Madeleine's. The mother listens and knowingly recounts Mik's exact whereabouts and activities in the apartment. As the sound reflects that he may have left, the background blurs and the mother calls out to Mik in panic, in medium close-up. A reverse shot of Mik at the door in a medium shot provides contrast to the rest of this segment which is shot in close-up of various pairs of characters, mother and son, father and son, father and aunt, as they explain that Madeleine is in the apartment and why.

Here is inserted the reunion scene described above. The camera reverses to show the mother back out of the aunt's room and, after another segment in the aunt's room, cuts to the mother in the bathroom. There is a cresendo
of countershots such that suspense is built for the spectator, but the other three characters pay the mother no heed. At one point the mother calls out that she's giving herself an insulin shot. At another point she actually returns to the communicating door to the aunt's room and weakly smiles and speaks before retreating to bed. In the aunt's room, explanations for the mother's poor health and need for insulin provide countershots to close-ups of the mother as she comes to realize the import of her actions and to regret her suicide. Finally, the camera stationary at the end of the bed, the mother sits bolt upright bringing herself back into extreme close-up as she screams for Mik.

Returning to the tight shots of early in the film, the immediate family gathers around the mother as the aunt checks that she's taken her insulin. The four scatter in meaningless motion as they try to take action to help her while the camera remains stationary. Tight two-shots continue of the mother with various family members. Finally the camera comes to rest in close-up on the mother and the other characters' faces pass in and out of the frame so close, at times, that their cheeks fill the screen. When Mik returns from seeking a doctor, the aunt announces that it is "trop tard," too late. The shots remain very tight and dark until the final cut of the entire bed when the
aunt announces from the doorway that she's sent away the cleaning lady explaining that "everything was in order." And the camera pans back to reveal a scene bearing remarkable resemblance to a stage because of the curtains framing the bed. In this final shot the spectator again gains a sense of place. The vaudeville of coincidence is announced visually rather than verbally by the aunt.

The order of things is established by the ordering of things. That is, the correct moral outcome is effected by the narrativizing of the various events. As the story is put into place the vaudeville of coincidental events is replaced by a more seamless relationship. Narrative triumphs.

Narrative flow necessitated a narrator. The orderly Aunt Léo fit the bill and assured the order of things restored. With the advent of narrative flow, the standards of a well made film fell into place: technically the editing smoothed out, camera movement became discreet; materially, the decor became recognizable as a sum of individual objects rather than a mass of clutter, the stars, more subtle actors rather than flamboyant, intimidating figures.16 Prior to her seizing control of

16Alan Williams, Republic of Images (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 278, definition of Tradition of Quality films. It should also be noted that primitive decor also gave this cluttered feeling, a sense that one doesn't know where to look first. For a discussion of this practice see Burch, p. 152.
the narrative, the film was pure spectacle.

From a seeming batch of oddities, as one might summarize the characters and or events early in the film, no order or meaning seemed to emerge. Vaudeville, in this context, occupies a central, pivotal position of a series of spectacles given order and meaning by a master of ceremonies. The vaudeville references and the explanations provided by Aunt Léo provide an intermediary step which began to order the disparate parts. Meaning was conveyed only when a moral sense of order was introduced.

Thus the film, viewed this way, effects a transition from primitive spectacle, or cinematographically primitive film shorts viewed through a primitive viewing apparatus. The spectator had no place within these projections. The introduction of Aunt Léo as bonimenteuse gave an order like the master of ceremonies of vaudeville. Or as Elena Dagrada presents the 1900-1906 period, Aunt Léo acts as the diegetic character who looks and acts out that which both she and the spectator see. Both are visually cast as liminal figures, uncomfortable at being so closely tied up with the spectacle. However, the spectator is given a passive role as indicated by the statue whereas Aunt Léo engages actively with what is presented. With the eclips-
As much as a character can narrate within the codes of a well made film, Aunt Léa comes to narrate the film. She takes control of events prior to the visit to Madeleine’s. First, Léa scripts the piece, telling the father what to say and counting on the absence or predictability of the other characters. Then she arrives early at the "set" to assure herself the staging will work. What she doesn’t account for is precisely what the film had been about until she took control, the human factor—the disparate little scenes that individuals choreograph to make their own scenes. Order has another dimension, morality.

In life, unlike stages and films, scenes cannot be remade or undone. The final scene, its necessity, its scripting, remind us of this. Film is not life. Characters are unpredictable and will continue to act unilaterally, as the mother committing suicide though all was "for the best." Coincidence cannot entirely be avoided. A certain amount of vaudeville is what we achieve, hence the final curtain over the bed. And life goes on as Cocteau’s voice announces in voice over: "Et la roulotte continue sa route; la roulotte ne s’arrête pas."
Chapter IV
Struggle for Wholeness

Aigle à deux têtes, written at the close of the Second World War (1945-46) as a play, wasn't filmed until 1948. It received mixed reviews as a play and as a film in France and a relatively negative reception met the film in New York. The negative response to the film is due to the fact that characters make more speeches and more grandiose gestures than screen audiences can bear.\(^1\) Highly

\(^1\)For example, in The New York Times Dec 30, 1948, p.24 col. 2, the reviewer states that it "usually helps if the reviewer has a faint idea of what the film is supposed to be about. Cocteau neglected to make it clear". The review "tries" to resume the plot. And it concludes that the film contains "the excess posturing and talk" and that the "slightly intriguing situation [is] lost in murky miasmas of fancy but pointless dialogue.... Pretentions toward symbolism get all tangled up in wooden words."
melodramatic, there seems to be more hiding and spying than the plot can justify. The plot itself is rather simple though the story is complex.

Essentially the plot runs as follows: a queen returns to a castle high in the mountains to celebrate her tenth wedding anniversary to the king who was murdered on their wedding night. She refuses to attend her own party and stays in her room. Meanwhile, the police release an anarchist-poet onto the castle grounds with orders to murder the queen. Wounded scaling the castle walls, the would-be assassin is kept by the queen, nursed to health and made her reader. Intrigued by the idea of controlling her destiny and looking it/him in the eye, the queen gives the would-be assassin three days to kill her, after which she will kill him. During the sojourn, the pair fall in love and the assassin convinces the queen to wrest control from the police and retake full power. They declare themselves an eagle with two heads; however the anarchist/assassin realizes the handicap he would pose to her rule should she retake power. So he commits suicides with the queen’s own slow-acting poison. Realizing this minutes before she is to reclaim power, the queen mocks the assassin and his love, driving him to kill her. A
knife in her back, she reclaims the throne and then falls down dead.

Although seemingly intriquing in summary, the film ends up being nothing more than flat characters, representations of ideas, acting out a rather predictable plot. In order to move beyond the plot and especially the characters, an analysis had to be performed to grasp the sign system behind the representations. Peter Brooks' *The Melodramatic Imagination* provides a taxonomy of the sign system of melodrama from its beginnings in theatre to its later realization in the novels of Balzac and James. By revisiting and then exploiting Brooks' groundwork, I can move beyond character description to a semeiotic analysis of changes Cocteau made from the standards of the genre and derive a sense of what was at work in his film. From this analysis, it becomes clear how another sign system, the primitive cinema, also informed the construction of this surprisingly complex work. Behind Cocteau's gesture to recoup means of expression from two earlier genres, the very basic workings of narrative are laid bare. What emerges from this analysis is a primal expression best explicated by the theories of Freud who was both thorough and contemporaneous. Thus with the background of Brooks' taxonomy of melodrama, recent analysis of the "primitive" or pre-narrative period of cinema, and recourse to Freud,
a close reading of Jean Cocteau’s film, *Aigle à deux têtes*, will reveal the layers of Cocteau’s melodramatic mode.

Cocteau begins traditionally by delineating a melodramatic sign system where characters are signs, incarnations of ideas. Secondly, Cocteau explores the primal expression behind each sign; that is its purest, most unpressed emotional or instinctual denominator. In keeping with traditional melodramatic plot structure, resolution comes with a clarification of signs. Thus, for the primal expression of her fear of abandonment to be exposed thereby freeing the Queen protagonist, only a reenactment of the cause of repression, the death of the king, can fulfill the queen’s struggle for wholeness. To fully appreciate the depth of this seemingly simple text, the steps must be followed sequentially. A background that explains the coincidence of such diverse components to understanding this sign system as semiology, Freud, primitive cinema, and melodrama begins with an historical overview.

Peter Brooks explains in *The Melodramatic Imagination* that melodrama in France was born of the revolutionary period when the sacred was completely and finally laid to rest and the world was bereft of center, without absolutes. The fall of the sacred comes to define the
modern era, where modern sensibility seeks to continue to express meaning in a world devoid of anchor. Weaving meaning and symbolic systems over this abyss leads to the expression of an occult or hidden meaning in the world, a play of signs.2

Each sign in melodrama is highly charged with meaning. Villain or purity incarnate, signs represent a moral absolute. However, as signs, they are in constant need of reading, of clarification. Thus one finds scenes of recognition and misrecognition, of characters speaking a highly elaborate vocabulary of moral epithets and declarations and of plot reversals which require renewed self-nomination, that is, reaffirmation of who they are, or better, what they stand for. What they express is primal, unrepressed. As signifiers, it is their visual interaction that counts, hence the moral polarization, the persecution of good and final triumph of virtue, and the dark

2Peter Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). See also Thomas Elaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury" Monogram 4, p. 3 who also notes that the height of popularity corresponds to periods of intense social and ideological crisis; that the "ideological message is transparent; that it is a "record the struggle of a morally et emotionally emancipated bourgeois consciousness against the remnants of feudalism." "They pose the problem in political terms and concentrate on the complex inter-play of ethical principles, religious et metaphysical polarities and idealist aspirations typical of the bourgeoisie in its militant phase."
The world painted by melodrama is manichaean. The struggle with evil would never seem more poignant for the French than during the German occupation. Written during this tumultuous period, L'Aigle à deux têtes reads as a typical melodrama. Cocteau fled Paris but could not escape the lugubrious overtones of surveillance from seeping into his work. The classic melodramatic plot moves quickly to a threat to virtue whereby virtue's survival is put into question and its identity is obscured. Writing an historical allegory, Cocteau dispensed entirely with virtue's eclipse, that is, the whys of France's occupation. The story of L'Aigle à deux têtes, in keeping with the melodramatic mode, is virtue's struggle for recognition. By Brooks' description, for the better part of the story, evil "reigns triumphant, controlling the structure of events, dictating the moral coordinates of reality", as

3Visual here does not refer exclusively to the stage. Melodrama as a genre is highly visual. Essentially characters are incarnations of morals and therefore quite spectacular, in all senses of the word.

4This is essentially a rough overview of Brooks' overview of melodrama. This paragraph and the previous one are paraphrases of chapters 1 & 2 of The Melodramatic Imagination, pp.1-55.

did seemingly the occupiers of France.\textsuperscript{6} It is only through a clarification of signs, evil's and then virtue's, and a scene of spectacular public hommage to virtue that her struggle can end.\textsuperscript{7} This structure implies a polarisation of forces and their embodiment in characters.

As Brooks explains, the characters of melodrama have no depth, they are an exteriorization of the conflict. It is their interplay as signs and the space created by that interplay that creates the drama. The villain may have many lieutenants, but his success depends largely on errors of judgement or misreading by those who should rightfully be protectors of virtue. If the heroine is supported by another character, it is often a child as bearer of the sign of innocence.\textsuperscript{8} Melodrama's exteriorization of the conflict evokes structures similar to those of the dream world. The characters are not psychological, but what they express is primal, integral and unrepressed.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{6}Brooks, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{7}Brooks, pp. 31-32.
\textsuperscript{8}Brooks, pp.32-35.
\textsuperscript{9}Brooks, p.35.
The expression of these primal forces calls for conflicting modes of representation. On the one hand, the signs are so basic and simple that they must be immediately comprehensible as signs. Yet it is the misprision of the signs that is the stuff of melodrama. Cocteau has recourse to the earliest cinematic representations to achieve this dual expression. Tom Gunning characterizes these films as a cinema of attraction which "aggressively subjected the spectator to 'sensual or psychological impact'". Tracing the structures of the earliest films, Gunning reveals a series of steps leading to the earliest forms of narrative.

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10 Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle*, 8, no. 3/4 (1986) p.63-70. Gunning explains that the term "attractions" comes from Sergei Eisenstein seeking a new mode of analysis for theatre which would undermine realistic representational theatre. Thus the quote 'sensual or psychological impact' is from Eisenstein. The rest of the quote is Gunning paraphrasing Eisenstein. Gunning goes on to explain that he chose "this term partly to underscore the relation to the spectator that this later avant-garde practice shares with early cinema: that of exhibitionist confrontation rather than diegetic absorption" (66).

The link to Cocteau goes deeper, if one were to continue to follow Gunning's argument. For the link to the Russian avant-garde movement has resonances in Cocteau's life. Daigliev once told Cocteau "Etonne-moi" which was a rallying cry which stood in juxtaposition to "épater les bourgeois" as an appeal to mass culture. This "esthetics of astonishment and stimulation" typified the avant-garde of the post-turn of the century era of which Cocteau and Daigliev were a part.
In Gunning's investigation of point of view in this era of "non-continuous style," that is, films made prior to 1906, reveals three major shifts 1) the cinema of attractions where the acknowledged point of view is non-diegetic; 2) the "peeping tom" series in which the point of view shot is formally similar to classical narrative film in a mediated but still acknowledged and shared indulgence in scopic pleasure; and 3) the keyhole film, a contemporaneous development towards the placement of point of view in significant relation to the unfolding narrative where the immediate relation of the spectator to visual pleasure becomes subordinated to narrative causality through a new channeling of scopic drives, pleasures and repression. The scenes glimpsed instead of being a discontinuous suite of images become "evidence, elements in a narrative and moral argument which uncovers villains and malefactors." The reference to villains and malefactors deliberately connotes the melodramatic mode of applying pressure to things in order to extract moral truth. With this third shift comes the introduction of a complex sign


system whose meaning is not what it initially seems. This shift of point of view and of the attention of the spectator to narrative causality and moral argument evokes primal emotions on the part of the spectator. The spectator's attention is drawn to the subsequent integration of these images into the narrative structure where they serve as evidence, to which pressure is applied to extract a moral truth. Cocteau's film at times recalls this earlier mode of representation which seems so well fitted to the melodrama.

The expression of these primal emotions is prerequisite to the revelation of their function within the text. The resolution of the film is the expression of the truth of these primal emotions. It is an acting out of these primal emotions, namely a reenactment of the King's untimely death. As well, it is a reenactment which gives the Queen the role she seeks, one empowered rather than defeated, one which works through her inculpability.

Freud has noted that often when fear is in play (en jeu), narrators resort to the doubling of the feared character, a sort of eruption of the repressed fear. The doubling of the King by Marais' character of the poet allows the

uncanny nature of these emotions to be revealed. Like the childlike figure at the keyhole in the primitive films who is there to satisfy his childish curiosity, the expression of the uncanny reveals an infantile wish behind the repressed emotion. It is only through an acting out that the initial scene which caused the repression will be revealed. This is not necessarily the primal scene itself but a childhood experience repressed which is reevoked through its uncanny expression. Thus the reenactment of the King's death repeated by the death of his double embodied in the poet allows the Queen to reveal her infantile fear of abandonment and permits her empowerment in the doubling of the scene. The use of the primitive cinema allows the double evocation of both a pre-narrative infantile innocence and its narrative integration into the story of its misprision. The theme of the misprision of innocence which lays at the source of melodrama is allowed its full and primal expression through this narrative mode. The melodramatic mode implies not only a misprision of primal emotions but their deliberate obscuring by the forces of evil. The manichaean universe created by such a


plot doubles the historical source of this story.

Cocteau structures his story such that each segment delves deeper into the workings of the melodramatic mode. The first part, as in any well constructed story, presents all of the major characters and their roles. Since the mode is melodramatic, the characters are incarnations of ideas, signs. Their interplay as signs defines space wherein the story's enigma will be played out. The manichaean nature of this world allows a secondary mode of expression to be introduced into the space controlled by the Queen. While still firmly melodramatic, the reference to the primitive era of cinema adds another layer of reading of these signs. In the final part of the film, the mode shifts again to a structure more exhibitionist but unsutured by the reverse gaze of the child-like observer. The Queen takes full control of the story and leads us through a reenactment of the death of the king but one that she has scripted, at least in part. This last part has a dreamlike quality in keeping with its discursive representation as the Queen's own story, that is, her desired version. Although like a typical melodrama the film ends with a reestablishment of the status quo, the enigma has been resolved, the source of repression has been revealed by the reenactment which, in contradictory fashion, asserts both the status quo and a liberation in
"a spectacular ritualization of virtue's innocence." A close reading of the film reveals the necessary steps that lead to this liberation.

The opening scenes set the terms and parameters of the opposing forces of good and evil. The film opens with a pan of a mountainous horizon and the backs of three people. The pan comes to frame the Queen at a mountain precipice with Felix and her reader, Edith, who is a pawn of the Archduchess—the king's mother. Cuts are made from different angles of their backs, some at vertiginous angles. The characters are calling out their names and listening to the echos. Edith insists that they are taking turns. The Queen refuses to join in because she fears that "il n'en répond un autre [nom]." The camera cuts to different views of the characters but all from behind, their faces are not revealed. The three wear traveling cloaks which render their appearance similar and relatively indistinguishable, except for their gender. The cloaks also connote dissimulation and villainy.

16 Brooks, esp. Chapter 2, pp. 24-55.

17 Note that the previous role of Felix has been displaced. Felix and Edith are speaking when the play opens and reveal much about the background of the queen and her character. It is clearly revealed that Felix is in love with the queen; he was the best friend of the former king. Here the role of close friend not under the sway of the Archduchesse seems split between Felix and Adams.
Immediately the spectator wonders at the identity of the characters. However, the film opens denying the spectator a name or face for the main character, the Queen, played by Edwige Feuillière. In fact, when she is finally shot from the front, her face is veiled. Moreover, the Queen has a very thick accent which only serves to underscore her mysteriousness, and in fact suggests that she is the evil one. Thus the film opens shrouded in enigma: who are these travelers perched at a precipice? why are their faces denied? why does the heavily accented one—the foreigner—refuse to tell her name to the wind? where are they going and from where have they come? The only certainty is the tone set by the dizzying angles and mysterious characters. The enigma is threatening, frightening.

18Feuillière is a renown stage actress who starred in the stage version.

19The queen is impenetrable like her castle. You can’t see in and can never tell what is going on inside. In that way, our situation is similar to the Archduchess (we’re also never seen on screen and our hopes for turning the plot are in vain).

As well, the first scene of identification of the queen, the scene where we are first given some information on her character/identity, is when it is explained why she likes Krantz. This allies her even more closely with the castle.

In his study, Acting in the Cinema, James Naremore explains how great actors’ and actresses’ entrances are delayed to heighten their value.
Rather than clarifying much other than her authority over the others, the Queen's conduct in the next scene only seems to raise further questions. They mount the carriage to Krantz which is filmed from the top of the precipice at a rather severe high angle. The Queen announces that she is hosting a ball and explains that she is announcing it at this moment because her words will be repeated to the Archduchess. Edith, appointed by the Archduchess and her proxy, responds with feigned innocence: "Moi?"; to which the queen replies: "Je n'ai nommé personne."\(^2\) It is only with these words that the terms of the relationship between the characters begin to take shape. The mystery of their identities remains relatively intact, but the melodramatic theme of spying is introduced.

As if to underline the theme of spying, the loud barking of dogs immediately follows this exchange and uniformed men on horseback are seen—the police. There is a cut to a very high angle of the police from a point of view behind and above the carriage, followed by a long-shot of the police surrounding the carriage. They hear

\(^2\)This sets the tone of mistrust and intrigue which permeates the film. This also reinforces the queen's refusal to speak out, to reveal herself verbally. First she refuses to play the echo game in the canyon and now refuses to name people. Thus there is a certain mistrust of words.
dogs and see policemen in pursuit of someone whom we will later learn is the Queen’s intended assassin. Although the police seem to be in pursuit of this man, it is actually the chief of police who has released him or hired him to kill the Queen at the Archduchess’s bidding. The introduction of the police by the sound of baying dogs reinforces the theme of pursuit and spying, punctuating the Queen’s aside about eavesdropping. It also lays claim to this space as the domain of the police who, we’ll later learn, are proxies of the Archduchesse. The world begins to take on a manichaean taint: the guilty pursued versus the as yet unidentified innocents, the clearly defined representatives of law and order versus the mysterious, cloaked travelers with foreign accents who hold balls without the Archduchess’s permission. The interruption of the conversation by the baying hounds underscores the anxiety created by the vertiginous angles and mountainous setting.

The use of high angles throughout these introductory scenes creates the sense of hovering. That is to say that the point of view represented by the camera is not designated as belonging to anyone within the film. Rather than sutured to a particular character, the hovering camera heightens the sense of threat and anxiety and leaves the spectator without firm footing in the film. The evocation
of such a primal helplessness on the part of the spectator is essential to establishing the terms of the narrative mode of this first part and to laying a foundation for the theme of the uncanny to be evoked in the second segment. The enigma rests as much within the story as without.

Very loud fanfare blares as the Queen's carriage passes through the castle gates. A high angle shot is used as they pass through the gate, then the camera pivots up directly towards the Queen. The camera then reverses angle capturing the review of troops from the Queen's point of view. The camera, still doubling the Queen's point of view, rotates to reveal Adams, her English-speaking butler, descending the stairs to greet her. The panoramic shot doubling the Queen's point of view is slow and deliberate. The fanfare designates the space within the gates as under the control of the army troops assembled there, which is designated by the review as belonging to the Queen. The panoramic shot of the area gives a sense of the castle's location and, by extension, sets the parameters of the Queen's authority. The use of fewer severe angles and a gentle, deliberate panorama indicate a certain toning down of the atmosphere of anxiety. Within the film in general, space is defined in absolute terms, as are the characters, creating a polarized universe: inside/outside, army/police,
Queen's/others', haven/pursuit, perched high but tucked away versus teetering on the brink.

Once the polarization of space establishes the manichaean nature of the melodramatic universe, the characters are introduced and the spectator tends automatically to divide them into two camps: the Archduchess' or the Queens'. As well, the emotional charge within the two camps is measured. The Queen in the next and preceding scenes is presented in terms of regal pomp (fanfare and review of troops and deeply curtsying ladies in waiting) which the Queen definitively rejects. Surveillance best characterizes the Archduchess: baying hounds, whispering and peeking servitors. Rather than whisper, the Queen's loyal servants speak English. This is a peculiar choice since it reinforces the otherness of the Queen, though it is her kingdom, while at least leaving the exchanges out in the open compared to the whispering of the Archduchess' proxies. In fact, this is in keeping with the melodramatic mode for evil is to reign throughout the bulk of the story and virtue is to be outcast, which is the effect of having the Queen's camp speaking an "other" language.

Another measure of the emotional charge is found in the storm brewing. The introduction scene where each character is presented and her or his measure is taken, is
also the moment when the decor is introduced. Like other signs, the setting (weather, decor) is also highly charged in melodrama. It gives yet another opportunity for the individual characters to speak of themselves in highly charged terms equal and parallel to those of the storm. Edith, the Archduchess' plant, is terrified of storms and thus of Krantz, the castle. The castle is high in the mountains, perched on a brink, like the characters. The thunder and lightening seem to visualize the electricity in the air. The Queen, on the other hand, is not afraid of storms and revels in them. Just as she enjoys the bats and broken windows that characterize Krantz, so the storm provides a thrill. Thus as characters are introduced, in addition to their names and titles, a summary glance provides their salient features.

The arrival scene of the queen and her taking charge of space within the castle further clarifies the terms of space and authority. Within the castle gates she is queen, unlike outside where the police patrol. The castle is unequivocally her domain; she mandates space and function right down to the use of each room. Her assertion of control further classifies the characters: the queen is in control, Adams serves her faithfully, she is being watched for the Archduchess by Edith and for love by Félix. The queen controls the army but not the police. Although the
parameters of her control seem limited, the queen is fearless and bears a certain affinity with nature. She is intimidated by no one and nothing whereas the Archduchess's plant, Edith, is easily frightened as well as rather childish as we learned from the echo game and her insistence on taking turns. Thus the vertiginous angles of earlier in the film are to indicate a frenzy not shared by the Queen.

The closing of "first act", if you will, however, reinforces the limits of the Queen's power. As with the initial scene of the police, this one is marked again by the barking of dogs. The final scene of the opening segment cuts to the door of a peasant hut where the police interrogate a woman standing in the doorway as to her relationship to the pursued culprit. The policeman in charge then turns and gives orders to shoot in the air and to shoot a lot to the men assembled. This is the extent of the introduction of Azrael/Stanislas, the poet hired to assassinate the queen by her mother-in-law's proxy, Count von Foehm. By initially presenting Stanislas in this fashion, he is cast as one of the good guys by virtue of the fact he is hunted by the police. Further oppositions to this polarized world include: peasant versus royalty, within the walls of whatever home as a space controlled by women and that without by men, the peasant woman's home as
impenetrable except to observation like the queen's castle. This scene also serves as the transitionary scene between the introduction and the story line itself. Following the plot delineated in Brooks' study, the final scene of the last act of a traditional melodramatic play marks the eclipse of virtue by the villain. Before moving to the next "act" of the film and the next level of analysis, let us return to Brooks' taxonomy of melodrama viewed in tandem with the film thus far.

The world introduced in the opening scenes is clearly one of melodrama. The characters are at once defined by terms such as Police, Queen, Archduchess, and Reader which announce forthcoming confrontations over power, control, territory, interpretation, and meaning. The sound track to this point has served to evoke and underscore the image track while neither used their typical mode. Rather than words, it is the lack of direct speech and startling sounds (barking, fanfare, thunder, a strong foreign accent or even the use of English) that explains the visual techniques of extreme angles and of obscure(d) frontal shots. The camera work thus far has been remarkable. Camera work clearly and deliberately sets the tone in the space in which each character group is represented.

Ambiguities hover and enigma remain unresolved throughout what serves as "the first act" of the film. As
Brooks points out in his discussion of melodrama, the title and early scenes evoke rather than resolve questions. Who or what is the eagle with two heads? Who rules? The title suggests a struggle for recognition over the rightful ruler or a divided ruler. It resembles titles of typical melodrama: Coelina, ou L’Enfant du mystère, or La femme à deux maris, L’Homme à trois visages, or Le Couvent ou les Voeux forcés, La Forteresse du Danube or La Citerne. The examples suggest mysterious people or places, as does the title of the film, L’Aigle à deux têtes.

The topoi that accompany the structure of classical melodrama, as defined by Brooks’ study, have been put into place: the enclosed garden, which here is the enclosed castle, into which the villain will insinuate himself in friendship or courtship or as an intruder; the chased villain will return to the topoi of the interrupted fête at the end of Act 1 or in Act 2, represented by the Queen’s party which has been announced to the appropriate parties in the initial scene at the precipice. Both of these topoi suggest closed and polarized space which is how the opening scenes have defined space within the film.

21 Brooks, pp. 28-34.
22 Brooks, pp. 28-30.
The plot structure of melodrama follows a relatively set pattern, which I summarize below from Brooks. The return of the villain at the fête represents the triumph of villainy and the fall, the eclipse or even the expulsion of virtue. The villain comes to reign over a good portion of the story, controlling the structure of events. Virtue eclipsed is tongue tied by the structure of familial relationships (to call into question would violate its nature as innocence); imposed silence may be represented as a vow. Recovery depends on the recognition of error by those in a position to judge, which first requires a recognition of evil. Usually there is a trial, but in Aigle à deux têtes the "people" are represented by the military whom the queen salutes when demonstrating her retaking of power at the climax of the film. This clarification of signs, of evil then virtue, is the necessary precondition for the reestablishment of the heroine. The third act acts out literally, violently, virtue's liberation (duels, chases, explosions, battles)—the tragic catharsis—a spectacular enactment of ritual.23

Cocteau has altered a bit the traditional features of the melodrama. The penetration of the garden and the

23Brooks, pp. 28-36. The entire paragraph is a paraphrase of the section entitled Structures of the Manichaen.
interruption of the fête are condensed. The Queen's castle is read as a garden, an enclosed place beyond the reach of the police, and beyond the vertiginous angles that have been used to evoke threat and helplessness. The ball is a sort of double party. The Queen simultaneously hosts two parties: one is the ball which she will not attend, given to celebrate her tenth wedding anniversary and the death of the king, and a second one, upstairs, which is an anniversary dinner where she and her memories of her belated husband will sup in private. However, the fact that word gets out that the Queen is throwing a ball, and more so that the Queen is even residing at Krantz, demonstrates that the garden, though enclosed, is not entirely impenetrable, and that, in fact, the garden and its implicit privacy have already been violated. The proxies of the Archduchess have gotten word of the Queen's evershifting place of residence and of the ball, for how else would they know to send the Queen's intended assassin to Krantz?

Another feature altered from that of usual melodrama is the character of the villain. Normally the role of the villain is "le beau rôle," the one played by the famous actor. It is also "the active force and motor of the
plot." In some ways Marais fills that role; he is the famous actor, as Feuillière is the famous actress. The actual force of evil never appears; only proxies circulate in minor roles filled by minor actors. As well, Marais’ character is the motor of the plot. Before his appearance the film is static, it depicts the evil state of things, explores the parameters of the status quo. After his appearance, the struggle begins between himself and the Queen, within the Queen herself, and between the two of them and the lieutenants of the Archduchess. Thus rather than the villain, it is the hero/poet, as socially and politically marginal, who functions as a catalyst to the plot.

The role of the poet in L’Aigle à deux têtes bears resemblance to that of poets during the Romantic era, particularly Vigny’s Chatterton. Vigny’s work made Chatterton’s name synonymous with a superior man victimized by his own genius. Both Cocteau’s and Vigny’s characters fear recognition because of the fame their work has brought them and are made an insulting offer by the

24 Brooks, pp. 32-35.

25 Sylvia Monfort as Edith de Berg, Jean Debucourt as Poehm and Jacques Varennes, Gilles Quéant, Abdallah, and Yvonne (de) Bray in a cameo appearance.
government in exchange for protection. In the end both commit suicide because of a forbidden love.

By evoking a Chatterton-like resemblance, Cocteau endows his poet with a certain superiority which enables him to play the role of judge, interpreter of signs. The remarkable resemblance Cocteau’s character also bears to the dead king somewhat overdetermines his character for the role. By this resemblance, Stanislas, Cocteau’s poet, is doubly endowed with the superiority to judge the other characters and to intervene; for who else could judge the Archduchess, his mother, but her son, the rightful king? For the powers of evil, the resemblance also makes him a choice assassin for the queen since presumably the resemblance will put her off guard long enough to commit the murder. By his physical resemblance to the king, a love relationship is evoked between the queen and the apparition of her former husband. The theme of love is the second, unspoken drama of Chatterton as well, as Vigny wrote. It is a theme evoked in the opening scenes of Cocteau’s film too.²⁶

Both loves remain unrequited as well. In fact, in a climax that can only recall the final, highly

²⁶In addition to the resemblance of Stanislas to the king, the love theme is also evoked when Edith takes Félix aside and among other things they refers to Félix’s love for both the Queen and Edith herself.
(melo)dramatic scene of Chatterton, Stanislas falls backwards down the stairs and lies dead at the bottom. In order to understand this remarkable resemblance, certain circumstances surrounding the writing of the work must be discussed. Cocteau wrote the role expressly for Marais. Moreover, Marais tells that he asked Cocteau to write him a play in which he doesn’t appear in the first act, enters through a window in the second and falls down a flight of stairs in the final act. This taken with all the other circumstances of its creation and the writer himself leads one clearly to see the depth and breadth of the reference to Vigny’s Chatterton. However, it is not Chatterton but Kitty Bell, his unattainable and forbidden beloved who falls down the flight of stairs.

The role of Kitty Bell was written by Vigny expressly for Marie Dorval, a then renown comédienne. Both she and Vigny were strongly urged against her playing the role by the Academy, La Comédie Française, and the king himself, Louis-Philippe. Dorval refused to rehearse the final scene because of all the commotion and performed it for the first time at the play’s debut, to the avid acclaim of the public. Thus Dorval and Vigny were vindicated by pub-

The overlapping/collapse of the two Vigny characters into the single role of the poet in Cocteau’s work is but the first in a series of similar gestures which hints at the evocation of the theme of the uncanny which serves to explain this doubling.

The uncanny nature of the doubling of this role comes from the film’s melodramatic source. First, from the opening of the film, a sense of helplessness, of fear and of threat, is established which sets the tone for the interpretation of doubling as uncanny. Furthermore, the hero’s insinuation into the narrative by his entrance into the queen’s bedroom through the window during this pivotal segment raises a series of questions which have their source in the melodramatic structure: is he evil, another proxy of the Archduchess sent to murder the queen or is he on the side of purity, sent to read her innocence? By his insinuation into the garden/castle and his subsequent role as the motor of the plot which, in the melodramatic mode, is that of villain, the poet/hero occupies an ambiguous position. It is precisely this doubling and the ambiguity

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28Marais explains in *Histoires de ma vie* that Cocteau refused to let him rehearse the fall down the stairs. However, they did not meet with acclaim. Rather, according to Marais, the only nice thing the newspapers had to say was that he was pretty and a fine acrobat. Even after the Liberation, reviews remained unreceptive, pp. 175-177.
created by it which provides the key to unraveling the sub-plot of *L'Aigle à deux têtes*.

The ambiguity of the poet/hero's status, whether he is on the side of good or evil, and at another level, his embodiment of both romantic hero and unattainable love object, makes him both creator and created, a character open to further projections by the various characters. The Count, at one point, applauds him for getting the Queen to play into evil's hands. For the Queen, Stanislas functions as a screen onto which she projects a series of characterizations. Initially, the Queen proclaims that Stanislas is "ma Mort", then "mon Destin". That is, she proclaims Marais' character to be her death, an embodiment of her infantile wish to control her destiny, her mortality. In a wrangling to determine both his identity and hers, the Queen makes a series of projections onto the character of Stanislas. An uncanny effect is easily produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality or when a symbol takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolizes.²⁹

Freud explains in his essay on the uncanny (1919) that the uncanny has two possible sources: "an uncanny experi-

ence occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed. In his ambiguous role, Stanislas occupies both sources. When Freud discusses death in another work, there is an elision between infantile and primitive beliefs. Without literally linking the two ideas, the paragraph immediately following the discussion of infantile complexes recounts a story from Plato in which it is told that humans were originally androgynous, a complete being which embodied both sexes. The Plato story furthers the elision for it incorporates the infantile complexes which predate the distinction of self and other and thus sexual difference and the moment of loss from which recognition of this difference stems out fear of death.

In order to master the loss children experience, rather than being passive, children engage in what Freud called the fort/da game. This game stands as the source of the repetition compulsion which in turn serves as a base, in later life, for the source of the uncanny. In

30Freud, "The Uncanny", p. 403.


32Freud, Beyond, p. 51.

33Freud, Beyond, Part III, pp. 12-17.
explaining the psychic sources of the uncanny, Freud refers the reader to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a contemporaneous text in which he explains the *fort/da* game as the source of the repetition compulsion. The loss which children try to master predates the distinction of self and other and thus recognition of sexual difference. This experience of loss and its subsequent expression is thus positioned to evoke a primal emotion which is later acculturated, an instinct. "An instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things."34 This earlier state of things, when children were complete and not threatened by loss, is clearly evoked in the Plato reference to an earlier time of wholeness.

Marais' character comes to embody the projections of the Queen's struggle for wholeness. He is her death as she states initially. With Stanislas dressed like the king, they avow their love. With the goal of her reclaiming power, they declare themselves an eagle with two heads. Finally, after swallowing the poison (the queen's own suicide pill), he stabs her. Thus the character of Stanislas is both the other half of her self, her death and later her corporal half as the eagle with two heads,

and an other, her love object; this collapsing of the two halves of a self and of self and other is something only possible in the infantile world of fantasy. A reenactment of this fantasy allows the Queen to repeat and thereby resolve the story, her story. This story can only be told by a layering of identities on the Marais character, Stanislas. For the Queen, he is the embodiment of an infantile wish for completeness. Also at the level of story, as both romantic hero and the unattainable love object (Chatterton and Kitty Bell), the Marais character is the embodiment of self and other, a "complete" being according to the Plato text and according to the reference to the romantic text of Vigny. For the melodramatic narrative, he functions as an interpretor/judge and a catalyst to the narrative's resolution through the embodiment of both hero and villain. On the cinematic level, he is both an independent character and a screen for the Queen's narrative, the one who receives her avowals of love and for whom she exhibits, displays her innocence. The role of the Marais character seems best summarized by Brooks: "confrontation and peripety are managed so as to make possible a remarkable, public, spectacular hommage to virtue, a demonstration of its power and effect."35 By

35Brooks, p. 25.
embodying all of these different roles, the Marais character enables the Queen to act out the layers of confrontation of her previously repressed character.

To function successfully at the cinematic level, this doubling must be given a narrative pretext. The opening segment of the film gives the spectator no anchor within the film. The camera hovers at acute high angles above the characters. Because of the mysteriousness of the Queen's character in the initial scenes, she is the figure onto which meaning is projected. She is cast as enigma, a screen of sorts, a veiled face which betrays no emotion or reaction to the designations projected on her by the other characters. Like the other characters in a melodrama, the Queen functions as a sign, in her case as that of enigma and mystery. However, there is a shift in presentation in the second part of the film. This transitionary second segment is composed of a series of short scenes. At the end of the segment, the scenes are linked to a diegetic spectator. The vignette style and the final anchoring to a diegetic spectator recalls the films of the primitive era of cinema. Within these primitive films there are two narrative steps. Initially these films appear to be a suite of images, of vignettes; it is only in their narrative framing that their meaning within the narrative is revealed.
The shift in point of view from a hovering camera to specific character’s perspective provides one reason for the reference to the primitive cinema. A second, deeper significance returns our focus to Freud and the underlying source of the uncanny. This choice of reference evokes an earlier era of human development when the source of the drive to look and thereby to understand predated sexual difference and the distinction of self and other which is at the root of the primitive era of cinema. The underlying assumption that gives rise to the term "primitive" in the study of films dating before 1906 is their lack of narrative continuity as we know it from classical cinema. Recall Gunning’s three types of narrative point of view from the introduction: the non-diegetic, the peeping tom and the keyhole. The non-diegetic point of view is simply the one provided by the camera itself. The "peeping tom" film contains a diegetic narrator who embodies the childish prankster. According to Marie, he is a voyeur who seeks to satisfy his infantile curiosity for knowledge of a primal scene. The "keyhole" film, which developed contemporaneously, places the diegetic spectator differently, whereby he seeks a knowledge in order to obtain evidence and eventually to punish the guilty. However,

36Marie, pp. 61-65.
Gunning notes that "In other films of the 'peeping tom' series the motivation for the voyeur's gaze remains scopic curiosity explicitly shared by character and spectator. In this Biograph film [the first keyhole film, A Search for Evidence] (and others that follow) peeping through keyholes is given a specific narrative function and character-based motivation, one which the viewer does not share directly."37 Lest this sound like the sophisticated technique of classical cinema, Gunning adds that "the scenes glimpsed through the keyhole remain discontinuous vignettes whose interest within the film seems rather divorced from the uncovering of the narrative enigma."38 Thus the search for evidence does not determine the content of the vignettes but is introduced, usually at the end, to frame the vignettes and provide a narrative motivation.39 In the transitionary segment of L'Aigle à deux têtes there are shifts in narrative point of view which bear distinct resemblance to each of the point of view techniques enumerated by Gunning. The reference to the infantile spectator of the primitive era of filmmaking is key to comprehending the shift in narrative point of

view within Cocteau’s film. The evocation of this earlier era is what explains the uncanniness of the Marais character and his role(s) within the plot.

Before launching into a close reading of this transitional segment, here is a description of this short segment of the film. It opens in a similar fashion to the previous scenes. A high angle, presumably from a window of the castle, reveals the arrival of the guests for the ball. This shot is held for the arrival of more than one group of guests descending from their carriage. One of the last is the arrival of Yvonne Bray as la Présidente. It is raining and Bray steps off her carriage right into a puddle causing her to shriek. Her arrival and the subsequent step in the mud motivate closer and closer shots. The camera then is repositioned at the top of the stairs and remains stationary to capture the rest of the arrival scene. As La Présidente continues up the stairs, she gossips about the queen’s new "Negro" servant. Another carriage, filled with giggling maidens, pulls up to the stairs and mounts them. The camera seems to recede into the doorway and reverses to show Edith descending the stairs, cross the hall in front of the group of giggling girls. There is a cut to La Présidente’s wet feet marked again by her shrill voice and then a cut to her face as she whispers that the queen will not be attending the
ball. The camera makes a slow deliberate pan of the room. Initially, we seemingly hear snipets of conversation and observe guests chatting in small groups around the room. Slowly whispering seems to emerge from the sounds and the words become distinct: "Pas au bal." The whispering sounds mount to a crescendo as the camera completes its panoramic shot.

This is the summary of the first of the two series of shots that occupy the transitionary segment. Although not a literal representation of the earliest films, there are clear and direct references made to films from this period. Foremost, the resemblance begins with the limited number of cuts. A clear effort is made to maintain a stationary camera. The scenes themselves bear reference to renown films of the primitive era. For example, the arrival of the guests recalls the many seemingly documentary films of the Lumière brothers. The scene seems to record the rather childish pleasure of watching these so nicely dressed people side-step and finally fall victim to the puddle in the middle of their path.40 The second scene thematically follows up this interest in the wet feet with a close-up of Bray's foot. This shot harks

back to the close-up of the woman’s ankle in the film The Gay Shoeclerk. Whereas that shot is motivated by desire, the cut in this segment repeats the sonoral motivation of the introductory segment. La Présidente’s shrill voice and her whispering gossip repeat the thematics of spying introduced previously by cuts motivated by sounds: the baying of dogs and the whispering of the Archduchess’ proxies in the scene of introductions.

Another reference to earliest films, the panoramic shot of the room, seems to have a two-fold narrative function. On the one hand, it recalls the earliest panoramic films which were shot in part for the pleasure of the circular motion, to see all around and to show off the camera’s capability to perform such a view. Yet there is also a narrative function more similar to the classical narrative mode. Here we can liken this segment more to the keyhole type film which, although displaying a series of vignettes, is framed by a search for evidence. For at another level, we know the pleasure of the proxies of the Archduchess, especially Edith’s pleasure, childish as it may seem, at the Queen’s scandalous conduct of not attending the ball. In fact, this entire segment seems framed

41Raymond Fielding, "Hale’s Tours: Ultrarealism in the Pre-1910 Motion Picture" in John Fell’s Film Before Griffith, pp. 116-130.
by shots of servants who are proxies of the Archduchess, from Edith’s decent of the stairs linking her to the opening frame through to the cut following the panorama to Félix descending the same stairs. Furthermore, La Présidente is linked to this group of proxies by the use of her voice to motivate cuts normally associated with that camp and by the nature of her gossipy conduct in general. Thus this first scene of the segment could be entitled naughty, curious servants in public. Both the amusement at the guests falling prey to the mud puddle and the panorama announcing the queen’s absence at her own ball bore direct reference to primitive films in their simplicity and childlike motivation. The point of view, to use Gunning’s categories, is non-diegetic.

The peeping tom and the keyhole point of view structures emerge in the second portion of this transitionary segment. Recall that I cut this segment at the shot where Félix descended the same stairs as Edith, she prior and he following the panorama. The camera pivots at the base of the stairs to reveal Félix climb the other set of stairs, the stairs expressly forbidden by the Queen to all but her reader, because they lead to the king and queen’s suite of

42 It should be noted that these are not literal point of view shots framing the panorama, simply symmetrical shots of characters filling similar roles.
rooms. With furtive steps, Felix comes to position himself kneeling behind a statue and observes the Queen as she descends the hall upstairs towards a door in the foreground. There is a reverse cut of Felix, through the statue's legs. The shot returns to the Queen as she hesitates at the door and then enters the bedroom. It is remarkable that this is the scene in which the Queen is revealed for the first time unveiled; no longer will she serve as a faceless, blank screen, now she will take charge of the narrative. The camera follows her in and up to a portrait of the king which she adores. The storm is heard in the background. There is another cut of Félix through the statue's legs which then reverses to show the queen closing the bedroom door behind her as she leaves and leaning against it, devastated by the emotions. The shot shifts to a point of view through the statue's legs of the queen as she makes her way back up the hall. There is a final reverse shot of Félix, in close-up, through the statue's leg.

The scene then changes as the camera cuts back to the ball. La Présidente is seen gossiping about the Negro servant when Félix is revealed, in the background, entering the room. Edith approaches and they whisper together, she wants to know what the problem is, why he looks as though he has seen a ghost. The second waltz then begins
which is the prearranged signal for Edith to go to the Queen in her room. There is a cut to a long shot of the queen’s room as Edith enters, goes to the window and closes it and the curtain and then goes to a table set for a romantic meal. A bell rings signalling the queen’s entrance and she comes through the door. The Queen goes to the window and opens it and complains of Edith’s fear of the storms and the castle. It is before the window that she explains that she will sup with "the shadow of the king" and that Edith is forbidden to enter despite the rules of protocol. Edith leaves and the Queen then goes to the bull’s eye window, opens it to reveal the ball and meets the returned glance of Edith below. There is a reverse shot of the Queen at the window from inside the room at which point the camera follows her about the room. She returns to the portrait and proceeds to have a conversation with it and even pretends to take the king’s hand and lead him to the table where she toasts him and then reads tarot cards as she tells their fortune. At the card of the young man, the tête à tête is interrupted by the abrupt and startling arrival of the wounded poet/assassin through a window. He promptly faints. The Queen tries to awaken him, even slaps him with a damp towel. The bell announcing the entrance of a person sounds and Edith enters. The Queen has hidden Stanislas
in the sleeping area of the bedroom. Edith announces that the police, though not the chief, Le Comte de Foëhm, have uncovered a conspiracy of murder and are chasing a suspect still at large. She also reveals his identity as that of the anarchist poet who wrote poems against the monarchy. At the end of the scene, the Queen summons Stanislas and, to list in a cursory fashion, they discuss the timing of his arrival, his disrespect at not answering her, and his resemblance to the king. The queen makes her first speech of the film in highly elaborate epithets of melodramatic language proclaiming that Stanislas is her death and her destiny, and that it is so because she, the queen, says so. She then gives him three days to get the job done, that is, to kill her. Finally she summons Tony, her mute valet, who takes Stanislas away to clean him up and get him settled in. The Queen then returns to the bull’s eye window, opens it and remains before it, her jewels glistening in the light, waltz music plays in the background. There is a point of view shot to the guests descending the stairs, repeating the opening shot of this segment.

The final shot of the segment repeats the opening shot. The Queen’s gaze anchors the entire segment but not until the end. The technique of presenting a point of view at the end of a series of vignettes matches Gunning’s
description of the keyhole film in structure. The question arises as to whether there is the search for evidence which accompanies this technique. Throughout the segment there are moments when pressure seems to be applied to the surface to force meaning from the vignettes or scenes. The match of servants on the same staircase, as noted in the earlier segment and later Edith’s interrogation of Félix forces a search of sorts for evidence. However, it is the second to the last shot indicating that it is the Queen’s point of view which matches the opening and closing shots of the guests which frames this segment. That suturing of the gaze provides the identity of the controlling force of the narrative.

The assignment of control shifts around in this segment but ultimately comes to lie with the Queen. The competing forces within the film struggle for control and, in fact, it seems that evil is in control at times. However, to prove her innocence the Queen must take control of the narrative, something which can only be done after the pervasiveness of Evil is proved. With the introduction of Stanislas, the process of doubling and thereby the unraveling of the uncanny can begin. The groundwork is laid by this segment containing reference to the primitive cinema and the acting out of infantile desire to see the primal scene.
Félix, in his desire to observe his love object in her private suite of rooms which she shares with the king (literally, as it were), repeats the point of view structure of the peeping tom film of the primitive cinema. As noted during the scene’s recounting, it is at that moment that the queen is revealed unveiled for the first time. This shot satisfies the spectator’s desire, played upon since the opening of the film, to know the queen, to lift her veil. By doubling the point of view structure of the peeping tom film, the Queen is cast as the object of desire rather than as simply enigma and thus potential threat.

All three of the point of view structures from the primitive cinema are repeated in this transitionary segment and each performs a narrative function. The non-diegetic spectator of the earliest shots repeats the unanchored panorama of the opening of the film. It reintroduces the thematics established early in the film of fear and threat and duality. The peeping tom segment cast the "evil" as curious child rather than possessor of knowledge. It thus undermined the authority of the Archduchess and her entourage for the spectator. Lastly and tangentially, it shifted the view of the Queen from enigma and threat to object of desire. The closure of this segment handed narrative authority over to the
character of the Queen. It is she who is searching for evidence, she is not the guilty party as the ambiguous opening of the film led the spectator to question.

The closure of this segment with the Queen's gaze indicates a shift in point of view. The Queen has become the diegetic spectator announcing her control of the remaining portion of the film. In fact, the Queen can open windows whereas the servants can only peek through apertures already established. Thus there is also a supplanting of the peeking and spying for a battle of self-revelation and self-nomination. This gesture is doubled by the fact that this is the Queen's first appearance without a veil indicating that she is no longer a blank face onto which Evil can cast its aspersions. The segment is therefore a transitionary one which hands the narrative over to the Queen but also contextualizes it thematically and visually. The curious gaze of the servant serves to announce the reading of the rest of the film as infantile, like their gaze. Clearly the Queen's conduct in this scene is also puerile—speaking to portraits and even pretending to take the king's hand to lead him to the table. The Queen's insistence that things will be a certain way because she is the Queen also recalls children's role-play. The reference to the tarot cards and Marais' wound connote an otherworldliness. Lastly, there
is a visual confirmation that we have entered the Queen's mind. When the Queen asserts Stanislas' role as her death, there are a series of punctuating close-ups, each more extreme than the previous one, of the Queen's eyes which are overdramatically lit. Her highly agitated state reflected in the successive extreme close-ups announces a corresponding penetration of the Queen's interior, her instincts and drives. This is paralleled by the two trips to the bull's eye window suggesting that these are windows into the Queen's mind. The shift in point of view from the infantile spectator to the Queen via the references to the primitive cinema allow a reading of the rest of the film as the spectralization of the Queen's infantile fantasy for wholeness through a working through of the layers of repression.

The startling entry of Stanislas through the window obliquely recalls another primitive film, *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show*. In that film, Uncle Josh watches a series of separate films within the film, at the end of which he tries "to get inside the image," only to tear down the screen and confront a rear projectionist. Unlike Uncle Josh, Stanislas simply enters at the end of a series of primitive-film likenesses and on the other side

of the screen confronts not a rear projectionist but another source of fantasy, another sort of projectionist, the Queen. He discovers, like the primitive diegetic spectator, a primal scene, one that reveals the puerile nature of the fantasy behind the Queen’s actions. The instinct itself is shown. Stanislas’ passage through the window allows a recognition/reactivation of the repressed desire. The initial repression is the Queen’s unfulfilled desire for her husband where her husband’s death is the site of repression of sexual desire, of desire for power and of desire to speak and act. This second group within the segment is a lifting of the veil rather than the skirts which hides the source of primal curiosity. Thus like Uncle Josh, Stanislas breaks through the screen which separates public from private, a distinction already announced by the primitive spectators seeking knowledge of the Queen.

Stanislas repeats this performance of the primitive spectator confronting the rear projectionist in another scene later in the film. In one of the first scenes of the final segment, after the confrontation that drives the Queen to reassert control of her life, the Count von Foehm, Chief of Police, pays her a visit to lay a trap. He announces that Stanislas was caught by the police. The conversation also reveals a lot about the interworkings of
the court and the Queen’s relationship to the Archduchess, especially how the latter maligned the Queen’s character publically. What is interesting is the point of view from which the scene is shot. Before Foehm enters, the Queen places Stanislas behind a one-way glass in front of the billiard table. From there he will hear and see the conversation without being revealed. Despite expectations, the camera never shifts to assume Stanislas’s point of view, as might have been the case in a Hollywood melodrama. Rather the camera seamlessly records the scene from what would be the view of a third party in the conversation. However, while the actual and verbal billiard games are played, the camera always keeps the one-way glass in frame. Again, Stanislas’s role is to reveal the rear-projectionist, to lift the veil on the mechanisms of repression, to bear silent witness.

Stanislas continues in this role until the end of the film, standing silently on the other side of the screen watching the production of the production. When preparations are finalized for the Queen to ride into the capital and reclaim her reign, Stanislas is framed in the window watching the procession assemble, as each side jockeys for position. Two differences from the previous scene trace the progress of the lifting of the forces of repression. As the mechanisms of repression are lifted, so the
screen is no longer opaque, the screen is now an open window through which Stanislas can clearly see. So too has Stanislas's function become effaced, for he served as the screen onto which were projected the forces of repression. Thus, in this scene he has just swallowed the Queen's own suicide pill which will ultimately remove him from the drama entirely.

The final scene which completes his role is the culminating scene in which the Queen presents herself to her troops at an open window and reasserts her reign as Queen. It is now the Queen who has moved to the other side of the screen, no longer struggling with the mechanisms of repression. After this act, Stanislas mounts the stairs to the Queen and stabs her. In a violent act of penetration, the Queen and Stanislas are joined. The Queen has regained all that was repressed and unfulfilled—her desire for union, power, and self-expression. However, by killing her at this moment, the logic of the text declares that the Queen cannot be subject.

According the the melodramatic structure, at the end the status quo will be reestablished, thus there was never a possibility for her to be the subject of the drama. However, that she attained the fulfillment of her desire makes this film the story of her struggle to be a subject. At the opening of the film, the Queen is a blank screen
onto which the Archduchess and the other lieutenants of evil project false or misleading narratives. At mid-point, people are seeking to peek beneath the veil that represents her repression and keeps the reigning monarch from being a subject. The final segment bears (silent?) witness to the Queen’s struggle to overcome repression and fulfill her desire, something only she can do. It is through a series of struggles with different incarnations of the other that she arrives at her fulfillment. The Stanislas character serves as the screen onto which the various others are projected.

There are two other roles the Stanislas character plays as screen. The first is rather oblique but still important. It comes from a reference midway through the final segment when Stanislas is commanded by the Queen to read from *Hamlet*. It is the scene of confrontation between Hamlet and his mother in her bedroom. Having just spared his uncle, the new king’s life, Hamlet mistakes Polonius behind the curtain for the new king and kills him. The Queen speaks the role of the Queen, Gertrude, and Stanislas that of Hamlet; she knows her role by heart. The scene recalls the Oedipal drama and gives the Queen/Stanislas relationship another facet, that of mother and son. This reference is important for that drama too is played out behind the scenes of the film. The unseen
Mother is the character of the Archduchess, mother of the former king, whom we are led to believe had a hand in the murder of her son. It is this drama that is left unspoken except for the reference from Hamlet. The repression of that scene evokes the primal scene witnessed by the curious child. Yet in the Hamlet version, it is the man behind the screen, Polonius, keeper of protocol, the rear projectionist of the primitive film, who is killed. That is, it is the mechanism of repression, social protocol, that is killed albeit mistakenly. But, in so doing, the full expression of desire can be revealed. Although the Mother is not confronted, her proxy, the embodiment of the Social, is laid to rest allowing desire its full expression. The scenes following are made possible by the symbolic lifting of the mechanisms of repression, the scenes of avowal of desire. Again it is Stanislas who will act as screen receiving and expressing the avowal.

The Stanislas character does the receiving, the reacting and the pining for the love relationship. A close reading of the two love scenes portrays Stanislas in the typically feminine position of recipient of the love avowals. It is on his face that we read the effect of the avowals. It is Stanislas who spurs, through his expression of love, the Queen into action. It is Stanislas who suggests they become an "eagle with two heads." In his
reading of Howard Hawk's cinema, Bellour has concluded that the woman, despite seeming man's equal, is still placed in the "feminine" position of recipient of the love avowal. "Mais ce n'est qu'à travers les marques codifiées qui veulent ici que ce soit la femme dont le visage magnifié puisse à la fois tout entier exprimer et recevoir l'aveu."\footnote{Raymond Bellour, "L'évidence et le code" L'Analyse du film (Paris: Editions Albatross, 1979), pp.123-130.} In \textit{L'Aigle à deux têtes} it is not the woman who receives the avowal and the man who acts but the opposite. This is clear at the level of story where Stanislas watches while the Queen prepares to and then does reclaim her power. It is also evident that cinematically the Queen is given the dominant role. The high angles capturing the assurance on her face contrast sharply with the low angles capturing the expressions of Stanislas's deep-felt reaction to the love avowals. Movement and authority reside with the Queen. To further emphasize her role, the two love scenes are intercut with images of the Queen on a wild horse.

The subject of much critical debate, the seeming excess of these scenes intercut into the narrative suggests precisely that, excess.\footnote{André Fraigneau, \textit{Cocteau par lui-même} (Paris: Seuil, 1957).} In his role as screen, as
recipient of the Queen’s love, Stanislas allows a revelation of the layers of repression of the Queen’s desire, the deepest and final one being sexual. These textual excesses are the final vestiges of the repression which escapes as excess. For it is desire that is repressed. And when it is expressed openly, it allows further expressions of the repressed. The scenes further place the Queen in a position of dominance. For not only does Stanislas’s face speak the emotions of the love avowal, but the Queen’s strength and dominance are asserted by her domination of the wild horse. Any fear from such wildness is expressed not on the queen’s face but in her second double, her faithful servant, Tony. He rides with her but cannot keep up, cannot match the strength, speed and courage of the Queen.

The power and dominance expressed and attributed to the Queen in the love scenes prepare the spectator for her ultimate declaration of power and dominance as she steps to the window to reclaim her reign before the troops. However, at another level, according the melodramatic plot structure, the Queen must be struck down at her pinnacle. However much Cocteau managed to shift the terms of power, wrangling with the many powerful images of woman, the melodramatic mode would not allow an outcome other than the status quo. Thus although the Queen was read at the
outset of the film as a sign of enigma and difference, typical signs of woman, she emerges, through a series of confrontations as a clear sign of royalty. The reign of evil was successful precisely because of its projections onto the sign of the Queen. Thus the clarification of signs that is the plot of melodrama was a clarification of the sign of the Queen.

By doubling and redoubling the Stanislas character, a series of signs could be projected onto him allowing the confrontation of the Queen with all the permutations of the other. As the embodiment of the king and poet/hero, he read the Truth of her character and the evil of government. As unattainable love object and embodiment of the King, he read the purity of her heart. As the ambiguous penetrator of the garden, he was her death, allowing the confrontation with the infantile fears of her own death and that of the King. Yet Stanislas could only play these roles, provide the screen for the different projections of the double, once there was a deliberate and clear shift in representation. The references to the primitive, cinematic and Freudian established the uncanny nature of the discursive mode, an encounter of repressed infantile and primitive beliefs with infantile and primitive ways of seeing.

What must also be questioned in this film is the role of the man. No longer simply the dominant, his role is
vital and more complex. Through the doubling of the Stanislas character with the king, Cocteau empowered him beyond human possibility. By further doubling, with both the image of Chatterton and Kitty Bell, the character was given attributes of genius, outcast and victim of love which all had their parallel role in the story. The overlapping of the reference to Chatterton and Kitty Bell also intimates at the Platonic complete being. By further doubling his role with the subtext of Hamlet, Cocteau raised important references to power and desire, questions which don't have to remain exclusively the domain of the actor in the plot. Yet even the duality of active and passive is undermined by the casting of Stanislas in the double dramatic role of hero and villain according to the melodramatic structure.

Another duality that was interestingly explored was that of the spectator. Initially Stanislas is inserted into the role of the primitive spectator, doubling the role the servants had established in the transitionary segment. Drawing on primitive models, Stanislas became not just curious child seeking primal knowledge but, through the reference to the Uncle Josh character, came to propose a more active role of tearing down the screen. The screen was removed not to intercede in the narrative, but to better understand the mechanisms behind it, a
knowledge that goes beyond the surface of seemingly clear sexual difference. It also allowed the creation of a being that incorporated difference, if for only a short time, an eagle with two heads and two sides that were not necessarily divided along the typical dualities of dominant cinema. Cocteau seems to take this stance deliberately:

L'Aigle à deux têtes, s'opposait au théâtre de paroles et au théâtre de mise en scène. Je ramenais le public sans l'ombre de ménagements, au théâtre d'actes. Actes qui empêchaient l'ennui que la plupart de nos spectateurs prennent pour le sérieux. On les avait mis à l'école. Il me fallait les en sortir. Vous me direz que les élèves adorent le tohu-bohu de la sortie des classes, mais n'oublions pas que dans l'école dont je parle, chaque élève observait l'autre du coin de l'œil et ne voulait pas paraître un cancre. Cette classe menaçait donc de s'éterniser, de prendre ses habitudes et de considérer la récréation comme un plaisir indigne d'elle.46

Although the reference is to the theatre, Cocteau also seems to oppose in principle the Institutional Modes of Representation (Burch's term) as a general position for the spectator. By exploiting different means of representation, including the melodramatic and the primitive, Cocteau implicates the spectator in the spectralization of the primal and the ineffable. This is achieved through the doubling of the Stanislas character, which coupled with the atmosphere created in the opening of the film,

46Fraigneau, pp. 92-93.
evokes an uncanny effect. The doubling creates the spec-tralization of the Queen's confrontations with the signs of repression, in keeping with the melodramatic mode. The layering of primitive discourse further aids in the articulation of the primal forces which give meaning to those signs in Cocteau's text.
Chapter V
Le Juste Milieu

Orphée, filmed in 1949, is clearly Jean Cocteau's best made film. In the "cinema de qualité" tradition, it features great actors and actresses in a seamless narrative. Yet the subject is not in keeping with that tradition. As the title announces, it is a retelling of the Orpheus legend wherein the poet so charmed the gods that he was allowed to retrieve his wife from the netherworld. The subject and its themes are much more a fitting topic for an avant-garde film than one in the "tradition de qualité".

Actually, Cocteau bucked more than the traditional themes of the cinema of quality. Technically, the film
violates many of the rules of what Noël Burch calls the Institutional Mode of Representation.\(^1\) According to this representational rhetoric, the screen duplicates the missing "fourth wall" of the theatre, the proscenium arch. For example, the 180-degree rule in cinema acts as a stage line, the mise-en-scene replicating the theatre. Actors' stances must remain open to the audience.\(^2\) However, Cocteau thought little of these rules and obeyed or disobeyed them at his convenience. In this film he rarely used the travelling shot or the shot-reverse shot for conversations. Cars and characters pass out of the frame to the left and, in the next frame, enter from the left without the justification of having changed direction. Instead, Cocteau exploited the trappings of a "well made film" only insofar as they fit his discursive needs. He invented his own sense of narrative continuity at a more thematic level, if you will, than the rote exercising of traditional techniques.

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A clever blend of representational and avant-garde film techniques, Orphée is viewed by critics as a well crafted retelling of the story told in Le Sang d'un poète. Narrativizing the heavyhanded techniques of Le Sang d'un poète, Orphée seems to take up the same themes. While it is true that the passage through mirrors, the reference to a "zone" between reality and immortality or death, and the timelessness of that region are recycled from Le Sang d'un poète, Orphée goes beyond a treatise on what courses through a poet's blood. Orphée reflects the mature vision of a seasoned artist who, while again casting a jaundiced eye at poetic reception and immortality, presents a song of the artist's plight. A song, something fluid taking the shape of that which contains it, otherwise always in flux, in motion. Orphée presents the ecstasy of the poet.

If Orpheus seems stuck, in a state of writer's block, at the opening of the film, the film presents much the

same picture. Visually, sonorally and spatially, the film excludes Orpheus. He is outside the status quo however it may be defined. Different characters or groups of characters represent various alternatives: the young poets are the young turks of the artistic milieu; Eurydice represents unconditional love; the Princess that elusive articulation of the beyond. This is not to say that Orpheus is not popular; he has reached the pinnacle of success. However, the price of that success places him outside the world.

The establishment of the status quo and Orpheus' exclusion from it is rather simply depicted. Terms of the exclusion are announced in a three-shot. The three-shot presents three figures in a triangular configuration whereby a pair of them indicates the exclusion of the third. The three-shot serves to announce the story and the terms of the characters' relationships. Prefiguring the story gives the sense it tells itself, a prime quality of a well made film. The Princess' dominance over and Orpheus' exclusion from threshold space are made to seem natural. Although the three-shot, as the dominant narrative technique, creates the sense that the story tells itself and thereby the impression this is a film in the "tradition de qualité," ultimately the sensation is foiled. A story cannot tell itself; the poet cannot be
excluded from the work, nor can his muse, in the form of the Princess, dominate over the work even figurally.

Sonorally the exclusion is established by the enforced silence of the "visitor" or "interloper." Characters throughout the film are told to be quiet or not to ask questions. Whereas this enforced silence would seem to inhibit understanding of what is happening in the film, all that occurs is announced through the three-shot and the sound track, usually with diegetic sounds, though sometimes with music.

Spatially the establishment of this liminal space is clear. Often the three shot, used to establish the exclusion of one of the characters, is presented in a threshold space. Usually doorways are used, however sometimes a transitional space is established through the narrative. The most obvious example of this is the "zone."

Cocteau's indebtedness to the primitive cinema in this film resides in his depiction of this otherworldliness. In a gesture of legerdemain rivaling that of Méliès, Cocteau paints the world, the status quo, and Orpheus' exclusion from it. Like Méliès', the "victim" of his magic was no-where, in that space between appearance and disappearance, between life and death. In fact, the magic films of Méliès are largely concerned specifically with this liminal space and involve the passage between worlds
or the disincarnation of a person usually through dismemberment, thus a passage into another "state." Tom Gunning in his article "Cinema of Attraction" points out that trick films such as magic films tend more to spectacle than narrative. Cocteau had to balance spectacle and narrative so that tricks such as passing through mirrors would not arrest the narrative, hence the recourse to the codes of a "well made film." By exploiting film's capacity to link disparate spaces and to integrate passage between these spaces through the motif of the three-shot, Cocteau successfully provided liminal space a place within the narrative.

Passage into another state or world is a significant theme of the Orpheus myth. As Cocteau retells it at the opening of the film:

Orphée était le chantre de Thrace. Il charmait même les bêtes. Ses chants le distrayait de sa femme, Eurydice. La Mort le lui enleva. Il descendait aux Enfers, la charma et obtint de revenir avec elle à condition de ne jamais la regarder. Mais il la regarda et fut déchiré par les Bacchantes.

As in the original myth, passage through liminal space is conditioned upon sound and sight. However, Cocteau

4Tom Gunning, "Cinema of Attraction" Wide Angle 8, no. 3/4, pp. 63-70.
changed the relationship between Orpheus and the gods. Rather than the premature death of his wife forcing Orpheus to use his charms with the gods to get her back, Death is posed as a figure who actively seeks out Orpheus because she loves him. Furthermore, the Bacchantes are given cause to kill Orpheus at the end, driven by revenge rather than incomprehensible aggression as originally told. Thus Cocteau grants substantial agency to the forces of the netherworld. He renders that world recognizable through its characters and ironic organization as a bureaucracy. The irony of the agency he grants love, inspiration and death is finally undermined as is the seeming agency given the three-shot.

The film opens immediately using the three-shot pattern. After explaining in voice-over that Orpheus is charmed by his own songs and thereby loses his wife, and so on, the camera reveals a group of three young people gathered around a table on a café terrace while one strums a guitar. To the right of the frame, separated by a wine glass centered on the table, the young man strums his guitar. To the left, one from behind, one from the front, the two others listen and chat. After the opening description of the Orpheus legend according to Cocteau, a pictoral representation of the essence of the story is provided. The young man with guitar is inebriated by his
own song, as represented by the wine glass and his segregation from the two others.

The shots that follow tell the same story in narrative form. The camera cuts inside the café and pans 270 degrees to reveal a crowded café, obviously quite popular. It comes to rest on Orpheus who stands up from his table alone and pays the waiter. The solitude of Orpheus in the crowd reinforces the opening shot.

The camera then pans to follow Orpheus’ gaze back across the same group of tables in a 180 degree arc. Above a group of tables is a large window half curtained. Through the open portion, Orpheus sees the arrival of a Rolls Royce and the chauffeur descend and cross to the opposite side to open the door for his passengers. This motivates a cut to the square outside the café which reveals the Princess and then Cégeste getting out of the vehicle. A slight shift in position allows the camera to follow the Princess across the street to the café terrace where she is greeted by those sitting there. She passes on towards the door with Heurtebise, the chauffeur and the drunken Cégeste in tow. Inside, Orpheus is about to pass through the door when the Princess comes through causing him to step back and turn to watch her pass. Again making for the door, his path is then crossed by Cégeste, swaggering, who takes a moment to identify Orpheus and then
snorts in his face as a child would imitating a pig. Finally, Orpheus has clear passage out of the café.

This short segment is filled with references to liminal space. Beginning with the guitarist who sits on the threshold between the café and outside, Orpheus is then left to gaze through the window to see the Princess and her entourage arrive. When Orpheus starts to leave, his passage is blocked not once but twice by the same group. Orpheus is again isolated as it is clear that the Princess, given the greeting she receives, is also part of the café society. Moreover, once Orpheus leaves the café, he is called back, further impeding his departure.

Capturing Orpheus' departure in a shot across the crowded terrace, a shout is heard calling Orpheus' name. The reverse reveals a second three-shot of two of the café's society surrounding an editor/critic who is twice their age. One, later to be recognized as a poet, comments under his breath to the editor that he must be nuts to call Orpheus, gets up and leaves the table with his comrade following suit. Again the three-shot establishes Orpheus' isolation from the poets of the café. Although called back, the conversation that follows does more to establish why Orpheus remains separate from the society. The editor asks about Orpheus' visit to the lion's den, so to speak, and Orpheus makes a comment about how bitter the drink is that they serve at this café.
On a sonoral level, the spatial and visual segregation of Orpheus is reinforced. Throughout this opening portion of the film, the guitar music filters through the chatter and bustle of the café. Unlike the rest of the café patrons, Orpheus only gets to speak in this very last segment and then it is to regret his isolation. Thus, although the first name called out in the film is that of the title character, as should be in a traditional film de qualité, this same character remains otherwise silenced.

During the scene at the café, Orpheus suggests to the editor that the young people at the café hate him. At those words there is a cut from the tight two shots that have characterized their tête à tête across the terrasse of the café to two women approaching. With their approach the music changes abruptly to a piano boisterously striking swing-like riffs. The two women are leaders of the "bacchantes" who, according to legend, ultimately kill Orpheus. Their path brings them to the guitarist from the opening, recalling the initial three-shot and its meaning. A second shot of the terrace, though it is barely perceptible that the angle has changed, reveals the Princess and Cégeste coming out of the café and crossing the terrasse to the group that originally greeted them, who, in turn, were joined by those from the editor’s table who shunned Orpheus. This weaving of paths knits a broad swathe,
isolating the editor's table from the rest of the bustling café.

Reinforcing his isolation and silence, the reverse of this bustle reveals a tight two shot of Orpheus and the editor. Orpheus, asking the identity of the woman in black and the young man with her, learns that the woman in the Rolls is the Princess and the drunkard is Jacques Cégeste, a young poet. The Princess' literary review of blank pages called "Nudism" causes Orpheus to chortle and to counter that he is still popular with the public at large. In addition to forcing Orpheus to learn who is up and coming and defend his own poetry, an extreme close-up of the editor's lips and Orpheus' ear during their chat underscores Orpheus' muteness and their isolation.

The bustle heightens in the café and a brawl breaks out. The rhythm of the music also increases and drums begin to sound quietly in the background. The drums will come to be identified with the motorcyclists-acylots of the Princess. The police arrive and herd the young people inside the café. The music stops. One policeman approaches Orpheus and the editor. There is a three-shot of the editor, Orpheus and the policeman, establishing Orpheus' control and dominance, if only for this short segment. Upon seeing Orpheus' identity card, the policeman apologizes for not recognizing him and allows
Orpheus to vouch for the editor. Thus is identified the public who still respects Orpheus, the common man. But the editor’s only comment is that he’s in too well with the police, reversing any sense of community for Orpheus.

Orpheus finds himself among the crowd of onlookers after Cégeste is mowed down by the motorcyclists. Throughout the film, the violent scenes, such as the taking of life, tastefully occur off-screen, as would be expected of a "well-made film." Although part of the crowd, the Princess quickly winnows him out, beckoning him to get in the car so as to serve as witness. Orpheus’ only opportunity at movement is controlled by the Princess. Even the space of the square she controls, telling the police with convincing authority that she will vouch for Cégeste and take care of him once run down.

Once inside the vehicle, the Princess’ dominance is again established in a three-shot of her, Cégeste and Orpheus. Furthermore, she will not allow Orpheus to speak throughout the journey in the car. An interesting lighting is used to highlight the Princess’ and then Heutrebise’s eyes. The latter is also limited by his reflection in the rearview mirror. The lighting indicates a special vision which only they share. Another special use of lighting and camera effects in this scene is the reverse negative. It is used to depict the surrounding
countryside and emphasize its other-worldliness. Furthermore, once that is shown the Princess asks for the radio to be turned on. The radio is white whereas the rest of the dashboard is the standard black color. The reverse lighting of the land and the radio indicates a resemblance between the two which is further complicated by the messages which the radio emits: "Le silence va plus vite à reculons; un seul verre d’eau éclaire le monde." It will come to be known that these are lines of poetry written by Cégeste and broadcast by him under instruction from the Princess. So there is no doubt as to who controls this "other-world," the only shot which relieves the view through the windshield is one of the Princess severely backlit by the reverse negative countryside outside the vehicle.

The Princess’ dominance is undiminished upon their arrival at the chalet. Rather it is reinforced by the now-standard establishing three-shot; at their descent from the vehicle, Heurtebise is cornered behind the car door, the Princess at its end and Orpheus on its open side. When crossing this next potential threshold, the Princess holds all the doors and doorways. Orpheus will await at the base of every stair and at the threshold of every door for the Princess to pass before him. In fact, he will act and speak like a somnambulist throughout the
scene, upon which the Princess will comment. It is only at her behest, "si vous dormez, si vous rêvez, acceptez vos rêves," that the spell over Orpheus seems broken. She also controls the sound track: Orpheus is still not allowed to speak; she forbids him to touch the radio; she changes the station after another emission of Cégeste’s poetry. The scene ends with Orpheus watching the Princess and her acolytes pass through the mirror while he is left behind.

In fact, once in the chalet, a certain fluidity of thresholds is established. In the transitionary segment which ends this portion of the film, the Princess leaves Orpheus in her room to be attended by her servants while she "officially" enlists Cégeste and takes him through the mirror to perform some function. This scene clearly establishes the Princess as Cégeste’s Death, something assumed given the legend on which the film is based. The three cuts whereby the Princess leaves her room and Orpheus, the servants enter with champagne, and the passage through the mirror of her, the motor cyclists and Cégeste resemble each other in that the door/mirror is situated in the same location within the frame for each shot. The effect dislocates the space the doors mediate. The layering of the three shots of the door/mirror gives a sense of fluidity or disorientation so that one no longer
knows which direction is which. Thus the chalet itself is defined as no where, a sort of ultimate threshold space.

To this point two practices have defined the narrative and space respectively. The three-shot has announced the story which is to be played out in the scene, defining the terms of characters' relationships. Characters and space have been dominated by the Princess. However, the following segment does not repeat this pattern. By virtue of this differentiation, the space in Orpheus' home is, at least initially, defined by what it is not: not dominated by the Princess, not prefigured by her. It is not until Orpheus returns to the Rolls to listen to the radio messages that the initial pattern returns.

Space has been set somewhere between the poles of public and private. The café, though public by definition and by practice, is frequented by the young poets of the day. The depiction of that space cinematically left Orpheus on its periphery while the other characters crisscrossed the space like bees at a hive. Sonorally, Orpheus was reduced to questions and whispers while the band played on, that is while music and chatter and scorn greeted Orpheus' every movement. His short time in the truly public space of the square was entirely dominated by the Princess who whisked him off in her Rolls Royce.

The Rolls like the chalet which is their destination is clearly the domain of the the Princess. The Rolls
epitomizes transition by its movement from one space to another. Like the chalet, its whereabouts and movement are mysterious. Therein Orpheus is again silenced. The chalet, as is learned through the course of the film, occupies a space between life and the no man's land, or "zone," one must cross before death. It too is neither public nor private, controlled by shibboleths of another world.

That space between two worlds, often between public and private, is the stuff of the primitive cinema. As Judith Mayne points out in her work *Private Novels, Public Films*, that "the cinema provides the sense of transgression of boundaries between public space of theatre and the private space offered on screen." She goes on to explain that "figures of vision emerge as primitive forms of mediation between public and private." Whereas Mayne's study focused on the mediation of space in terms of the spectator's relationship to the film, as a matter of pure content, it must also be noted that one of the preoccupations of the primitive cinema is the transgression of two worlds. Let us repeat Mayne's gesture of returning to the primitive films to examine what is at work.


6Mayne, p. 87.
Going back to the very first films, there are many examples of this fascination with the transgression of space. In the Lumière film, *Repas du bébé* which records the feeding of an infant, the final gesture of the film is the child offering a cookie to the person operating the camera. This film thus falls more within the domain of Mayne’s study of the transgression from within to without. In the same vein, *Arrivée d’un train* caused spectators to run from the theatre as they thought the arriving train was, in fact, going to come through the screen and into the theatre. In another Lumière film the transgression remains within the diegesis, *Sortie d’usine*, which records workers leaving the factory. While not all Lumière films record a transgression of opposed spaces, it seems a topic oft repeated in the various scenes of bourgeois life which form the bulk of Lumière’s film work.

Méliès’ films show a similar interest in the crossing of spaces. Renown for his magic films, Méliès reproduced many of the magic tricks that he produced on stage in person before the advent of any recording device.7 His very first films recorded the appearance and disappearance of various characters. This is not a transgression of public

and private, but simply a here and there. The characters, fairies, pages, magicians, valets and disciples of Mesmer, reside on the fringes of reality or daily life. They are already recognized as personnages who pass between two worlds.⁸

Méliès' films are most relevant to a discussion of Cocteau's depiction of this passage. However, it should be kept in mind that the fascination with passage between two different sorts of space is not the exclusive domain of magic films, but rather an interest reflecting the time of the first cinematic productions, be they Lumière's or Méliès'. Méliès and Cocteau share an interest in a more ephemeral view of the space in mind and a more magical conception of the passage itself. Film lends itself well to their shared view, though it must be repeated that Méliès, at least initially, did not use the properties of cinema to depict the disappearance and appearance of his characters. He relied on magic as he practiced it on stage. While Cocteau exploits the properties of cinema to

exact his magic, in Orphée unlike Le Sang d'un poète, the passages between worlds is made to fit with the practices of a "well made film," it is made to seem "normal," as it were.

The primitive cinema taken as a whole seems a catalogue of experiments in links between two spaces. Cocteau too experiments with a variety of representations of different transgressions. Thus the cinema itself seems born of liminal space. Not only does it experiment with the relationship between the two sides of the camera as Mayne noted, but with the film medium's capacity to link disparate spaces in a seamless narrative within the diegesis.

The segment of Orphée which follows Orpheus' return home begins to reveal the diversity possible in creating the links as well as the indebtedness to the primitive cinema. Annoucing the scene is the standard three-shot, this one of Orpheus in the Princess' Rolls, Eurydice and Heurtebise as Orpheus listens to the radio messages sent by Cégeste. Orpheus has fallen under the spell of the Princess like Heurtebise while Eurydice, though cornered between the two, is excluded. However, it is Orpheus who tells Eurydice to be quiet, indicating that he is now under the Princess' sway. To reinforce the depth of his commitment to the Princess, the three-shot is repeated as
he explains that he would give all his previous work for one phrase resembling the poetry emanating from the radio. In fact, there is a surfeit of three-shots which create a sort of visual hyperbole depicting Orpheus’ conversion to the Princess’ camp.

It must be noted that Orpheus has gained no freedom of movement with this shift of alliance. In one of the many three-shots, Heurtebise is visually excluded from the triad by the car’s window frame. Heurtebise will deliver Eurydice. Both Eurydice and Heurtebise together are framed passing through thresholds, from the car, out of the garage and through the trap door of the bedroom. Orpheus, on the other hand, when he goes to pass through the garage door is captured immediately in a three-shot reinforcing both the spell of the Princess and his continued stasis. To the left is Heurtebise, centered is a statue which stands beside the garage door and coming to a halt just through the door to the right is Orpheus. Orpheus, like the statue, is stuck, held in place by his muse and captor. In a Méliès-like substitution, the statue comes to stand in for the live figure of the Princess, a magical substitution which empowers and incarnates the statue like the dancing corpses of Méliès’ L’Enchanteur Alcobribas, Décapité récalcitrant, Le Manoir du Diable, to name a few early examples. As well, it
recalls the animated statue of *Le Sang d'un poète*, a work come to life.

It is Heurtebise who must accompany Orpheus if he is to cross any thresholds, effect any movement. A diabolic passe-partout, Heurtebise remains the only figure in the triad of the three-shot who can move about freely. He escorts Eurydice to her room and Orpheus into town. Once in town, Orpheus sets off to the police station on a false journey. After climbing steps and hills, he becomes entangled in a series of labyrinthine crosscuts as he chases the figure of the Princess. Ultimately, Orpheus advances nowhere and, frustrated, returns to the awaiting Heurtebise. The sense of arriving nowhere is achieved through another scene seemingly drawn from the primitive era. In the chase film, *La Course aux poitrons*, a series of scene changes allows the stationary camera to capture the elusive pumpkin whereas those in pursuit are doomed to continue to pass through the frame well after the pumpkin has disappeared. The recourse to the primitive likeness reinforces the sense of a labyrinth of disconnected spaces in which an otherwise inanimate object is guided more clearly than the humans who pursue it. Thus there is a double elusiveness, a space which seems dislocated and a force which seems superior.

The private space which constitutes Orpheus and Eurydice's home is not subject to the Princess' control.
There is no introductory three-shot to establish her control. Another, more subtle and less dominating, configuration is used there. Next to the doors leading into the house and garage, there are statues of women. These statues will be co-opted by use of the three-shot as the Princess comes to dominate Orpheus at home, as was seen in the shot at the threshold of the garage. However, the Princess exercises no official control over Eurydice. Thus the statues seem to stand as a menace to her private space—a muse of conflicting inspirational forces. It is intimated that before the arrival and instantaneous enchantment of the Princess, Eurydice served as the force behind Orpheus' inspiration.

Therefore, when Eurydice seeks to venture out on her own, though she meets a more abrupt end, the three-shot indicating the Princess' dominance is not utilised. In fact, Eurydice is visually permitted to cross the threshold out of her home. However, her passage is marked by a two-shot of her and the statue at the door. Because the Princess is not authorized by the rules of the other-world, she in turn is not visually authorized control of Eurydice. The bell on the front gate rings indicating her departure, the motorcyclists roar past and Eurydice's bicycle is propelled, unguided, across the road to a ditch. As with the depiction of Cégeste's death, all
occurs off-screen. However, once dead, whether official or not, the three-shot is featured indicating the Princess' control of Eurydice.

In the scene where the Princess comes through the mirror to get Eurydice, there is a struggle over whether or not she has permission. Although officially the death is unauthorized, visually the three-shot announces the Princess' control. Two three-shots establish her control. The first features Heurtebise, a statue on the mantle in the bedroom and the Princess when the argument first arises over authorization. The shot reflects the ambiguity of the situation. However, the second three-shot confirms the Princess' control by substituting Eurydice in the position Heurtebise occupied in the first place. The substitution recalls visually the absurdity of calling into question the Princess' control. To call further attention to how ridiculous Heurtebise's question of right and wrong, at the moment the Princess' temper flairs at being questioned, the lighting of the three-shot is reversed, rendering the Princess' dress white. Like Heurtebise before, Eurydice is subservient to Death.

Actually this question of authorization, as silly as it may seem when discussing such lofty topics as death, love and poetry, becomes the subtext of the film. Discursively there is no question as to the Princess'
dominance. However, within the story, the question is raised thereby creating a conflict between the story and the discourse. The discourse works as mysteriously as the Princess, and in the final analysis, both must be undone.

After the Princess leaves with Eurydice, the thresholds of the private space of Orpheus and Eurydice's home are dominated by statues. Orpheus and Heurtebise are left behind at home. At each passage through a threshold, statues are featured: Orpheus through the garage door, Heurtebise beckoning to Orpheus from the second story bedroom window, Heurtebise standing by a window in the bedroom, and Heurtebise explaining how windows are the doors through which Death passes. With the elimination of Eurydice, the statues become Death's proxies, reminding us that even within the limited parameters of the home, Death controls all movement.

However, since the taking of Eurydice exceeded the authorization of the Princess, once back at the chalet for her tribunal, a three-shot of the judges indicates that they supersede the Princess' authority. The judges are now dominant. This is reinforced throughout the tribunal by three-shots. As Orpheus and Heurtebise arrive through the mirror of the chalet, a three-shot of a judge, the Princess and Orpheus reflected in the mirror, recalls that Orpheus is but a transient in the otherworld and the judge
not the Princess has the authority. However, a second three-shot emphasizes that even the judge and Princess are mere manifestations of a higher authority as they are framed and reflected in the mirror and Orpheus is shown directly. Throughout the Princess' tribunal, three-shots of the judges reaffirm their authority.

A curious angle which is used deliberately but sparingly must also be interpreted at this juncture. It occurs for the second time once the Princess' tribunal ends and she and Orpheus are shown to her bedroom. Therein, the Princess avows her love for Orpheus and her face softens and begins to look human. Together the Princess and Orpheus lie back on the bed to discuss the future and their love. The camera is positioned at the head of the bed such that the two lovers appear upside down in the shot. The angle is most startling. Once before, this upside down shot of the face has been used in the film. When Cégeste was being taken away after his demise, by the policemen to the Princess' Rolls. In both cases something is amiss.

Although the Princess had authorization to take Cégeste, she used him and his poetry to seduce and charm Orpheus, thus exceeding the bounds of Death as one might imagine them. The love between the Princess and Orpheus is also forbidden. Although the poet is naturally fas-
cinated by Death, certainly a long passionate kiss, as featured in close-up, or discussion of the future together exceeds the Poet’s knowledge. What is more the poet is not even dead yet.

As the legend goes, Orpheus is permitted Eurydice on the condition he never look at her. In order to prefigure this condition, the standard three-shot opens the segment of the film concerned with this situation. Eurydice is featured in the door for she is the one granted passage or movement through threshold space. Orpheus is centered on a diagonal between her and Heurtebise. However, Heurtebise’s role is peculiar. He is not featured in the legend as it is known but added by Cocteau to introduce a second love relationship. Therefore, in this introductory shot, he is shot from the back. Without his facial features figured in the shot, his impotence in the relationship is clearly marked. He is sent only to ensure the couple does not violate the condition of Eurydice’s return; he cannot fulfill his love for Eurydice, and above all else, he is merely a proxy of Death.

Heurtebise’s status is clearly depicted through the three-shots of the scene of Orpheus and Eurydice’s return. In the first, Heutrebise is blocked out of the frame except for his face by an anonymous letter from the bacc-chantes threatening to avenge Cégeste’s curious demise.
The letter serves as the third figure next to Orpheus. In the second, Heurtebise and Orpheus are separated by a statue bust. In fact, this is the only statue featured throughout the entire segment indicating that the Princess no longer dominates the private space of Eurydice and Orpheus' home: into the three-shot of Heurtebise and Orpheus with the statue comes Eurydice such that Orpheus takes the original place of the statue and thereby reinforcing the separation of Heurtebise and Eurydice with his body. However, once Orpheus' primacy is established, Eurydice's imminent demise is prefigured in the three-shot that immediately follows. The same shot is simply shown from the another angle giving Orpheus the foreground and presenting Eurydice and Heurtebise from the back. That is, Orpheus will lose his wife and, with her passing, Heurtebise who is his last link to his lover, Death. Ultimately, of course, things are put right and Orpheus and Eurydice are restored to their original relationship before Death intervened where she shouldn't have. This outcome is prefigured in the third three-shot of essentially the same shot: Eurydice turns around such that she and Orpheus are side by side facing the camera and Heurtebise is featured still from behind, announcing his elimination. However, these are merely the first shots upon the return of Orpheus and Eurydice to their home, all
this has yet to be played out. Interestingly, there will be no further use of sustained three-shots until the final segment of the movie when the Princess "unkills" Orpheus so as to return him to his rightful place beside Eurydice, an act which nullifies or undoes the entire film.

In fact, just as Orpheus becomes unwritten from the story, so he becomes unfeatured in the three-shots that provide the insights into the doings of the narrative. Since the three-shots of the scene of return lead us to the penultimate scene, then it is only after Orpheus has returned to the Rolls in his obsession to receive the coded messages/poetry and has relost Eurydice by looking in the rearview mirror of the Rolls at her and has been stoned to death by the bacchantes avenging Cégeste's death and has redescended with Heurtebise through the zone, that we come to the final scenes of Orpheus' undoing and the three-shots which untell his story.

After returning to the Princess in the zone between life and death and avowing his undying love and obedience to her, the Princess "kills" Orpheus and, with Heurtebise's help, returns Orpheus to life before her intervention. The three-shots that narrate the closing of the film begin with Orpheus' rekilling in the zone. The first three-shot presents, from left to right, the Princess, Heurtebise and Orpheus from behind, announcing his
imminent elimination. The second three-shot explains the result of this death by the subsequent "elimination" of the Princess represented by a three-shot of the same configuration except that the Princess now occupies the position Orpheus did previously. The third three-shot disfigures Orpheus. Featured between Heurtebise and the Princess, Orpheus' face is covered by Heurtebise's hands. The fourth three-shot integrates another practice heretofore only lightly touched upon: the upside down face.

Featured previously with the demise of Cégeste and the loving faces of unrequited love between the Princess and Orpheus, it has been used one other time at the confirmation of Orpheus' death as he lay in the backseat of the Rolls. Now, as with the previous "doomed," the disfigured Orpheus is revealed upside down in the next three-shot of the film. Immediately following the faceless three-shot of Orpheus between Heurtebise and the Princess, a reverse angle of the triad is shown with Orpheus' head slung back across Heurtebise's shoulder. Finally, as Heurtebise and Orpheus go back through time a cut back to the triad reveals Orpheus again between Heurtebise and the Princess, his head thrown back so that his face cannot be seen because unlighted.

With this last segment, the three-shot no longer prefigures the storyline. As the story and the discourse
are reunited by the undoing of the Princess' work, so the technique which called attention to the separation of the two features of the narrative are joined. Whereas the three-shot initially served to announce the story before it unfolded, that function became untenable. For the Princess' dominance runs parallel to the utilisation of the three-shot.

Returning to the initial discussion of the "well made film" so as to situate the function of the Princess, recall that the certain codes were established in order to create the sense that the story tells itself on the screen. Cocteau's film has the appearance of such a film. However, as always in Cocteau's films, things are not as they seem. The techniques of the well made film serve as a cinematic straw man. The three-shot quickly comes to be recognized as a prefiguring of the story to come, thus rendering redundant the need for a story that tells itself. That is the story seemed to tell itself twice.

The figure of the Princess allied itself with the three-shot. The three-shot established her dominance of threshold space. By virtue of her dominance of threshold space, she thus control the movement of characters. Control of characters seemingly yielded control over the
However, the judges foil such a sense of control. Characters do not control a story as codes do not determine the narrative technique of a film. The muse cannot ultimately control the poet. Cocteau seemingly posits an authority which supersedes even the judges featured in the film. When the muse oversteps the poet, as the statue did in Le Sang d’un poète, the poet revolts.

The muse, as represented by the Princess, seems allowed to stop at nothing to charm the poet. She even forces him to plagiarism, as when Orpheus submits Cégeste’s poetry as his own. However, the muse is not the subject, art cannot exceed the artist. The ultimate authority is the poet. Thus when the Princess begins to write the story rather than work in service to it, the story falls apart. The shot turns upside down, as it were. The two must work in tandem, story and discourse must be brought back into line.

The story of Orpheus tells the supremacy of the creator. The work cannot exceed the artist who creates it, not while the artist lives nor after his death. It is the work though which allows the artist to explore the

9Teaching this film one quarter, a student remarked that the film was odd in that the story didn’t change the characters but the characters the story. That statement haunted me for a long time. Herein lies an explanation—finally!
space between life and death, the liminal space which is the fascination of the modern artist. Cinema allows an exploration of the point where two spaces join. That space can be the one occupied by the screen, the space between spectator and film, the space between the artist and his creation of another world or the presentation of the space as represented by the relationship of story and discourse. The figure of the mirror, like the screen onto which a film is projected, is a privileged space. It reflects all of these relationships. It is the reflection itself, be it what the spectator sees reflected in the screen, the artist in his work, the artist in himself, the one cannot exceed the other. The seamless web of narrative which the codes seek to create is another reflection of the work and cannot exceed it, the narrative creates that liminal space between told and telling, one reflecting the other.
Chapter VI
The Primitive Legacy

Le Testament d’Orphée is not a traditional film. It does not follow the modes of institutional narrative though it does tell a story of sorts. Beginning literally where his film Orphée left off, Cocteau personally takes us on a journey through artistic creation. Unconstrained by the limits of time or space, Cocteau passes from one scene to the next engaging with former works, characters and/ or symbols. Like an epic, Cocteau’s film grapples with the creation of a work and the artist’s relation to that work during and after the creative process.

Whereas previous films drew on isolated techniques from the primitive era, Le Testament d’Orphée draws form
and content to provide a waxworks, an animated legacy, of his cinematic creations. Like the servant of primitive voyeur films, Cocteau places his eye to the keyhole of his previous works and views them with the distanced eye of an outsider. The mischievous peeping tom is ultimately punished for peering in at the disparate scenes like his primitive counterpart. His crime is seeking to look behind "the fourth wall", to interrogate what goes on behind the scenes, literally and figuratively.

A prologue which revisits the final scene of Orphée places the thematics squarely within the debate of artistic creation. This film ended with the Princess, as a representative of Death, surrendering Orpheus to his wife and his mortal life. Presumably he returned to his position as a great artist in quest of new inspiration, where the film began. The first full segment of Le Testament d'Orphée begins with Cocteau visiting a professor at various points during his life because he is the one who can release the artist from his no man's land outside of space and time. The professor shoots Cocteau to set him free.

Cocteau follows a horse figure through some ruins and into a gypsy camp. He watches a photograph of Cégeste, his adoptive son Edouard Dermit, emerge from a fire and be torn up by a fortune teller. In the next scene the shreds of the photograph give form to Cégeste as he emerges from
the sea foam. He and Cocteau travel on a boat. Cégeste offers Cocteau a flower which he must resuscitate. He then offers to be Cocteau’s guide.

A segment without these two characters opens on a tapestry, made by Cocteau, of the legend of Judith and Holophernes. The tapestry hangs in a film studio. A young female student approaches and mounts a podium before the tapestry. Prompted by her teacher’s questions as though undergoing a test, she tells where Cocteau’s talent lies. Cocteau crosses the stage as the unseen audience applauds.

Cocteau and his guide emerge in a painter’s studio and come to stop before an easel draped in cloth. Underneath the cloth, Cocteau discovers some of his completed works. However, he persists in trying to draw the flower. Instead of the hibiscus a self-portrait appears and Cocteau destroys the flower in a fit of rage. Cégeste insists he resuscitate the flower, which Cocteau does with his hands, and then bids the artist to follow him.

Leading him down a runway in a film studio, Cégeste brings Cocteau to a doorway which lets into the tribunal scene from Orphée. The judges who emerge are none other than the Princess and Heurtebise. Obliquely reenacting Orpheus’ interrogation before the judges in his film, Cocteau responds to questions about the creative process and
his journey into the supernatural without orders. Cégeste, in his turn, also answers questions similar to those asked in Orphée. After being condemned to life, Cocteau and his guide leave the scene by the door and run-
way.

Seeming to follow Pallas, Cégeste leads Cocteau through ruins to a vision of Isolde on a rowboat. Wander-
ing next through the streets of Villefranche where Cocteau spent much of his life, they cross paths with Cocteau’s double. The Cocteaus eye each other suspiciously as they pass. Cégeste and Cocteau emerge in a zone of ruins in the center of which bust mounted on a tall pedestal. When fed autographs asked of two artists who write their feel-
ings while embracing, the bust spits out streams of paper on which are written various works of art in different forms: songs, poems, etc. which render the artist famous. Led away, Cocteau is left before the statue of Pallas to whom he offers his flower. She kills him with her lance. Two horse-men carry Cocteau to a catafalque where the gyp-
sies come and mourn him.

Cocteau is seen roaming through the ruins of legends he has illustrated without seeming to recognize them. He emerges on a road winding through cliffs above the sea. Two motorcyclists from the film Orphée ride up and demand to see his papers. While they examine them and decide to
ask for his autograph, Cégeste leads Cocteau away. A car of rowdy youths ride by in a convertible blaring Jazz music. They distract the police who pursue them.

Cégeste then takes his leave and Cocteau wanders on alone. He comes to a desk, manned by Yul Brynner, where he is told several times that he’ll soon be received. Summoned, he finds himself before Pallas-Athena who impales him with her lance. Celebrities look on from a loge as Cocteau is laid on his deathbed. Gypsies mourn him. Cocteau rises and walks away. He walks on, passing without seeing, first the Sphinx and then Oedipus, characters that "one wants to know most," he says in voice-over.

As this summary clearly indicates, this film is comprised of a series of loosely related scenes seemingly linked more by the consistent appearance of Cocteau than by any theme. In that way it harks back to the early voyeur films of the primitive cinema where the domestic, or another voyeur, linked a series of scenes viewed through the keyholes of doors. The domestic served more as an excuse to present the series of disparate scenes than any function within the story itself. However, at the end of the film, meaning was conferred on the scenes, usually by the punishment of the peeping tom in the final scene. The goal was not, as in later films of this genre,
the uncovering of evidence, but looking as a mischievous act.¹

In a certain way Cocteau is like the domestic, a social marginal who is mischievously looking. Throughout Cocteau’s films, especially those thematically preoccupied with artistic creation, the artist has been painted as social outcast or marginal. From his writings, he makes clear that he purposely goes against traditional techniques.² The interrogation regarding his art is a purposeful demonstration of the success of these marginal techniques, a flaunting of them. This makes the act mischievous.

As in the peeping tom films of yore, Cocteau presents a series of disparate and comic scenes. The pleasure in viewing them, like the cinema of attractions to which Gunning refers, is derived from a pure scopic pleasure of viewing diverse spectacles.³ These spectacles give


²This was made clear in his Diary of a Film: La Belle et la Bête trans. Ronald Duncan (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1972), the only working record of his filmmaking. It is also clear from his interviews made in hindsight such as Entretiens autour du cinématographe (Paris: Pierre Blafond, 1973).

³Gunning, pp. 33-43.
pleasure precisely because they provide a release of social tension usually through a gag. The "gags" in this film are often "inside jokes," jokes based on a previous knowledge of Cocteau works. The reenactment of the tribunal scene from *Orphée*, because it is turned this time against Cocteau himself, is hilarious.⁴

The individual scenes within this peeping tom motif also bear the marks of the primitive cinema. The scenes are often "crammed" as Noël Burch describes a primitive tableau.⁵ The decor is busy with references to various Cocteau works: tapestries, paintings, drawings, characters, friends, symbols. For example, early in the film Cocteau disappears from a scene with the professor and, as suddenly, reappears, explaining that he forgot his gloves. It is the oversight of Death's gloves that permits Orpheus to pass through the mirror with Heurtebise to retrieve his wife from the netherworld in *Orphée*. It has been thought by historians of the primitive cinema that lecturers "read" the films to spectators commenting on what was

⁴I had the pleasure of first viewing this film at Rockefeller Center in New York during a film series revisiting the New Wave to which this film was to serve as an introduction. The crowd roared at each inside joke and it quickly became clear who within the audience was familiar with which works by the direction from which the laughter emanated.

being shown.\textsuperscript{6} Cocteau, at times, reads or comments on these various references, linearizing the narrative and other times leaves them clearly and purposely unread, such as the ruins of his works through which he wanders. The sensation one receives in viewing this film is that of visiting an old friend or a place where one grew up. This recalls another aspect of the primitive tableau.

The display of primitive films, especially in the countryside, often took place at fairgrounds. Thus Burch quotes historians Deslandes and Richards as emphasizing the continuity between fairground actualities such as dioramas and waxworks and what was offered via the cinematograph.\textsuperscript{7} Thus this sense of familiarity has its roots in the origins of primitive film.

In another sense these peeping tom films evoke a peephole that isn't literally present in the film. Presumably, to have a peeping tom film one needs a keyhole. Rather than literally presenting a keyhole, \textit{Le Testament d'Orphée} evokes one. The fact that many of the opening segments are filmed in a studio film set where the lights and props are stacked within view of the camera, lends a sense of peering in on something from which our

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{6}Burch, p. 154.
  \item \textsuperscript{7}Burch, p. 54.
\end{itemize}
vision should be excluded. The spectator is offered a view which exceeds what the institutional mode of representation would allow. Thus we are seemingly permitted to see "behind the scenes," or through the keyhole, beyond what is normally excluded from vision.

There is another sense in which we are peeping in on scenes. The use of footage from previous films, such as the opening scene from Orphée, gives the sense of putting one's eye to an old-fashioned viewing machine. That is, it is clear that this is not "the film," the new one Cocteau is offering to us, but a reproduction of an old one. By setting the tone for the film in this way, the familiar objects within the film act to reinforce this sense of visiting a waxworks of Cocteau's career, of looking back through an optical device with Cocteau. As well, the stage setting for the subsequent segments lends a Mélièsque air, not only because of the finite depth of the stage but the fact that it is clearly a stage, as it is in Méliès' films.8 The entire film comes to exude a contrived air of a staged production. The reference to Méliès in this context is particularly pertinent since most of his films are remakings of his stage acts, creat-

8"...For Méliès the perceptual flatness of the picture on the screen was the only cinematic 'truth'" cited in Burch, p. 165.
ing his own set of waxworks so to speak. 9

One comes to wonder if the reappearance throughout the length of the film of the hibiscus is not a reference to Cocteau's primitive reconstruction. The hibiscus flower is used to produce a textile, a fabric. Cocteau's repeated destruction and reconstitution of the flower, with his own hands, refers to his destruction and reconstruction of his films. As well then it would serve as a commentary on artistic production: A work, once completed, is a work but it can be remade or manipulated to become another work or part of another work. All works, although complete and unto themselves, are part of a larger process or statement. This is further reinforced by the transitoriness the hibiscus represents. Thus Orphée, a highly regarded film in itself, can serve in turn as the launch for a further work, Le Testament d'Orphée. Its component parts, without destroying their integrity within the original, can come to serve within another context.

Cocteau's aesthetics clearly enter the discussion. The subtitle of the film, Le Testament d'Orphée ou ne me demandez pas pourquoi, sheds some light in this regard. As always with Cocteau, it is best to heed his warning

that he is not presenting a hermetic, integral aesthetic. Cocteau is not an aesthete but a creative artist who works from his heart, using what works rather than driven by preconceived notions.10

The opening scenes of the film are concerned with returning Cocteau to "reality." He was too curious about art and became caught in "l'espace-temps." His Louis XV garb is not a costume, he explains, but something left from that time, presumably, when he got lost. The space-time of which he speaks is undoubtably the fold in space and time which only cinema can successfully simulate; only the cinema can make to seem contiguous two distant spaces or times. The Louis XV garb was used in Le Sang d'un poète to intimate at the status quo or the "professionals"

10This is probably most clearly seen in the making of a film such as La Belle et la Bête where one has a record of some of his intentions, the process of trying to create the desired effect and the work itself. (Cocteau, Jean Diary of a film: La Belle et la Bête trans. Ronald Duncan (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd, 1972). Off hand, the transformation of the Beast or weaving of scenes between the domain of the real and the Beast come to mind. In the first case, Cocteau could not achieve the desired effect on his own and finally left it to his cameraman who intuited what Cocteau sought. Or the criticism his tried to ignore when first filming because they (Clément included) felt his takes of each scene were too long. However when it came to editing, Cocteau achieved the desired rhythm because of the slow and deliberate manner in which he filmed the scenes at the Beast's castle. In each case, Cocteau had a sense of what he hoped to achieve; in the first, he did so with "professional help," in the second, he tried to overlook "professional" opinion.
which Cocteau sought to go against in making the film on his own and not according to their codes. Since by 1959, when *Le Testament d'Orphée* was made, the seamless match of two distant spaces or times had become institutionalized and codified, the two are linked in these scenes. By making light of such links while still playing with them Cocteau comments upon them.

For example, one of the shorts scenes in this segment has a nanny dropping the "dear professor" on his head as an infant. Cocteau comments that this no doubt had a great effect later in his life and even links it to the scene where the professor dies by placing the two scenes one after the other. However, he undermines the logic by mocking it in the voice-over and by traveling back in the story to another time in the professor's life when he can help Cocteau with his problem of being stuck in space and time.

A later scene with the professor allows Cocteau to gibe at science and those "in the know." He explains that the professor comes from the 19th century, the only century in which scientists were naive enough to believe there is an exact explanation of the world. The professor then asks how Cocteau could come to him through time. To which Cocteau explains that "les poètes savent pas mal de choses ...redoutables." The professor can only answer
that he believes they know more than scientists. These are both common themes in Cocteau's films---the undermining of "professionals" and the championing of "le poète"---which Cocteau here revisits.

The following scene in the camp of the gypsies shows how Cocteau plays with figures from previous films to convey further meaning and to play upon meanings from previous works. Cocteau follows a gypsy in a horse mask through some Egyptian ruins. The reference to the gypsy clearly concerns an itinerant group. The reference could be taken to the film Les Parents terribles wherein it was said that the family lived in a caravan. The point is that neither the characters of that film nor the gypsies occupy a specific place or time. The horse mask recalls Orphée the play, written in 1927. Therein, a horse rather than the Rolls Royce of the film version conveys messages from Death. The poet in Le Testament d'Orphée is drawn to follow the messenger of death as was Orpheus before him, but he is not completely taken in as was Orpheus in the film and play. The Egyptian tomb sets the scene for the resurrection of Cégeste, via his picture from the film Orphée. The choice of an Egyptian setting places us well outside of Western culture (and baggage), however within a culture which believed in an afterlife. The corridor through which the poet passes to arrive at the gypsy camp
is described as "pareil à ceux des rêves d’enfance." The purpose is to evoke a time and space disjointed from the rest; a child would have no inkling of such matters but still suffer the effects of a dream of being lost in such a way.

From the flames of the campfire emerges a photograph of Cégeste from late in the film Orphée. Although not specifically mentioned in this segment of the film, there are a few references to Cocteau’s "expertise in phenixology," thus opening the theme. Further reference to phenixology, however oblique, is the fact that the gypsy who tears up the photograph has tarot cards spread before her on a table. Another reference to tarot cards comes from a key scene in Aigle à deux têtes when the Queen is pretending to read the cards to her imaginary king as though he never died when his likeness, a paid assassin, enters the room thereby setting off the chain of events which comprise the plot of the film. The presence of the tarot cards must hark back to this film. It evokes at once a very personal but key belief in the role of the heart in phenixology, a Baudelairian belief in interconnectedness in time and space, and provides a clear precedent for the resurrection of a character within a film, or even from another film, as though there is an otherworld for characters.
A voice-off commentary by Cocteau mentions that he recognizes the photograph from his last film. He takes the pieces of the photograph and walks off "d'une démarche de sonambule." The man with the horsehead watches him go. Cocteau comments in voice off that the man displeased him and he thought he was trying to lure him into a trap. Finding himself before a lighthouse light, Cocteau comments that he felt fate was letting him commit an imprudence by throwing the pieces of the photo into the sea. Yet it is from the sea foam that Cégeste emerges in the next scene, a scene linked to the last without transition.\(^1\) The walk of the sonambule and being led into a trap recalls the scene from *Le Sang d'un poète* in which the poet realizes that the statue has betrayed him. The statue insists that he must believe in what he wrote about passing through mirrors and must as well live it. The reference at this juncture recasts the references from

\(^1\) I feel compelled to reflect on the reference to mythology. As the story goes, Minos and Poseidon strike a bargain whereby Minos is given a bull to sacrifice which rises from the sea. The bull is so beautiful that he substitutes another bull. His wife falls in love with the bull and has a cow frame made such that she may consumate her love for the bull and from that union is born the minotaur. The linking of his adoptive son, Edouard Dermit, to the beautiful bull which is to be sacrificed but is not, seems rich in possible interpretations and should undoubtably be linked to the bull roaming the final scene of *Le Sang d'un poète.*
previous works into a particular light. No longer are they set, something to be taken as they were originally intended, but something malleable, that gains new significance in a new work.

Playing upon roles and personas, Cocteau's first comment upon seeing Cégeste in the flesh is that he had difficulty recognizing him because he is no longer blond. Cégeste explains that he dyed his hair only for a film, putting into question the relationship between character and actor. The poet further comments that he thought him dead, to which Cégeste responds "comme tout le monde." Recall that Orpheus believed himself dead because he was too comfortable. Cocteau then asks why he came back via the sea. Cégeste, turning the words of the Princess from Orphée back upon him, answers "Pourquoi, toujours pourquoi. Vous cherchez trop à comprendre. C'est un grave défaut." The irony is rich, the warning heeded.

The final scene of this segment concerns the willing suspension of disbelief, a problem with which Cocteau seems to grapple in every film. Here Cocteau treats the question more lightly, having his character banter with him, repeating his own words and thoughts on the matter. The film is thus turned back upon itself, as Cocteau is turned back upon himself. He is not caught as the poet in Le Sang d'un poète. The pleasure of this film is the
playfulness with which Cocteau struggles with the same questions which haunted former works. However, it is not to make light of previous concerns but to maintain a dialogue with them and for the sheer joy of engaging with them again.

The debate as to the status of a work once it is completed is explored in the next segment. It opens on a tapestry Cocteau made of Penelope and Holophernes. In voice off Cocteau tells the legend which ends with Judith weaving her own sarcophagous containing her own legend. This anticipates Cocteau’s own death within the film, implying that, with the fabric of the hibiscus, he is weaving his own legend. The legend he weaves, the film he makes, like the hibiscus bloom for a finite time. Then they are used up, or reused, as his works are in this film, to serve another function in another time.

In front of the tapestry is a podium which a young female student mounts to answer oral test questions. First, she answers that Penelope is responsible for making and unmaking tapestries, a reference to Cocteau’s making and unmaking of various symbols and the film itself. She then answers that Jean Cocteau made the tapestry and that he is a violinist. The professor questioning her tries to prompt the student to say that he plays "un violon d’Ingres," meaning the act for an artist of practicing an
art which is not his. She says instead "un violon dinque" which the professor corrects. No doubt Cocteau is responding to critics who complain that he dabbles in all arts. Using an expression such as "un violon d’Ingres," an expression born of a work of art, shows how all artists’ works can take on a life and meaning beyond that of the work itself much like the tapestry of Penelope and Olophern in this scene.

As an unseen public applauds the girl, Cocteau, carrying the hibiscus, and Cégeste pass behind her and into a painting studio with an easel holding covered canvases. Cégeste tells Cocteau, "Mettez votre nuit en plein jour. On verra bien celui qui donne les ordres et celui qui les exécute." The drape then magically flies off the canvases revealing Cocteau’s finished work Oedipe et ses filles. In voice-off Cocteau comments: "Bien sûr que les oeuvres se font toutes seules. Qu’elles rêvent de tuer père et mère....Bien sûr qu’elles existent avant que l’artiste ne les découvre." Cocteau recasts the Oedipus myth by implying that works, like Oedipus, desire to kill their father. At that Tête d’Orphée mort is shown on the easel and Cocteau exclaims, "Mais toujours cet ‘Orphée’, toujours cet ‘Oedipe’! J’avais cru qu’en changeant de château je changerais de fantômes, et qu’ici une fleur saurait les mettre en fuite." The drape magically falls
to recover the painting. Cégeste fishes a death mask from the flower pot and puts it over his face. Again the drape flies off to reveal a slate, on which Cocteau prepares to draw. Instead of the hibiscus which he eyes, an autoportrait emerges. Cocteau curses, rips up the hibiscus and grinds it under his foot. Cégeste retrieves the pieces, places them in the flowerpot, and they exit the scene. Three familiar themes are raised in this scene: criticism of Cocteau dabbling in many different media, the life a work takes on beyond the artist, and how works ultimately reflect the artist regardless of the artist's intent. The latter theme provides a response to the two former ones.

Once outside on a patio covered with Cocteau’s mosaics, Cégeste invites Cocteau to reconstruct the flower, which he does. The reconstitution of the very image of transitoriness, the hibiscus, intimates at the power of the artist to manipulate both nature and symbols. Cégeste suggests they go to see Pallas-Athena. Cocteau asks what happens if he refuses. Cégeste responds that those are the orders and he best not disobey. He then recommends he bring the flower, as goddesses, like women, appreciate flowers. When Cocteau refuses to go, Cégeste asks him if he ever thought about where he left him at the end of Orphée. He then places the death mask on Cocteau who removes it and says he will obey.
Cégeste leads Cocteau down a runway which crosses a studio to a set resembling the one of the tribunal in Orphée. During this scene many topics are covered. Questions center mainly on creativity, reality, and the artist. First, the accusation is read and Cocteau pleads guilty to both counts: innocence and the desire to enter a world which isn’t his. He goes on to admit he feels guilty for mistakes he didn’t make and for wanting the jump the fourth wall on which men write their dreams.

Clearly the fourth wall to which he refers is the cinema. Like Uncle Josh before him, he wants to see inside the image to the desire behind the screen.\(^{12}\) When asked why, Cocteau explains that he does it out of horror of habit, the disobedience that audacity opposes to rules, and a spirit of creativity. Asked if disobedience is sacerdotal to Cocteau, he wonders what children, heros, and artists would do without it. When asked what a film is, Cocteau explains that it’s a petrification of thought, it allows the ressusitation of dead acts and gives an appearance of reality to the unreal. The unreal, he explains, is that which surpasses our limits. This dialogue essentially recapitualtes Cocteau’s beliefs on the cinema and

\(^{12}\)Uncle Josh and the Moving Picture Show is a primitive film in which the spectator, Uncle Josh, tries to enter the image so as to better know what’s behind it. He confronts instead a rear projectionist.
creativity. The only new insight is his desire to jump the fourth wall, to look behind his desire to create.

The tribunal scene continues the bantering tone with Cégeste and then the professor who appeared earlier in the film. This raises the implication that a work need not be completed for the characters within it to be caught up in the meaning. When the professor seeks to hide behind the excuse that he merely dreamed what happened earlier in the film, the Princess points out indirectly that film is a collective dream. This was a point made in the tribunal scene of Orphée when she tells Orpheus to accept his dreams. The collapsing of artist from another film, as represented by Orpheus, and character from this film, embodied in the professor, making them both equally responsible for their role in a work, exculpates Cocteau from responsibility for his works. By animating characters and other aspects of previous works and this work, this theme achieves prominence in Le Testament d’Orphée. Cocteau comes to claim that he is responding to a higher calling, something which surpasses him mentally and physically, as well as temporally and spatially.

The tribunal condemns Cocteau to life and renders him the flower. The flower has come to mean the source of inspiration during the final segment of Cocteau’s encounter with the tribunal. Thus Cocteau is invited by
his own characters to continue to create but with the understanding that they, in turn, will continue to question how they came to be. "Nos oeuvres ne songent qu’à tuer père et mère en notre personne et à prendre le large. Mais les créatures de notre esprit restent curieuses de leurs origines...Je me demande...." With these words of wonder, Cocteau sets off with Cégeste to undergo "the rest of his trials," as Cégeste terms them.

Keeping in mind the question works pose as to their origin, the first of the "trials" harks back to the final moments of the primitive era of filmmaking. Cocteau and Cégeste enter a garden where a Sarah Bernhardt-type figure wanders reading a book entitled "Série noire." In 1908 a concerted effort was undertaken to create art films which appealed to middle class audiences. This effort was coupled with the opening of permanent movies houses in Paris which would accommodate the new audience. The art films were called "Série d’art" and drew on the talents of stage luminaries such as Sarah Bernhardt.¹³ As well the "Série noire" raises the specter of the feuilletons of the era, especially the Fantomas series.

¹³ A short history of the period can be found in Noël Burch’s Life to these Shadows, p. 56 especially or Alan Williams’ The Republic of Images, chapter 3 entitled "Growth and Diversification".
A pair of Pan-like figures, reminiscent of a Picasso painting, mime and then stop to point like a hunting hound at the fine woman. Cocteau asks if she is Athena; Cégeste responds that she’s merely a woman lost in time. Choosing this moment in film history as the first trial and answer to the question of his work’s origin is curious but pointed. Curious because Cocteau makes few, if any references to "film d’art" in his previous works. However, the reference is rich in implications. It seems an admission to his works’ source in a period which sought to appeal to the middle class as well as a moment when traditional theatre came to play a larger role in cinema’s development. Cocteau drew upon the theatre, as a source of subject (Les Parents terribles, L’Aigle à deux têtes, Orphée) and a source of actors (Marais, de Bray, Feuillière, to name the most prominent). The addition of Picasso-esque Pan figures points to the openness of his sources. Cocteau drew as well from other media and other artists. The choice here of figures from Picasso’s work is probably due more to the fact that Picasso was on hand for the filming of this scene than a reference to this specific artist as a source of inspiration.\textsuperscript{14}

A second short scene finds Cocteau and Cégeste before a sign: "Propriété privée pièges." Then they are looking at a yacht, the Orphée II, on which stands a figure of Isolde while a horn (Tristan’s?) sounds. Cocteau again asks if she is Athena. Cégeste explains that Isolde is found on every boat and that she seeks to rejoin Tristan. Cocteau played a large role in the filming and especially editing of the film L’Éternel Retour (1943) by Jean Delannoy, a remake of the Tristan and Isolde legend. This was the film that launched Jean Marais to stardom. Another short segment has Cocteau and Cégeste descend from a small boat. The segregation of this short scene from the other but the fact it immediately follows the reference to the Tristan and Isolde legend leads one to wonder if the meaning is that like Isolde, artist and character alike are on a quest to rekindle a lost love, a pure love, like the two unrequited lovers of lore. Thus Cocteau enacts as a "trial" in his epic, the desire embodied in the legend and in seeing behind the fourth wall.

The desire to see beyond the fourth wall is not only founded on unrequited love but personal history and identity. In the following scene, he and Cégeste are shown mounting the steps of the chapel Saint-Pierre which Cocteau had taken to repair and redecorate for the fishermen of Beaulieu, Saint-Jean and Villefranche. Coc-
Cocteau suggests that this is his own sarcophagus in memory of his dead childhood and the town of Villefranche where he "[a] tant vécu." Wandering through the town they cross paths with Cocteau's double. During the ensuing dialogue, Cocteau seems hurt that his double ignored him. Cégeste imagines that the double has suffered in Cocteau's place. When Cocteau suggests he kill him, Cégeste reminds him that he'll find no one else stupid enough to die in his place. The sources of inspiration are both past, present, and future. The artist is forced to look upon himself as other, as character, and as artist, in seeking to understand the nature of creative desire.

In negotiating the dialectic of self and other, Cocteau implies, through the next scene, that the process begins in retrospect. Cocteau and Cégeste wander the ruins of the region, then through a wilderness and into a quarry. Ruins of the past lead to the timelessness of legend and the wilderness. Wandering in the wilderness they hear a woman's voice announce, "Je suis la Clef des Songes. La colonne triste. La vierge au masque de fer."

As Cégeste leads Cocteau through the quarry, a severe high

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angle shows them at the heart of the quarry. In voice-off, the poet answers that other dangers menace her, statues that kill voyagers and that he has enough seafoam in him to speak the language of the waves. The waves, like the stone of the quarry, are eternal, mined and dug like legends and lessons of the past.

The creative process itself seems relatively quick as does the movement of the work to fame: As they walk on, they encounter a young couple embracing while taking notes over each others shoulders. Children approach and ask for their autographs which are subsequently fed into the mouth of a bust atop a column. Cocteau asks about the idol; Cégeste explains that it renders famous those whose autographs are introduced. A shot of the idol shows ribbons emanating from her mouth which Cégeste explains are celebrated works: novels, poems, songs. They move on. Unlike Le Sang d’un poète and Orphée which treated at length the question of fame, Cocteau seems to dismiss this problem rather offhandedly with this short scene.

Cégeste announces he is leaving and refuses to heed the pleadings of Cocteau to stay. Cocteau wonders if Cégeste doesn’t need a mirror to disappear. Cégeste responds that mirrors "renversent prétentieusement les images et se croient profonds." Again Cocteau seems to dismiss themes which formed the crux of the question of
creativity in his previous films directly concerned with similar questions. Cégeste asks Cocteau to cover his eyes and he disappears. When Cocteau asks where he is, Cégeste’s voice answers "near and far," then "where you put me." The question which has plagued the Cégeste character throughout this film and raised the question as to the role of character within a work remains unresolved. Like at the end of Orphée, Cégeste is simply left, left to again pose questions as to his status, his origin and the possibility of him returning to kill "père et mère," as Cocteau suggested previously.

For the final segment of the journey, Cocteau is alone. He wanders on through the quarry to a part that resembles Egyptian ruins, then climbs to find nothing but a large hole, an abyss, and redescends. Finally he comes upon "un huissier" seated at a table with a telephone. Upon seeing Cocteau, the "huissier," played by Yul Brynner, hangs up the phone and tells Cocteau that the minister will see him soon. In a huge waiting room, the figure of the seated Cocteau seems dwarfed. In voice-off Cocteau explains that he waited and waited and waited. Cuts shift

16The translation is difficult because of cultural differences and the word’s broad meaning. Un huissier can be a royal doorman, an usher, or a bailiff depending on the context, which is certainly ambiguous in Cocteau’s film.
back and forth between Brynner at the desk and Cocteau in the waiting room. Each time Brynner tells him someone else will receive him promptly. Cocteau's reaction, always in voice over, emphasizes the wait. Cuts back and forth between successive shots of the two characters reveal them closer and closer until Cocteau stands. The huissier tells him to leave all hope here, as though he can check his hope at the door. Cocteau responds that he'd figured as much and asks if he should at least sign in. The huissier suggests that its useless and that Cocteau enter without knocking. Dropping the pen on the table, Cocteau conturns the table as an airline hostess announces in three languages that they should fasten their seatbelts and extinguish all smoking materials.

The scene calls to mind many modern texts depicting the wait for death; two which leap to mind are Beckett's _En attendant Godot_ and Kafka's _The Trial_. The reception is bureaucratic, the identity of whom he awaits elusive though superior. However, unlike his modern counterparts, Cocteau meets his maker, so to speak.

Still in the quarry, perched on a stone, is the long sought Pallas-Athena surrounded by men in horse masks like the gypsy wore early in the film. Wearing a wetsuit, carrying a shield with the head of a gorgon in one hand and a swan's neck cask in the other, she leans on her lance. A
reverse-shot of Cocteau shows the hibiscus reappear in his hands. He leaves the shot and enters the next one which frames Pallas-Athena and her entourage from a distance. A close-up shows the goddess' head as she turns it towards the artist. A shot from her point of view reveals Cocteau offering her the flower. She turns away and the artist says that "Lazarus didn't feel so well either and that there is even a scene when Martha and Mary block their noses with fabric..." His voice trails off as he excuses himself and leaves the frame. Pallas-Athena brandishes her lance and throws it through the poet's back. Slowly he advances and comes to his knees, mumbling of the horror. The horsemen descend and remove the lance. Charles Aznavour peers down on the scene; Serge Lifar enters the scene to see. From a loge above the scene, Jacqueline Picasso, Lucia Bosé, Pablo Picasso, and Luis-Miguel Dominguin look on. The horsemen lift Cocteau and drag him to a burial stone where they lay him out. The gypsies surround him and begin to mourn. A shot of the goddess shows her horsemen giving her back her lance and resuming their posts around her. Various shots of the mourners precede a close-up of the poet showing false eyes drawn over his closed ones and smoke escaping from his lips. In voice-over he comments: "Faites semblant de pleurer, mes amis, puisque les poètes ne font que semblant d'être
morts." A reverse action film trick shows the artist rise to a standing position. From behind he is seen walking away from the tombstone and the mourning gypsies.

This scene, with its specific references to aspects of the Perseus myth, provides insight into the meaning of Cocteau's death. First a quick summary of the myth: Pallas-Athena gives Perseus her shield to protect him when he slays the Medusa, one of the three Gorgons; Hermes gives him his sword. On his journey, with Hermes as his guide, he comes upon the Gray Women looking into a waver­ ing light which resembles swans with human heads and arms. Finally one of the women removes the eye which the three share and Perseus finds his moment to seize it. This allows him to retrieve from the happy people the final tools necessary to kill the Medusa: winged sandals, a magic wallet, and a cap which makes the wearer invisible. When Perseus came to the Gorgons, Hermes and Athena were with him, and all the while looking only into the shield, rather than directly at the Gorgons, Athena guides his hand as he slays the Medusa. The invisible cap protected him from the two immortal sisters seeking revenge.17

Cocteau made some deliberate changes, but references clearly link key components to the myth. Pallas-Athena still holds her shield. She holds as well a reference to the light/swans embodied in a cask. Thus she holds the light, clearly referred to as a wavering light in the myth, and protection from light in the form of the Gorgons' gaze. One wonders, with these powers, if Cocteau has not created the goddess of cinema, holding the light and the screen on which one must gaze.

Items not specifically displayed but evoked reinforce the analogy to cinema: The winged sandals allow passage to a place out of reach of the Gorgons, as the spectator is beyond the reach of those on screen; or the winged sandals allow flight through space and time as cinema allows a contiguous pathway through disparate places and times. The wallet which expands to hold what is carried in it bears remarkable affinities with Cocteau's cinema in which felt he could portray anything he desired on screen and remained undaunted by criticisms of colleagues and technicians in this mission. The cap which renders the wearer invisible gives the spectator that sense of invisibility or invulnerability which came with the institutional mode of representation. Thus Pallas-Athena, as Cocteau

18Noël Burch, Life to those Shadows (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p.250. "....For all these factors converge upon a single effect, embarking the spectator on that 'motionless voyage'
represents her in his film, comes to embody the cinema. Her launching the lance through his back to cause his death tells us that cinema’s goddess has killed Cocteau, a death, like all deaths, that the poet overcomes.

This is the end of Cocteau’s trials, his epic. This is also the end of peeping tom and his film. The meaning conferred by the backward glance on the disparate scenes is Cocteau’s final analysis and depiction of what cinema is. The mischievous marginal is punished for his gaze. And now he too seeks to know the desire behind his creation, like his characters before him.

Still wearing the false eyes, the poet walks down a steep grade along the Mediterranean coast. He passes a statue of the Sphinx without noticing her. As an immortal, he is no longer required to respond to the riddle, for his is not man.

Oedipus, being led by Antigone, appears to leave the gates of Thebes and pass before the poet. Oedipus appears to suffer at each step and leans heavily on his staff. A closer shot reveals blood on his toga. As the myth has which is the essence of the institutional experience. Through constant identification with the camera’s viewpoint, the experience of the classical film interpellates us solely as incorporeal individuals [his emphasis]."
it, Oedipus is on his way to his death, but he will die a happy man.

Cocteau's voice off announces that the Sphinx and Oedipus are those one wants to know most and that it is impossible to cross paths with them without seeing them, which is exactly what happens to Cocteau in this scene and the former one. Cocteau's concerns are no longer earthly, he has turned his eyes away. However, like other characters and symbols, Oedipus and the Sphinx continue to occupy an important place in his films. They remind us that characters live on, as Cégeste did, to return, to haunt Cocteau's screen, as riddler and as one who ultimately will kill his maker.

To reinforce the myth of who lives on, characters from a previous film reappear in the next scene. The poet walks on. The camera moves before him, capturing his hypnotic walk. He explains in voice over that as he walked he heard the motorcyclists of his film Orphée. A shot shows two approach, drive past and park. They return to stop Cocteau and to ask him for his identity papers. While they examine his papers deciding if they should ask for his autograph, he walks off. A convertible blaring Jazz and carrying a raucous group of youths drives by and distracts the motorcyclists who pursue the vehicle. In the dust they leave behind swirl the petals of the
hibiscus. The agents of death have not come for him yet; the bacchantes, the next generation of poets, inhabit his film and wait their turn, as Cégeste did.

The film closes on the opening drawing of Orpheus to which has been added a lyre, as Cocteau comments:

Une vague joyeuse vient de balayer mon film d'adieu. S'il vous a déplu, j'en serai triste, car j'y ai mis toutes mes forces comme le moindre ouvrier de mon équipe... Ma vedette est une fleur d'Hibiscus. Si vous avez reconnu en route quelques artistes célèbres ils n'apparaissent pas parce qu'ils sont célèbres mais parce qu'ils répondent à l'emploi des rôles qu'ils interprètent et parce qu'ils sont mes amis.

The shot then returns to the smoke bubble that a long knife pops. The smoke disperses to reveal the word: FIN.

Drawing on the primitive narrative techniques of the peeping tom film, Cocteau structures a story which tells how characters, himself included, live beyond a given work and come to question their origin. The Oedipus myth, the desire to kill one's maker and know the pleasure of one's own creation, lives in the heart of each character, real or created. The maker too is curious, curious about the desire behind his act. But pulling down the screen, as Uncle Josh revealed, only shows a rear projectionist. Cocteau, like his characters, is at the whim of a force
which surpasses him. This force is as old as legends and lives on after mortals and artists, only to taunt future generations. This desire cannot be known, the artist wanders on in the wilderness, hoping only for insights.
Conclusion

The primitive cinema is integral to an appreciation of the films of Jean Cocteau. From his first film, made in 1932 to his final testament in 1959, Cocteau drew upon the primitive legacy. The function of this source varied greatly from one film to the next.

In *Le Sang d'un poète* the primitive cinema stood as the threshold through which the artist needed to pass to view the diverse sources of his inspiration. In *La Belle et la Bête* the magic of the fairytale evoked the magic films of Cocteau's childhood. Cocteau drew directly from the collective memory of a generation of children during...
the Méliès era in the hope of tapping the child in each of us. Les Parents terribles portrays a much more sophisticated rereading of the primitive era. The theatricality of the work plays into the narrative function of the lecturer drawn from the earliest cinema. L'Aigle à deux têtes again reveals a keen appreciation of the subtleties of primitive narration. Maintaining the integrity of the melodramatic mode, Cocteau again exploits the primitive heritage to effect a shift in narration in his work. Like the legend on which the film is loosely based Orphée is about the passage between realms. Cocteau drew on techniques from Méliès' magic films to depict this passage. However, this film more than any other remains firmly rooted in the institutional mode of representation. Le Testament d'Orphée picks up where Orphée leaves off. The passage between realms is expanded to include more than characters. The filmmaker, his works and his characters meet and collide. The primitive cinema provides means for the engagement of these parties between and within realms. At the heart of their meeting lies an interrogation of the meaning and implications of the creative process.

Le Sang d'un poète stands as Cocteau's first interrogation of the source of the creative process. In the first of four segments which comprise the film the creative process is literalized, the artist's suffering
externalized. A drawing of a mouth is transferred onto the artist's palm where it becomes a speaking wound. The ambiguity with which the artist faces the wound reveals his conflicting emotions: shame, fear, exhilaration and desire.

Thus opens Cocteau's exploration of what c(o)urses (through) the artist's blood. It is a search for something primal, integral, not unlike the cinema from which he draws certain narrative practices. The playfulness recalls the earliest cinema in its effort to use humor to bypass or thwart social strictures. This allows Cocteau to question authority without raising the spectator's anxiety. At the source of Cocteau's cinema lies a sense of the process of recognition and documentation and the process of discovery, the same concerns and fascinations embodied in the primitive cinema.

More literal references to the primitive era of filmmaking include the falling smokestack footage which calls to mind early documentary films. The implication of beginning and ending the film with this reference is that the film actually lasts only as long as the tower takes to fall. Thus the film resembles a dream, a seemingly disparate set of images tied together. Another reference to the tying together of disparate scenes is the overt naming of the location of the second segment of the film "L'Hôtel
This is the actual name of a pictureshow arcade in Paris. Furthermore the entire segment is organized like a "peeping tom film" of the primitive era. The artist moves down the 'hotel' corridor peering through the keyholes. Meaning is conferred only at the end of the segment when the artist refuses to commit suicide and nullifies his journey through the corridor by retracing his steps.

Within the "Hôtel des Folies-Dramatiques" segment there are many other specific references to the primitive cinema. At the heart of all the references to the primitive cinema is a sense of innocence. There is an innocence in the playfulness expressed. The playfulness includes the literalizations, the puns and the gags. There is an innocence expressed in the way the artist responds to his gift of artist creation, that is to his wound. This innocence is revisited in the third segment of the film at the reenactment of the snowball fight. As at the level of story so at the level of narrative an innocence is expressed.

The primitive cinema provides a means of telling which allows subversion of linearity. One example is the falling tower which opens and closes the film. Another is the tableaux which comprise the second segment. The visual layering of time and space provides a third example. Each
of these gestures contains its opposite, a linearity and a subversion of linearity.

The oppositional nature of the examples lies at the heart of the film. The linearity is at once purposeful and subverted. The playfulness is fun and at the same time quite serious. The work itself contains its own question, its own doubt. Like Cocteau's final film, this is a film which presents and questions the film and the desire behind the film.

La Belle et la bête draws on another primal mechanism at once personal and cultural by tapping a common social memory. Cocteau bypasses the spectator's incredulous reserve by exploiting this common social memory through his aesthetic. Seeking to reveal the truth rather than the real, the supernatural rather than the picturesque, Cocteau creates "the reality of childhood".

This "reality" is achieved through the reenactment of primitive cinematic techniques and institutionalized ones. After establishing the puerile innocence of Belle, Cocteau uses modern practices to align the spectator's point of view with hers. Thus her final reading of the Beast's decency and her family's cruelty appears the truth.

As well, the alignment of the spectator's point of view with Belle's recalls the copresence of voyeur and scene observed typical of the voyeur films of the primi-
tive era. Cocteau draws mainly on techniques from Méliès' magic films. This plays into Cocteau's aesthetic of rendering concrete abstract concepts such as the passage between realms. It also makes the magic more palpable. By drawing on Méliès' technique of animated decor, the magic of the Beast's domain is made to seem inevitable, latent within the edifice itself.

The inevitability of the events is reinforced by the use of primitive camera placement. The frontality and fixity of the camera so that the action comes to it rather than it following the action, lends a sense of anticipation. The paintings recall the earliest cinematic practice of animating picture postcards as a source of film narrative. These techniques work together to reinforce the sense of inevitability, of watching a tale whose outcome is sure. In this way the fairytale is reassuring, in its narrative as in its story.

A film that opens revealing the pure spectacle of family relations ends an ordered narrative. Les Parents terribles is a series of short segments, little, one act plays presented by and starring the Mother. The tight close-ups and even tighter relationships leave no room for the spectator.

It is only when Aunt Léo takes on the role of diegetic spectator, as one finds in the primitive film, that the
mode of the film shifts from spectacle to narrative. In the primitive cinema, the diegetic spectator watches and acts out what the audience views. The diegetic spectator is often a social marginal who reveals his discomfort, often through humor, at witnessing private scenes. Often he espies them through keyholes.

Like the lecturer or master of ceremonies, Aunt Léo functions as a bonimenteur, providing meaning and narrative for the disparate scenes and for the various misinterpretations of different characters. As narrator, Aunt Léo brings order and meaning to the film. This effects a shift from the spectacle of a family to a narrative, a story and a solution.

Thus Cocteau draws on the vaudeville roots of cinema, from disparate shorts presented and given meaning by a master of ceremonies to the coincidental events that comprise the vaudeville theatre. The spectator too is made to feel like a primitive spectator. The original copresence of the voyeur and object viewed meant the spectator could be caught looking. The use of a diegetic narrator, in the figure of Aunt Léo, and the extremely tight camera angles implicate the audience in the filmic event. Specularity is emphasized over narrative until the bonimenteur makes order from the chaos.

The primitive cinema works in tandem with the melodramatic mode in the film L'Aigle à deux têtes. Fol-
ollowing the codes of a melodrama, Cocteau establishes a sign system based on the interactions of characters. Characters in melodrama are signs, incarnations of ideas, whose misprision drives the plot. The plot becomes a series of misreadings and rereadings by characters of other characters. The final clarification of signs, evil and then virtue's, allows a spectacular public hommage to virtue.

The clash of signs in the form of characters creates a drama of readings—misreadings and rereadings—of what characters represent. This clash recalls a primitive cinematic mode of expression named the cinema of attractions by Tom Gunning which "aggressively subjected the spectator to sensual or psychological impact." A shift in point of view in the primitive cinema represented by peeping servants reveals a shift in the spectator's relationship to the narrative. Rather than sharing the scopic pleasure with the servant, as in the peeping tom films, the 'keyhole films' frame the narrative such that the spectator shares in the search for evidence to assess guilt or innocence. The shifts in point of view are reenacted in Cocteau's melodrama to reflect the spectator's shifting relationship to the narrative as the plot progresses. The plot moves forward by the reading of signs, namely the characters.
The opening segment of the film aggressively subjects the spectator to the fear and threat of an enigma, the Queen. At the arrival of her would-be assassin, a shift in point of view drives the curious to speculate on the identities of the Queen and her assassin, Stanislas. Finally the Queen takes control of the narrative creating a final shift in point of view as the true malefactors and innocents are revealed at her dramatic ascent to the throne. Reenactments of scenes from the primitive cinema mark these discursive shifts that follow the melodramatic structure to its conclusion. They place the spectator in the position of a primitive spectator, a point of view which differs from the modern filmgoer's.

The predominant theme of the Orpheus legend is the passage between worlds or states—heaven and hell, life and death, mortal and deity. In order to narrativize this theme, Cocteau turned back to the magic films of Méliès. Méliès' magic films too reflect a preoccupation with changes of state—disappearance or dismemberment.

Méliès' characters reside in society's or reality's margins: fairies, pages, magicians and valets. Cocteau too places his protagonist outside society. Using the three shot motif, he establishes the Princess's dominance and Orpheus' exclusion. The three shot motif serves to announce the story giving the sense that it tells itself.
The Princess seems to be controlling the characters by controlling their passage from one space to another.

However, the Princess's dominance reels out of control. She exceeds the limits of her own world. Ultimately, the authorities of the netherworld retake control since a character cannot be allowed to dominate a work and seemingly write the story. Thus when the character of the Princess exceeds the story, she is brought back into line.

*Le Testament d'Orphée* provides a summary glance back on the role of the primitive cinema in Cocteau's films. Like a mischievous peeping tom from the earliest cinema, Cocteau is punished in the end. In this way the disparate scenes are conferred new meaning.

The diverse scenes which compose *Le Testament d'Orphée* allow Cocteau a dialogue with various aspects of cinematic creation and previous cinematic works. The film begins where *Orphée* ends and quickly leads Cocteau into a trial scene with characters from *Orphée*, the Princess and Heurtebise. During the trial Cocteau confesses to wanting to "jump the fourth wall on which men write their dreams," namely the silver screen. The Princess also turns his own words from *Orphée* back on him: "Si vous rêvez, acceptez vos rêves," just as the statue attempted to do in *Le Sang d'un poète*. 
In this and other scenes, there is a layering of Cocteau's identity. He seems to function at once as a filmmaker responsible for his works and a character like any other. As a character, he falls victim to twists and turns in the plot. Cocteau also functions as part of the decor. In keeping with the primitive motif, scenes are "crammed," as Burch described the primitive tableau, with references to various Cocteau works. These range from fellow artists to critics, tapestries to characters, drawings to symbols.

Cocteau, in the primitive motif, makes light of these references. He uses gloves to make a joke about Orphée; a painting to tease himself for dabbling in many media; Picasso as spectator and symbol source. The sensation is one of visiting a waxworks. This sense of familiarity has its roots in the exhibition sites of the primitive cinema which it shared with waxworks and diaramas.

Another source resembling the exhibition of the primitive cinema is the sense of looking through a viewing apparatus. The placement of footage from another film into Le Testament gives the impression of watching through just such a device. This further reinforces the sense of visiting a waxworks. It also gives the film a contrived air.

This contrived, stylized impression is literally represented in Le Testament. Certain scenes are filmed
such that one can view "behind the scenes." At other
times Cocteau talks about appearing and disappearing after
he’s done so on screen. This self-referential gesture
removes all pretense of realistic representation.

The elasticity of representation, of character, of
filmmaker, is precisely the topic under discussion in the
film. By drawing on the primitive techniques of waxworks,
peeping toms and viewing apparatus, Cocteau constantly
shifts the focus of attention. Cocteau serves at once as
mischievous peeping tom, as director, as character, as
artist, as Poet. He uses one role to comment on another.
This points to the film’s subtitle Le Testament d’Orphée
ou ne me demandez pas pourquoi. To the question "pour-
quoi" there seems no answer.

Cégeste asks during the film: "What about me?" Recall
that Cégeste is left in la zone, no man’s land, at the
conclusion of Orphée. Cégeste’s curiosity, like that of a
child regarding his parents, reflects a desire to know
one’s origin. Character and filmmaker alike pose the
question of the desire behind creation, like the desire
behind killing one’s maker. Cocteau serves of no answer
to explain the desire or its source. He seems as much a
victim of it as the works and characters who haunt him for
an answer. Thus he remains guilty of wanting to look
behind the fourth wall on which man projects his dreams.
Filmography


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