

Jean Cocteau (1889 – 1963), poet, dramatist, librettist, designer, playwright, filmmaker, avant-gardist, opium addict, novelist *Les Enfants Terribles* (1929), *La Belle et le Bête* (1941); PQ 2605 .015; www.jeancocteau.net (site officiel du comité Jean Cocteau)

From the bibliofilmography on the Criterion disc

Bernard, A. and C. Gauteur, *Jean Cocteau: the Art of Cinema*. Translated by Robin Buss. London: Marion Boyars, 1992.

The Journals of Jean Cocteau. Ed. trans. by W. Fowlie. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1964.

Cocteau, Jean. *Opium: Journal of Intoxication*. Paris: Editions Stock, 1930.

Evans, Arthur B. *Jean Cocteau and His Films of Orphic Identity*. Philadelphia and London: Associated University Presses, 1977.

Fowlie, Wallace. *Jean Cocteau: the history of a poet's age*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1961.

Fraigneau, Andre. *Cocteau on the Film*, trans. by V. Traill. New York: Dover, 1972.

Sprigge, Elizabeth and Jean-Jacques Kihm. *Jean Cocteau: the man and the mirror*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1968.

Steegmuller, Francis. *Cocteau: a biography*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1970.

Cocteau's orphic productions (— w/ OGCMA refs) :

Orphée (1925), tragic stageplay; published 1927 —0779Orpheus

"La Doleur d'Orphée" (1926), a "poésie plastique" sculpture —0780Orpheus

Le Sang d'un poète (1930) — 0780NOTOrpheus

series of lithographs (1944) — 0780Orpheus

Orphée (1944), ballet scenario —0780Orpheus

Orphée (1949), full-length film — 0793OrpheusEurydice

series of paintings (1951) — 0780Orpheus

"Death of Eurydice", part of fresco cycle in the Salle des Mariages, Hotel de Ville, Menton (1957 - 1958) — 0793OrpheusEurydice

Le Testament d'Orphée (1959) — 0780Orpheus

Jean Cocteau: autoportrait d'un inconnu (1985), featuring Orpheus frescoes from the Villa Santo Sospir (the 16mm film from 1952) and other Orpheus paintings — 0780NOTOrpheus

John Carvalho, "Orpheus: the absence of myth in Cocteau," in *Reviewing Orpheus: essay on the cinema and art of Jean Cocteau*, ed. by Cornelia A. Tsakiridou (Lewisburg and London: Bucknell UP, 1997).

Bernard and Gauteur, 29: "Cocteau's affinity to the mythic, and especially to the Orpheus myth, was of a special importance to him and his identity as a poet. It is this preoccupation that seems to determine Cocteau's "communicative" purposes in *Le Sang d'un Poète*, *Orphée* and *Le Testament d'Orphée*.

M. Winkler, *Cinema and Classical Texts: Apollo's new light* (CUP, 2009), 282: "Like [Virgil and Ovid] Cocteau gives us a moving meditation on love, life, death, and even love of death."

Heurtebise in *Orphée*: "Mirrors are the gates through which Death comes and goes."

“In the film, Orpheus is not a great priest. He is a famous poet whose celebrity annoys what has come to be known as the avant-garde. In the film, the avant-garde play the role of the Bacchantes in the fable.” Cocteau in *Three Screenplays* p. 188. — The film thus becomes somewhat an autobiographical and self-revelatory polemic, a “rebuttal of [his critics’] condemnations.” (A.B. Evans, 109)

In *Le Sang d’un Poète’s* second episode, the poet is trapped in an exitless room. The poet learns that diving into the mirror affords him a way out. By “entering into himself by the gateway of his own image” the poet experiences a new reality.

Orphée the play (1927):

Aglaonice and the bacchantes have decapitated Orpheus.

Commissioner: As you can tell me your place of birth, perhaps you’ll no longer refuse to tell me your name. You’re called ...

Orpheus’ Head: Jean

Commissioner: Jean what?

Orpheus’ Head: Jean Cocteau.

Commissioner: Coc. ...

Orpheus’ Head: C, O, C, T, E, A, U.

Jean Cocteau, *Orphée*, from *Five Plays*, trans. Carl Wildman, et al., (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961) 44.

“[Cocteau’s life-long identification of self as Orpheus], this strange preoccupation hardly seems to constitute a mere passing poetic fancy or stand simply as one of Cocteau’s many ‘tricks’ to briefly draw attention to himself and his creations. On the contrary, this curious rapprochement between Cocteau and Orpheus harbors a much deeper significance, at least to Cocteau, since it lasted for so long and remained so close to him.” (Evans,)

“The death and subsequent return to life of Orpheus, much like the celebrated myth of the phoenix, appealed to Cocteau and offered to him an admirable vehicle for expressing his own ideas concerning the identity of all true poets who must live precariously balanced between the life of this world and the reality of the next. Although such poets may die many deaths at the hands of their critics and contemporaries, they are reborn with every poetic creation and, accordingly, remain immortal in mens’ minds. Methodologically, Orpheus seemed to epitomize all that Cocteau would hope to achieve through his technical productions.” (Evans , 82)

Evans on Cocteau’s mirrors:

“All that transpires behind the mirror in *Orphée* , to the same extent as in *Le Sang d’un Poète*, is actually happening *within* the poet. ... Cocteau’s repeated use of the mirror seems to signify the outer physical shell of the poet — the shell that the poet must pass through in order to make contact with his interior ‘angel’ and become inspired.” (Evans, 118-20)

Rilke picks upon on Cocteau’s mirrors in the Sonnet #3.

Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, I contend, derives its thematic use of mirrors from Cocteau’s.