

Jean Cocteau and the Occupation of France

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I, Ruth Elizabeth Newns Austin, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

The work of Jean Cocteau continues to be of interest and has been the subject of many studies, with anniversaries relating to the poet's life and work continuing to prompt new exhibitions of his work and assessments of his work. The fact that the interest in Cocteau so often extends beyond the work itself is a starting point for this study of the poet's work during the period of the German Occupation of France, 1940-1944, and this will also be explored in this project. The project is divided into three sections which consider 'l'affaire Breker', Cocteau's work for the cinema and his theatre productions of the period.

I have worked through the newspaper archives at both the British Library's collection in Colindale and that of Leeds University, the only two archives in Britain which between them offer a complete collection of the journal *Comoedia* as well as a number of other newspapers from the period, such as *Je suis partout* and *La Gerbe*. I have also read much of Cocteau's work in parallel with the *Journal intime* he kept from 1942-1945, which was published posthumously.

By examining the article on Breker, Cocteau's involvement with cinema and the theatre during the Occupation, a view emerges of an artist grappling, not always successfully, with the particular challenges of the wartime context. While on the one hand his efforts to minimize the threat the war posed to the creative endeavour can certainly be criticized as a politically contestable choice of action, I would argue that it is important also to recognize the belief Cocteau strongly held that art was even more vitally important during war than at other times, and indeed that art was in itself a mode of resistance to the destructiveness inherently associated with war.

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Jean Cocteau during the German Occupation of France.

Introduction

The work of Jean Cocteau continues to be of interest and has been the subject of many studies, with anniversaries relating to the poet's life and work continuing to prompt new exhibitions of his work and assessments of his work. The fact that the interest in Cocteau so often extends beyond the work itself is a starting point for this study of the poet's work during the period of the German Occupation of France, 1940-1944, and this will also be explored in this project.

Cocteau did not choose silence following the defeat of the French but continued to work. As such, he became embroiled in the controversy which for some was met by anyone who continued to produce work during the Occupation. As one critic has put it, 'to publish legally is to acquiesce in an imposed ideological and political situation, and hence to lend it respectability, in however indirect a way' (Pickering 1998, p.163). Or according to another: 'Quels que fussent les sophismes, dont ils déguisaient leurs actes, le fait d'écrire un article, même anodin, dans un journal qui n'était qu'une feuille de propagande hitlérienne, de jouer dans un théâtre qui n'était autorisé à rouvrir que dans la mesure où cela servait les desseins des nazis, de tourner un film, de se comporter, en bref, comme si la guerre n'avait pas eu lieu, comme si la Patrie n'était pas en deuil, comme si l'ordre nouveau n'était pas en rigueur, constituait une manière indirecte de servir les intérêts allemands' (Halimi 1976, p.29).

Cocteau's pre-emptive response to such a stance is reflected in his *Journal* where he writes that 'La France, sous l'occupation allemande, avait le droit et le devoir de se montrer insolente, de manger, de briller, de braver l'opresseur, de dire: "Tu m'enlèves

tout et il me reste tout” (Cocteau 1989, p.557). As Burrin writes, this argument of Cocteau’s was also circulated after the Liberation, the idea that ‘chaque film tourné, chaque livre publié, chaque pièce jouée avait été un défi jeté par la culture française à la face des destructeurs de toute culture’ (Burrin 1995, p.329). Opinions about the merits of the two different approaches remain divided to this day.

A brief survey of assessments of Cocteau in biographical writing

The reader can turn to Cocteau himself for an understanding of the way in which his work was judged in tandem with his life, ‘Nos compatriotes jugent l’œuvre à travers l’homme. Ne voyant de l’homme qu’une image fausse, ils jugent faux’ (Cocteau 2003 [1947], p.30). It is of note that this statement was included in an essay in Cocteau’s *La Difficulté d’être*, a collection of essays published in 1947, not long after the Occupation. As we will see, Cocteau attracted criticism from two opposing quarters. Many of the far-right newspaper critics chose to focus on Cocteau and his reputation as one of the “degenerates” of the Third Republic, an opinion they held before the Occupation and which they had were much freer to express in the Collaborationist press, rather than the work they purported to be writing about, while others reproached him his dealings with the Germans. Let us start by considering some of the assessments of Cocteau during the period of the Occupation, which so often have a sub-text of the poet as frivolous and a-political, as can be seen in this example, ‘Cocteau’s only fault was in having remained so disappointingly true to his nature’ (Brown 1969, p.357). The same study then continues with a simultaneously damning and excusing evaluation, ‘Cocteau was not a collaborator but a publicity-monger. In his eyes, Germany represented the latest fashion’ (Brown 1969, p.359). This notion of Cocteau responding to the presence of the German Occupier as a “fashion” is in keeping with other evaluations of the poet which use a similar idiom which we will find in the Collaborationist press. For

example, superficiality is the main attribute associated with the poet in one description of him at the Breker exhibition which sees him ‘parade à l’exposition de ses oeuvres, en Mai 1942, entouré de toutes les vedettes de la “collaboration” et de personnalités allemandes’ (Cabanne 1992, p.113). This notion is then continued with the further sub-text of political expediency the following year, ‘Cocteau révisera, dans le courant de 1943 – l’Allemagne, on le sait maintenant, perdra la guerre – son attitude à l’égard de l’occupant. Spécialiste des pirouettes, celle-ci fut l’une des plus magistrales’ (Cabanne 1992, p.113). It is again the associated superficiality of the successful, “celebrity” artist which is referred to in another study, in which the author singles out Cocteau and Sacha Guitry as examples of those who ‘did not allow the reality of the occupation to interfere with their private pleasures’ (Curtis 2002, p.230). Another writer views him as having little interest outside of his art: ‘depuis la défaite, Cocteau vit concentré sur son art’ (Burrin 1995, p.352). Certain examples place Cocteau “outside” politics, something which one can compare with the poet’s own response to questions of political alignment. For example, in answer to a question posed by André Fraigneau of a series of interviews with Cocteau as to whether he had ever belonged to a political party, he replied: ‘Mais je suis un parti!’. He then continues: ‘Mon parti est assez terrible, il me donne des ordres auxquels je dois obéir; il ne me laisse libre de faire aucune des choses qui me plaisent, il exige une obéissance sans bornes et l’abolition totale de mon individu’ (Fraigneau and Cocteau 1988 [1965], pp.169-170). The seemingly facetious response is also an example of Cocteau’s insistence that he existed outside politics, however impossible this position may be. It also shares a similar position found in an entry in Cocteau’s Journal in which he writes, ‘Mon royaume n’est pas de ce monde et ce monde m’en veut de mal suivre ses règles’ (Cocteau 1989, p.537). This self-governing can be seen in another example of an evaluation of the poet during the Occupation: ‘La vie de Cocteau, alors, abonde en paradoxes douloureux et violents,

fruits d'une déconcertante fidélité à soi-même, son art et ses amitiés' (Barré 1983, p.94). It is a continuing theme in writing on Cocteau which sees the self-proclaimed existence outside of the reality of the political situation of France during the Occupation as a 'repellent detachment' (Steegmuller 1986, p.439). Another author sees it in similar terms, 'Cette position très détachée, si peu patriotique et résistante d'un artiste qui ne mesure pas l'ampleur du drame que vivent la France, l'Europe et le monde, expliquera pendant toute l'Occupation un comportement qui peut sembler étrange, voire odieux si l'on n'en tient pas compte' (Gidel 1997, p.222). Gidel singles out the writing of the 'Salut à Breker', which we will discuss in detail later, as a moment when Cocteau places himself 'au-dessus du conflit' (Gidel 1997, p.236).

Less critical assessments however see Cocteau as resisting the presence of the Occupier rather than collaborating with it: 'He was determined, come what might, to be creative' (Kihm and Sprigge 1968, p.151). This latter stance adopted Cocteau's own idiom from the beginning of the Occupation as evident in the form of his 'Adresse aux jeunes écrivains' which was published in *La Gerbe*, 5th December 1940. It included the following rallying cry: 'Pensez, écrivez, adorez, détruisez, fondez des petites revues. Montez des spectacles'.

Cocteau's position during the Occupation is one of apparent contradiction. As he wrote in the article for *La Gerbe* at the beginning of the Occupation: 'Nul ne vous en empêche. Ne dites pas: "C'est trop difficile, je me cache." Dites: "A l'impossible je suis tenu. Je me montre."' He remained in the public sphere, an action which he at certain points during the period sees as a stand against the Occupiers, and yet would also see him accused of various degrees of collaboration at the time and in assessments which have followed the Occupation. But it was also this public presence during the Occupation which made him a focus of frequent attacks from the Collaborationist press. Writing in the decade following the end of the war, Cocteau recalls a remark Ernst

Jünger, one of the Germans with whom he associated, made to him during the Occupation: ‘Si les journaux paraissaient sur un timbre-poste, il resterait encore assez de place pour vous injurier’ (Cocteau 1983, p.401). One article from *Au Pilon* is reproduced in Cocteau’s Journal from the Occupation and includes a reference to him as one of the “degenerates” of the Third Republic: ‘Si M. Cocteau, après ses glorieux états de service “Feu la III” s’était contenté de publier, sous le manteau et à l’usage de quelques indécrottables et peu culottés fidèles, des paquettes à tirage réduit, nous n’aurions point songé à lui réserver les honneurs du pilori’ (Cocteau 1989, pp.655-6). The campaign against him by the Third Republic’s fascists, who by the Occupation had become Collaborationists, was successful if one considers the account Cocteau gives of the physical attack he suffered when he happened across the *Légion des Volontaires Français* parading along the Champs-Élysées: ‘pendant que les cinq ou six hommes de main me frappaient, je les ai entendus crier mon nom. Ils frappaient donc en toute connaissance de cause’ (Cocteau 1989, p.339). Despite his experience during the Occupation, he would add his name to the petition to ask that Robert Brasillach, the editor of *Je suis partout*, be saved from the death penalty in January 1945. As he comments in his Journal, ‘Je trouve Brasillach absurde et néfaste, mais je signerai parce que j’en ai assez qu’on condamne les écrivains à mort et qu’on laisse les fournisseurs de l’armée allemande tranquilles’ (Cocteau 1989, pp.613-4). The petition failed and Brasillach was executed, however it is significant that for Cocteau writers existed outside of the general rules which governed society.

My starting point with this project was to consider the biographical work on Cocteau, particularly pertaining to the Occupation. What is immediately apparent is that one event dominates the discussion, the ‘Breker affair’, that is to say the controversy which is associated with the article Cocteau wrote to mark the occasion of the exhibition by the Third Reich’s officially sponsored sculptor, Arno Breker. More

than anything else, that article helped to sully Cocteau's post-war reputation. However, I believe that the reaction to it was misplaced in interpreting it as a piece of political activism. In particular I feel that the context of the publication tips the balance in favour of the article being proof of his naivety, rather than something more malign. I have worked through the newspaper archives at both the British Library's collection in Colindale and that of Leeds University, the only two archives in Britain which between them offer a complete collection of the journal *Comoedia* as well as a number of other newspapers from the period, such as *Je suis partout* and *La Gerbe*. As well as allowing access to the article itself, reading through the periodical enabled me to highlight the extent to which Cocteau was a frequent subject of articles as well as their author. Reading through *Comoedia* also led me to question the widespread view that this was a 'politically neutral' publication during the Occupation and to consider the extent to which the 'Salut à Breker' should be read within the context of the coverage which had been given to Breker in the run-up to the publication of Cocteau's article, rather than considering it in isolation.

As well as the work produced by Cocteau during the period, there is also the Journal *intime* which he kept from 1942 to 1945 and the public 'diary' which he published to accompany his film, *La Belle et la bête* at the time of the film's cinematic release, and which takes the reader through to the immediate aftermath of the Occupation. A reader of Cocteau's Journal from the period of the Occupation will be struck by the amount of time spent by him in the company of Germans, with accounts of evenings with 'plusieurs Allemands de culture française très profonde' (Cocteau 1989, p.31). And yet, at the same time that this demonstrates naivety towards the Occupiers, other entries in his Journal suggest a clearer understanding of the very limited view he has of the Third Reich, meeting only a small circle of Francophile Germans, 'nous regardons ce bocal de poissons rouges et le prenons pour la mer' (Cocteau 1989, p.79).

Such notes in the journal *intime* also exist in parallel with Cocteau's public pronouncement during the period on the theme of the 'haute patrie des artistes' introduced in the 'Salut à Breker'. The Journal serves as a contrast to the public work of Cocteau during the period as well as to the contradictions of his life during the time. One of the earliest entries sees Cocteau reflect on why he has only decided to start the Journal at this stage in his life, and paradoxically refers to the calm of the city during the period, 'J'aime mieux commencer à prendre ces notes maintenant que ma vie est calme et que je quitte peu ma maison' (Cocteau 1989, p.35) and a similar reflection is seen in the essay he wrote in *La Difficulté d'être* entitled 'Du Palais-Royal' where he reflects on his home during the period, the small apartment on the rue de Montpensier, from where he wrote *Renaud et Armide*, 'séparé de tout, libéré de la sonnette du téléphone et de la porte, l'été de 1941' (Cocteau 2003 [1947], p.127). And yet the quiet period he refers to in these two examples, one from the private and the other from the public sphere, seems far removed from the attention he was given in the press at the time. The one court appearance Cocteau made during the Occupation was at the trial of Jean Genet in July 1943, where his testimony played an important part in keeping Genet from prison: 'nous avons sauvé Genet' (Cocteau 1989, p.321). The public aspect of Cocteau's support is highlighted in the following extract from a letter written to Genet after the trial and included in Cocteau's Journal, 'tu as osé prononcer une affirmation dont la gravité ne m'échappe pas. [...] Je sais l'importance que prend sous ta plume une affirmation publique aussi catégorique' (Cocteau 1989, p.327). Championing Genet in such a public manner, putting himself in a politically precarious position with both the Occupiers and the Vichy officials, reminds the reader of the Journal of the way in which existing 'au dessus du conflit' or in the 'haute patrie des poètes', to borrow his phrase from the 'Salut à Breker', does not always need to be read in a critically negative manner. It begins to suggest that the blanket condemnation of Cocteau's behaviour

during the Occupation which we will see in some detail in the section on ‘l’affaire Breker’ is misplaced, and that a more nuanced approach needs to be taken.

The project is divided into three sections which consider ‘l’affaire Breker’, Cocteau’s work for the cinema and his theatre productions of the period.

Jean Cocteau and *l’affaire Breker*

In the section on Arno Breker I explore the implications of both the article itself and the controversy which accompanied it at the time and in the years which have followed.

The content of the article itself in fact attracted surprisingly little attention in previous studies. This seems an oversight particularly given the way in which it has become a short hand for what is generally seen as Cocteau’s questionable behaviour during the period. Frequently Breker is referred to in studies of the period as Hitler’s official sculptor but I will examine the complex relationship he had, in relation to sculpture in France both before and during the Occupation. A reading of Cocteau’s Journal from the time allows an insight into the complexity of the decision made by the poet to be seen to support Breker while also confirming the naivety which he is so often accused of. I also consider the status of *Comoedia* during the Occupation and will consider the way in which the perceived neutrality of the periodical, as suggested by some studies, is an over-simplification. In this section I will also consider Cocteau’s work as a newspaper contributor both during and after the Occupation period as well as his position as the subject of personal attacks in the Collaborationist newspapers.

Jean Cocteau and Cinema of the Occupation

Much of Cocteau’s energy was devoted to the cinema during the Occupation and the Liberation. My focus will be on three films in particular, *L’Eternel retour* (Delannoy, 1943) for which he wrote the screenplay, *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* (Bresson,

1945) for which he wrote the dialogue, and *La Belle et la bête* (Cocteau, 1946) which he wrote and directed. I will argue that due to the protracted nature of filmmaking the three projects can be defined as films belonging to various degrees to the Occupation period. My evaluation of *L'Eternel retour* will suggest the film can be read in a way which allows it to be considered as something other than a film which shares the visual idiom of the Third Reich. In the example of *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* I will consider possible Resistance readings of the film, particularly the notion of re-occupying the streets of Paris. As in Cocteau's long poem, 'Léone', composed during the Occupation, in which the quasi-mythical creature of the poem moves freely around the city, there seems to be a common theme of reclaiming the streets of Paris during a period of Occupation which led to curfews and curtailed freedom. *La Belle et la bête* was Cocteau's first feature-length film which he both wrote and directed and follows on from what can be seen as the apprenticeship which preceded the making of the film. The film is considered in relation to both the Journal *intime* and the public diary which Cocteau published to coincide with the film's release and in which he discusses the film but also the state of the nation in the immediate aftermath of the Occupation.

Jean Cocteau and theatre of the Occupation

Cocteau was also deeply involved with the theatre during the period in question. He wrote two new plays which were performed during the Occupation, *La Machine à écrire* (first performed 29th April, 1941) and *Renaud et Armide* (first performed 13th April 1943) and oversaw a revival of his controversial play from 1938, *Les Parents terribles*. I will consider the theatre during the period in general terms before looking in more detail at these three afore-mentioned plays in order to examine the way in which there is a possibility of a resistance reading, not only in the plays themselves, but in the

mere fact that Cocteau staged them during a period when attacks against him in the Collaborationist press were so prominent. *La Machine à écrire* is based on the same story as Georges-Henri Clouzot's *Le Corbeau*, and for the most part it is in relation to this that play is ever mentioned, having rarely been performed since the first production. For Cocteau, as can be seen in the preface he wrote to accompany the play, it was an experiment in form, but it is also striking for the family it presents, which is very far removed from the ideal promoted by Pétain's 'Révolution Nationale', and the call for anarchy by one character in the play is of particular note in a period of such stringent censorship. In the case of *Renaud et Armide*, the accompanying article he published in *Comoedia* is of as much interest as the play itself and sees him directly acknowledge and respond to the Occupation: 'Je n'ai pas cette opinion qui consiste à croire que les époques tragiques demandent qu'on écrive des pièces légères. Aux époques tragiques, j'estime qu'il faut la tragédie et que les artistes forment des groupes individuels où le seul esprit commun soit un esprit de grandeur' (Cocteau 1951, p.420). I will also consider the significance of the way in which the story of *Renaud et Armide* is adapted by Cocteau; it is not insignificant that Renaud is presented in his version as the King of France. As I have already mentioned, *Les Parents terribles* was a revival of a play which had already made Cocteau the subject of attacks in the far-Right press of the Third Republic. Given the uproar which had surrounded the play when it was staged in 1938 it is surprising that a re-staging was permitted, and one might question some of the assumptions made regarding the state of censorship in France during the Occupation, as well as the way in which Cocteau is willing to set himself up for further criticism from the same critics who by the time of the Occupation were writing for the Collaborationist press.

By examining these three different aspects of Cocteau's work during the Occupation, a view emerges of an artist grappling, not always successfully, with the

particular challenges of the wartime context. While on the one hand his efforts to minimize the threat the war posed to the creative endeavour can certainly be criticized when read as a politically contestable choice of action, I would argue that it is important also to recognize the belief Cocteau strongly held that art was even more vitally important during war than at other times, and indeed that art was in itself a mode of resistance to the destructiveness inherently associated with war.

Chapter 1

Jean Cocteau and *l'affaire Breker*

In this section I will consider the short article written by Jean Cocteau to coincide with the exhibition held in Paris in 1942 of Arno Breker's sculpture. In considering the article I will also look at the implications of the exhibition, an event which has come to be seen as emblematic of collaboration in the arts during the Occupation, or as one author describes it, 'le point culminant de cette hospitalité artistique' (Burrin 1995, p.351). In assessments of Cocteau during the Occupation this so-called 'high point' in artistic Collaboration has come to signify a low point in his career during the period. Steegmuller's influential study of Cocteau is typical in the way it singles out the Breker article while excusing other associations with Germans during the Occupation: 'so difficult was avoidance of contact with the Occupiers that his fellow Parisians regarded him with comparative indulgence except in a solitary, specific instance – the publicity article he published in the newspaper *Comoedia* in May, 1943, for a Paris exhibition by the German Arno Breker, Hitler's favourite sculptor' (Steegmuller 1986, p.440). By reading the article by Cocteau it will be possible to consider whether the content was controversial or if the controversy was limited to the subject, Arno Breker, 'considéré en quelque sorte comme le sculpteur officiel de Reich' (Heller 1981, p.123). To understand the controversy which surrounded, and continues to surround, Cocteau's involvement with the exhibition of Arno Breker's work, the background to the newspapers which Cocteau was associated with during the period, as well as the complex role the sculptor played both in Germany and Occupied France need to be considered.

Jean Cocteau as journalist

There had been a fashion for well-known writers to contribute to newspapers and journals in the first half of the twentieth century, ‘bien plus fréquemment que de nos jours, on retrouvait la signature des grands romanciers dans les colonnes des journaux’ (Bellanger, Godechot, et al. 1972, p.481) and throughout his career Cocteau was a constant contributor to newspapers and magazines. Cocteau’s first regular series of articles for a newspaper was for *Paris-Midi*; published weekly between March and August 1919 and collected as *Carte blanche* the following year (Cocteau 1920). From January to May 1935 the Saturday edition of *Le Figaro* printed a series of articles by Cocteau under the title ‘Portraits-souvenir’ which were accompanied by the author’s illustrations, and were collected and republished under the same title in 1935 (Cocteau 1935). The following year he wrote a series of articles for *Paris-Soir* published regularly as, along with Raymond Radiguet who served as the ‘Passepartout’ to his ‘Phileas Fogg’, he emulated Jules Verne’s *Tour du monde en 80 jours* and these articles were collected and re-published in the same year as *Mon premier voyage* (Cocteau 1936). This all formed part of a ‘genre’ of sorts of Cocteau’s work which he would refer to as his *poésie de journalisme*.

Cocteau’s first articles to appear during the Occupation were for the Collaborationist newspaper, *La Gerbe*, for which he wrote his ‘Adresse aux jeunes écrivains’ published on December 5th, 1940 and the follow up article which appeared in the paper on 2nd January 1941, ‘A ceux qui nous ont écrit. Réponse de Jean Cocteau’. The two articles Cocteau wrote for *La Gerbe* have been largely forgotten and it is the article on Breker which appeared in the politically more “neutral” *Comoedia* which has come to dominate assessments of Cocteau’s behaviour during the Occupation. Cocteau was a regular contributor to *Comoedia* during the period, with his by-line regularly

appearing on the front-page, writing reviews under the heading of ‘Foyer des artistes,’ the title which would be used for the collection of articles published after the war which would also include a series he had written during the 1930s for *Ce Soir* (Cocteau 1947). However the ‘Salut à Breker’ was omitted from that collection and all subsequent collections during Cocteau’s lifetime and beyond.

***Comoedia* and newspaper publication during the Occupation**

Between June 1940 and August 1944, the French press was ‘une presse captive, comme la nation qu’elle avait théoriquement mission d’informer. [...] Les journaux que les Français lisaient n’avaient désormais pas plus de liberté qu’eux mêmes; leur finalité était de servir une politique’ (Bellanger, Godechot, et al. 1975, p.7). Newspapers such as *La Gerbe* and *Je suis partout* had a clear Collaborationist agenda. *La Gerbe* was edited by Alphonse de Châteaubriant, the first edition appeared 11 Julyth, 1940. At the Liberation he was condemned to death, in absentia, for collaboration with the enemy; he had already fled the country and died in 1948. *Je suis partout* pre-dated the Occupation, having first appeared in 1930, soon aligning itself to the far Right movements of the period in its anti-Third Republic stance. The newspaper was banned for a short period preceding the Occupation only to reappear again, with Robert Brasillach as its editor, who was executed for Collaboration in 1945.

Comoedia, on the other hand, while being under the control of the German censors, was nevertheless lacking in a clear political agenda, other than an attempt at neutrality. It was originally founded in 1907 as a daily journal, but was re-launched as a weekly periodical in January 1941, and this ‘re-launch’ meant that it was still under the ultimate control of the Occupiers and thus had to align itself politically before a publication licence was granted. Fernand Vitus became its proprietor-editor and on the 27th January 1941 and wrote a letter to Sonderführer Schmidt of the Propaganda-Staffel

to secure the right to publish *Comoedia*, and the declaration in the letter illustrates the manner in which the press can be understood as ‘captive’ for even though *Comoedia* was not ‘collaborationist’ as such, it was still expected to engage with the politics which underlined all attempts to gain the right to be published during the Occupation, as the following extract demonstrates:

La partie politique de notre journal aura pour rédacteur responsable notre collaborateur M. Sylvain Bonmariage. D’accord avec nous, cet écrivain a établi un programme de politique générale comprenant:

1. L’intégration de la France dans le plan de l’Europe nouvelle définie par le Führer dans son récent discours.
2. La collaboration immédiate et sans restriction telle que la proposait M. Pierre Laval.
3. Plus particulièrement la collaboration intellectuelle pour laquelle M.Sylvain Bonmariage est pertinemment bien placé par son oeuvre d’écrivain et ses relations avec le Reich (Joseph 1991, p.163).

At the trials of the épuration nobody was found guilty of collaboration solely based on their association with *Comoedia*. However, it still participated to a certain degree in promoting collaboration at the artistic level and promoted German art and literature, as one study declares: ‘Dans chaque numéro, une page sur six est consacrée à l’Europe, celle bien entendu qui se trouve présentement sous influence allemande, c’est la concession la plus apparente à l’air du temps’ (Venner 2000, pp.659-660). What is being referred to here in part is the regular section entitled ‘Connaître l’Europe’. This section of the paper contained reviews of German books available in French translation and offered profiles of artists, composers and artists, such as Breker. Therefore, while it can be said that ‘in practice, while the paper avoided explicitly political commentary, both its content and its composition responded to the evolving circumstances of the war and the Occupation’ (Hamer 2001, p.44), it played an important part in promoting the normality of the idea of a new Europe as represented in the arts. This can be seen in terms of the way in which ‘*Comoedia* exemplified the ambivalence and the caution of

the cultural sphere in its focus on survival in time of crisis' (Hamer 2001, p.51). In reading through the newspaper it is apparent that any references to the political situation tend to be implicit; commenting on a trip by Piaf and Trenet to Germany in 1943 to perform to the 'ouvriers français', there is no reference to the fact that the workers are there under the duress of the Occupying forces.¹ The paper also subscribed to the idea of the Francophile German amongst the Occupiers, for example Ernst Jünger, already a well-known author in France following the success of his memoir of the First World War, *Storm of Steel*. In the edition of *Comoedia* published on 18 July 1942, a review in the 'Connaître l'Europe' section is given of Jünger's *Jardins et Routes* (his memoir of the first years of the Second World War) in which readers are informed that 'Il se confronte sans cesse avec des écrivains de chez nous. Ne soyez donc pas étonnés s'il procède en enquêteur plutôt qu'en conquérant. Soldat irréprochable, il se trouve responsable devant son pays vainqueur et devant l'autre.'

***Comoedia* and Arno Breker**

The Breker exhibition is revisited on several occasions in *Comoedia*, highlighting the importance of the exhibition as a symbol of the artistic 'entente' between France and Germany, and in the edition published on 15th August, includes an article promoting the special edition of *Cahiers franco-allemands* which will have a report on the exhibition: 'Ainsi cette revue qui paraît sans interruption depuis dix ans continue à refléter l'activité culturelle de la France et de l'Allemagne et contribue à une meilleure compréhension par la connaissance mutuelle'. There is little difference between the coverage of Breker given by *Comoedia* compared with that of *La Gerbe*, with both emphasizing the 'debt'

¹ *Comoedia* 21 August, 1943: 'Charles Trenet et Edith Piaf en Allemagne: Deux de nos plus grandes vedettes du music-hall et de l'écran sont parties pour l'Allemagne où elles joueront pour les ouvriers français. Ce sont le fantaisiste Charles Trenet et la chanteuse et comédienne réaliste Edith Piaf. Ce sera une joie pour nos compatriotes de respirer ainsi une bouffée de l'âme et de l'esprit parisiens.'

owed by Breker to France via the influence of French sculptors. *La Gerbe* printed a profile of Breker on May 21st, 1942 referring to the early sculpture included in the exhibition and executed in Paris in 1928 as ‘modèles rugueux, mais si puissants de cette époque, et qui sont comme un hommage au génie âpre et plus tourmenté de Rodin...’ The article then continues with a reminder of the period Breker had spent in Paris, ‘C’est au cours d’un séjour de huit années à Paris qu’il se lia avec les meilleurs sculpteurs français, entre autres: Bourdelle, Despiau, Maillol’. *Comoedia* takes a similar stance in emphasising Breker’s association with France, but more unusually for this publication, also engages with the idiom of the Third Reich in a survey of new sculpture in Germany which was published 23rd August 1941, and saw the sculpture as ‘le symbole d’une époque nouvelle, telle est l’impression qui se dégage notamment des grandes statues dans le style héroïque de Arno Breker et Josef Thorak [...]. Les statues de Breker sont un exemple de tenu artistique, elles s’élèvent très haut dans la beauté et traduisent la sensibilité organique de la nouvelle génération’.

Arno Breker

Breker at the time of the Occupation was generally understood to be Hitler’s favourite sculptor but his history with France pre-dates the war, having lived there from 1926 to 1932 based in Montparnasse and figures from his Parisian past, including Cocteau, re-emerged to demonstrate their support with a number apparently doing this in order to gain protection from the sculptor who appears to have had such influence within the Third Reich. Breker gained a certain amount of recognition during his earlier time in Paris and he had formed part of the group of artists and writers who had moved from elsewhere in Europe and lived in the city in the inter-war years and his work had been influenced by, amongst others, one of France’s most celebrated sculptors, Aristide Maillol. As Gerhard Heller writes in his memoir of his time in Paris as a German officer

during the Occupation, Breker ‘avait la chance d’être à la fois ancien *Montparno*, admirateur de Rodin et de Bourdelle, élève de Maillol, et le sculpteur préféré de Führer’ (Heller 1981, p.123). It was this pre-existing association with France, and in particular Paris, which explains the impact of his role as unofficial artistic ambassador during the Occupation, not only through his direct actions but also by the way in which he could be viewed in Occupied Paris as a sculptor who was largely indebted to the influence of his French masters, a theme repeated in much of the writing related to the artist and the exhibition at the time, making him an ‘intermédiaire efficace dans la collaboration franco-allemande’ (Cointet 2000). Breker developed his work as a sculptor during this inter-war period and exhibited at the Salon des Tuileries and the Salon d’Automne (Petropoulos 2002, p.206) and this prior involvement which had seen him as an active member of Parisian artists goes some way to explaining the efficacy of his role in the politically problematic and precarious project of promoting artistic collaboration between France and Germany during the Occupation.

Breker moved back to Germany in 1933, following a year in Rome, and soon came to the attention of the new political regime, winning the silver medal for sculpture in the 1936 Berlin Olympics ‘with his decathlon athlete and a female ‘Victory’ bearing an olive branch created for the Berlin Olympics in 1936’ which appears to be the moment when he first gained Hitler’s attention (Wilson 1989, p.106). His work at this stage was already on a huge scale with the Olympic contributions exceeding three metres in height (Dorléac 2008, p. 93), and although it was at this point that by most accounts he first came to the attention of Hitler he may have already gained the attention of the Third Reich when the Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, visited fascist Italy when Breker was working there (Petropoulos 2002, p.209). In 1937 he was appointed to the jury which would select artworks to be included in the Paris World Exposition in which the French population had one of their first opportunities to see

examples of art and architecture as political propaganda associated with the Germany of Hitler. In the same year he was made an official sculptor (Stattsbildhauer) of the Reich, a title which led to him being listed as an 'irreplaceable artist' under the Third Reich and therefore exempt from military service and in 1940 Hitler awarded him the Golden Badge of the Nazi Party but this was only one element of the benefits he received through the patronage of the regime (McCloskey 2005, p.54). The financial rewards were immense and what became clear at the time of the de-Nazification trials in Germany after the war was that Breker had been one of the Reich's richest men. What the money allowed was for Breker to develop his monumental style with a large studio being provided for him on the outskirts of Berlin, for this was sculpture on a monumental and industrial scale.

His sculpture, on one level, had changed little over the interwar period other than in size in which the predominantly male figures of his sculpture took on the monolithic proportions which it shared with the architectural rhetoric of the Reich. Along with Albert Speer, amongst other things the official architect of the Reich, they played the most prominent role in putting into stone Hitler's vision of the New Order with Breker supplying the 'decorative aspect to the architectural plans of Speer' (Dorléac 2008, p. 94). The alliance between Breker and Speer was described in the monograph produced to accompany the 1942 Orangerie exhibition in the following terms: 'concertée des deux arts, sculpture et architecture, est aussi celle de deux hommes faits pour se comprendre et se compléter: Arno Breker et Albert Speer' (Despiau 1942, p.72). It was this association with Speer that put Breker at the centre of the Reich's artistic project and assured his position of influence and political power. Even Breker is willing to concede in his memoir the significance of this relationship recounting his first meeting with Albert Speer on a day in November 1938: 'C'est ce jour-là que mon destin se décida. Positivement, quand je pense aux tâches énormes qui

me furent confiées; négativement, quand j'évoque les conséquences que cette participation entraîna, après la chute du IIIe Reich' (Breker 1970, p. 34). Breker may offer a definitive starting point to his involvement with the Third Reich, however his development into the artist who would be championed to such an extent that his work would be included in all major architectural projects either realised or planned was more complex in its progression and took place over a number of years, 'Breker's collaboration with the Nationalist Socialist elite was a gradual process that occurred between 1934 and 1937 (the date when one can label him a *Staatsbildhauer* or official sculptor)' (Petropoulos 2002, p.210). However, by the time of the Occupation, he embodied, above all others, the state sponsored artist at the centre of the Third Reich's propaganda.

Among those he had come to know during this earlier period was Cocteau, with some historians referring to them as lovers during the period, although not giving a source for this information.² What is clear is that Cocteau was one of the first people Breker contacted on his return to Paris for the preparatory work leading up to his exhibition and as recalled in Breker's memoir he had been in contact with Cocteau at the very beginning of the Occupation. From the beginning of the Occupation, Breker had travelled regularly between Berlin and Paris, in one post-war interview Breker recalls that he was 'very often in Paris. I'd take the Paris-Moscow train from the Gare du Nord, very comfortable too' (Pryce-Jones 1981, p.220).³ One of the reasons for the frequent visits was to supervise the studio he had set up in Paris in 1941, which was headed up by Rudier, who had once worked casting bronzes for Rodin, and whom Breker had arranged to have released from prison so that he could work for him in his

² This claim is made by Frederic Spotts in *The Shameful Peace: How French Artists and Intellectuals survived the Nazi Occupation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008) p. 44. This repeats an idea put forward by Ian Ousby in *Occupation, the Ordeal of France 1940-1944* (London: Random House, 1999) p. 56.

³ The last meeting between Cocteau and Breker recorded in Cocteau's Journal is in December 1943 (Cocteau 1989, p.416).

studio. He had also visited the city at the very beginning of the Occupation when he had formed part of Hitler's entourage on his first and only visit to the capital during the war the day after the Armistice was signed. Cocteau's journal from the period begins in 1942, however Breker recalls visiting him in 1940, 'Cocteau et moi prîmes immédiatement contact en automne 1940, lors du premier séjour que je fis à Paris sous l'Occupation. Il nous tenait à cœur de préserver un climat d'entente, malgré les événements' [...] Ce fut à cette époque que je commençais à aider secrètement les personnes menacées, quelles qu'elles fussent, qui s'adressèrent à moi...' (Breker 1970, p.292). This is familiar rhetoric in Breker's collections of the Occupation in which he re-states his involvement in the protection of French artists.

The Arno Breker exhibition

The exhibition was the only one by a German artist in Paris during the Occupation, significant in itself, and which goes some way to explaining the amount of press coverage and attention it received at the time and the reason why the accompanying events which ran alongside the exhibition have been described as the 'Breker jamboree' (Spotts 2008, p.195). It was the unique nature of the exhibition which also explains why it remains an event of such significance. Breker, having spent such a substantial amount of time in Paris prior to the war, his position on his return was unusual and made the exhibition of his work an event which was equally important as a propaganda tool to the Occupiers as it was to the Collaborators, and was made possible by the fact that his old friends in the capital extended beyond the artistic community of the city and included some of the key figures in Collaborationist Paris. Among those friends were Jacques Benoist-Méchin who would play an important role in the formation of the Légion des Volontaires Français (LVF) and who had been aligned to Jacques Doriot and the Parti populaire français (PPF) of the 1930s. Along with his involvement with the

Comité France-Allemagne (1935-1939), this meant he was met with approval by the Occupiers as a member of the Groupe Collaboration which would effectively replace the Comité during the Occupation. Another of Breker's friends who also played a direct role in persuading him to exhibit in France was Drieu la Rochelle, a follower of the PPF and during the Occupation the director of *La Nouvelle Revue française*. Drieu la Rochelle had also been active in collaboration and rapprochement with Germany following Hitler coming to power in 1933, having spent a week in 1934 with 'les jeunes nazis' and again in 1935, at the invitation of Otto Abetz had attended the 'congrès nazi de Nuremberg' (Heller 1981, p. 41).⁴ According to an interview with Breker it was Benoist-Méchin who was the first to ask him to exhibit his work and thus 'collaborate in Franco-German rapprochement' with Breker claiming that his response was that 'I am an old *Parigot*, [...]; in present circumstances I haven't the heart for it' (Pryce-Jones 1981, p.220). The same interview has Breker claim that it was Drieu la Rochelle who finally persuaded him to exhibit his work in Paris, 'he pushed me into exhibiting in Paris' (Pryce-Jones 1981, p.220). Gerhard Heller contrasts Benoist-Méchin's enthusiasm for the work of Breker and what he understood it to signify with his own (possibly revised) response to the sculpture, 'Benoist-Méchin voyait dans les statues de Breker des symboles magnifiant les vertus de fidélité et d'abnégation du peuple allemand. A travers ces figures héroïques, il découvrait la manifestation en art du même style que dans la conception hitlérienne de la vie et du monde. Je pensais la même chose et c'est pourquoi je n'aimais pas, moi, ces œuvres grandiloquentes et brutales' (Heller 1981, p. 150). This positioning of himself at a distance from both Nazi ideology and the enthusiasm of Collaborationists is repeated throughout Heller's memoirs.

What is clear from reading Breker's memoir is his insistence at being assessed as an apolitical artist, at once inside and outside the Nazi Party, this stance described in

⁴ The importance of Drieu la Rochelle on the Collaborationist scene is further emphasized by the fact that he is the first Frenchman Gerhard Heller visits at home during the Occupation (Heller 1981, p. 43).

one study in the following terms: ‘His arrogance led him to believe that his work would ultimately transcend its politicization’ (Petropoulos 2002, p.206). However, it is problematic to consider Breker’s work as being politicized by the Nazis without also taking into account that to work as a Nazi-sponsored artist was not merely to be the object of passive politicization but to be involved in active engagement with the Third Reich. As Petropoulos points out, he shared the self-confidence of Leni Riefenstahl and ‘thought that he was immune from the corrupting influence of politics even as he executed official commissions’ (Petropoulos 2002, p.206). What any protestation on Breker’s part always omits is the acknowledgement of the enforced labour which was used to produce his work. He uses the example that he ‘freed’ French prisoners, some of whom he had known in his early years in Paris, as an illustration of his support of the French, still unable to recognise that this ‘freedom’ took the form of forced labour. Breker also chooses to ignore his involvement with looting which took place in an indirect manner when it came to the bronze supplies for his studio, as one assessment claims that ‘the main use made of bronze statues taken from German-occupied countries was not for artillery production, but rather for sculpture; needed in large amounts for Breker’s colossal figures (Ragache 1988, p.127). Breker was also accused of involvement with the looting in a more direct sense in the way he profited from the art market in Occupied Paris, or as one study states: ‘He exploited the occupation economy in France and purchased artworks at highly favourable prices’ (Petropoulos 2002, p. 214). Furthermore, it appears according to some accounts that Otto Abetz ‘arranged for Breker to stay in Helena Rubinstein’s Aryanized apartment’ (Riding 2010, p.176) although he was also given apartments in the Ritz, which is where Cocteau reports meeting with him in his journal (Cocteau 1989, p.126).

In his memoir, Breker recalls the press conference which preceded the opening of the exhibition at the Orangerie and recounts the following exchange between himself

and one journalist: ‘A l’ultime question que me posa un journaliste: “Y avait-il un art national-socialiste”, je répondis en toute franchise par cette autre question: “Avait-il appris quelque part que l’on pût opérer un caecum, par exemple, d’une façon catholique ou d’une façon luthérienne?”...’ (Breker 1970, p. 146). This cryptic response from Breker to the question, and its recollection in the memoir, is a continuation of his refusal to even be considered as a Nazi artist. Breker never modified his response and his confidence was such that he was willing to engage with the notion of himself as beyond the influence of a regime even at the time of the Occupation itself, remaining steadfast in his belief of himself as an artist existing outside any influence, ‘Tous mes projets recevaient l’approbation d’Hitler. Jamais on ne me donna de directives, que ce fût sur un plan esthétique, formel, ou dans le choix des thèmes. Je travaillais dans une liberté souveraine’ (Breker 1970, p. 38). It is not only Breker who engages (however superficially) with the perception of his being an official artist of the Third Reich, but this is also to be found in the monograph: ‘Mais, diront quelques-uns, voilà un art officiel; il se fera l’esclave du pouvoir, car on ne met point de statues sur les places qui ne soient commandées d’avance et qui ne doivent obéir à des conditions imposées. L’art véritable est celui qui peut s’exprimer sans entraves’ (Despiau 1942, p.69). The question of the official artist is not immediately dismissed but rather used to depart on an argument which attempts to promote the notion of the sovereign artist. Given that the Third Reich’s sponsorship of Breker continued throughout the Second World War one can only assume that this was fully sanctioned as an argument by the Nazis.

Breker’s association with Occupied Paris was not only the exhibition in 1942 as he had returned there initially after the fall of France. His visit to Paris was documented in newsreel footage and propaganda photos distributed at the time which show him accompanying Hitler and other representatives of the Third Reich around the deserted streets of the city. He recounts in his memoir the days leading up to the trip relating the

excitement he feels about the artistic collaboration he envisages, ‘J’entends ne dresser aucun obstacle qui compromette l’entente franco-allemande, elle viendra... c’est sûr!’ (Breker 1970, p. 97). On arrival in Paris he is struck by the fact that the welcome, from the few Parisians he encounters, is far from warm, displaying simultaneously a naivety and arrogance which is to be found throughout the memoir, for example his surprise at the reaction of the first Frenchman they meet noting, ‘il semblait pétrifié’ (Breker 1970, p. 100). This is followed by a realisation on his part that the invasion and occupation of the country will not be as straightforward as he imagined, ‘Je sentis pour la première fois le fossé tragique qui nous séparait: *l’Occupation*’ (Breker 1970, p. 100). The sense of tragedy is limited to the personal rather than an understanding or acknowledgment of the broader political and ideological motivation which lies behind the Occupation.

The unofficial role played in Occupied Paris as an intermediary therefore extended beyond his exhibition and took other forms, such as his involvement in recruiting French artists to travel to Germany as part of an official visit to see the Third Reich at first hand. This was a particularly successful propaganda coup on the part of Breker suggesting that the ‘fossé tragique’ caused by military Occupation did not need to be extended to artists and writers who would be welcomed in Germany. Such a trip (which Cocteau wisely did not join) allowed Breker to expand on his version of the Occupation which far from the reality of the military defeat, existed outside of politics in his way of thinking with such projects being seen to confirm the ideology that led him to believe that he could exist outside the politics of the Third Reich. In response to Halimi’s question as to what he thought of French artists who travelled to Germany during the Occupation and were subsequently condemned as being pro-Hitler, Breker responds: ‘C’est absurde de les avoir condamnés. Dans une guerre, les artistes ont, les premiers, le devoir de se serrer la main. Nous sommes loin de la politique, des idées’ (Halimi 1976, p. 235). Further questioning on the subject leads to the following

response: 'C'est une affaire personnelle. Pour ma part je suis tout de suite venu à Paris serrer la main à tous mes amis. Ça a eu un grand avantage pour pas mal de gens' (Halimi 1976, p. 235). What this further elaboration displays is Breker's simultaneous desire to demonstrate himself at once as an artist existing outside of politics and also, and contradictorily, with the power to protect his Parisian artistic 'compatriots'. This forms part of Breker's contradictory account of his position within the regime in which he insists he transcended the political and at the same time had enough power within the regime to be able to influence decisions. In one post-War interview he recounts a story that Picasso had been sending money to Russia and he recalls with pride how he spoke to General Müller (head of the Gestapo): 'I said to Müller that such a man could not be allowed to die, and that if he would not help, then I would ring up the Chancellery and tell the story there. That changed matters. He rang up Paris and gave the orders to stop all activity against Picasso' (Pryce-Jones 1981, p.220).

Breker was supported and championed by Hitler but where the ambiguity of this relationship is to be found is in the notion of whether or not he can be understood as a fascist artist. Part of his defence when tried by the de-Nazification courts was that the two sculptures which flanked the New Reich Chancellery had been renamed by Hitler after they had been bought. Breker had entitled them *Fackelträger* (Torch Bearer) and *Schwertträger* (Sword Bearer) and it only in their re-naming by Hitler as *Party* and *Wehrmacht* (according to Breker's line of argument) which gave them 'a political meaning that the artist had not intended' (Petropoulos 2000, p. 243). Reading some of the press coverage from the time of the Occupation allows an understanding that the names given to both these sculptures, and which formed such an important part of Breker's post-war defence, was given to change during the period and were far from fixed. In the monograph the sculptures in question are referred to by the name given originally by Breker, 'Le porte-flambeau' et 'Le porte-glaive' (Despiau 1942, pp.70-

71). And yet a year earlier in an edition of *Comoedia* (23rd August 1941) an extended article under the regular heading of 'Connaître l'Europe' was illustrated with a photograph of Breker's statue names as using the translation of the approved Nazi title, 'La Statue du Parti'. On May 16th 1942, a photograph is used again of the statue and on this occasion the name is changed back to the more neutral 'le porte-flambeau'. The way in which the re-naming is understood for the most part is that it was a single event, that after a certain date, the new names were used and yet from reading the newspapers and including the monograph by Despiau it appears that this was less straightforward than first imagined. This renaming has been described in the following terms: 'a paradigmatic episode is provided by the two figures he created for the New Reich Chancellery, which he titled *Torch Bearer* and *Sword Bearer*. Upon Hitler's express orders, they were renamed and publicized as *Party* and *Wehrmacht*' (Petropoulos 2002, p. 211), and yet it seems that Hitler's orders were not followed consistently. The politics of the naming of the statues continued after the war in the politics of Breker's rehabilitation, an American post-war example referred to in one article which considered art in and of the Third Reich, 'the statues were renamed Swordbearer and Torchbearer for this American promotional publication' (Kasher 1992, p.57). The titles attributed to them in a recent study are 'The Party' and 'The Wehrmacht' (Dorléac 2008, p.91) but it is apparent when reading the newspapers of the Occupation that the names were not fixed and clarification is needed when one appreciates that the names of these two sculptures had significance which went far beyond the sculpture itself.

The Breker exhibition

It was not only the 'Salut' itself which caused controversy at the time but also Cocteau's presence at the exhibition. It was enough to prompt Éluard to write the following letter to Cocteau, dated the 2nd July 1942: 'Freud, Kafka, Chaplin sont interdits, par les mêmes qui honorent Breker. On vous voyait parmi les interdits. Que vous avez eu tort de vous montrer soudain parmi les censeurs! Les meilleurs de ceux qui vous admirent et qui vous aiment en ont été péniblement surpris. Redonnez-nous confiance. Rien ne doit nous séparer' (Cocteau 1989, p.175). It is of note that Éluard makes no mention of the article but focuses on Cocteau's presence at the exhibition and his sudden appearance amongst 'les censeurs'. As will be seen in the reading of the Journal, Cocteau did associate with a number of Germans during the Occupation but the implication of the letter is that at the time this had gone largely unnoticed; it is the very public nature of the widely reported exhibition which troubles Éluard. What is contained in this disapproval is the acknowledgement that the Breker exhibition was 'the most notorious cultural event of the era' (Fiss 2009, p. 202). More than just an exhibition to celebrate the work of a sculptor at the centre of the artistic project of the Third Reich it permitted a coup in terms of political propaganda which made much of Franco German collaboration which pre-dated the Occupation with the accompanying coverage both in the press and in newsreels prompting one historian of the period to refer to it as 'what turned out to be the cultural summit of the Occupation years and the ultimate *collabo* jamboree. This was an exhibition in the Orangerie of gigantic sculptures by Arno Breker, a disciple of Maillol and, more relevantly, Hitler's favourite artist' (Spotts 2008, p.43). As Breker recalls in his memoir, Benoist-Méchin, his first French visitor in Berlin during the war, as we have already seen, played an important role in persuading Breker to exhibit in Paris, 'Il pressentit mon aide et mon coopération pour construire avec lui une nouvelle ère d'entente, face à la disproportion des forces en présence' (Breker 1970, p.133).

It was a popular exhibition, if this is quantified by the number that came to see it, with one estimate of the number of visitors standing at 80,000 (Petropoulos 2000, p.236) another standing at a more conservative, but still significant number, of 60,000 visitors (Spotts 2008, p.45) and a further example refers to the number of visitors as ‘estimated (or exaggerated ?) at 65,000’ (Mitchell 2008, p.77). The significant number of visitors (60,000 or 80,000) not only marked the popularity of Breker’s work, or at least an interest in it, but also the success, in part, of the propaganda mission of the German Occupiers and the Collaborationists to demonstrate the ‘entente’ which existed between the two countries. It is therefore not the association with the sculptor Breker as such but rather with the project which was being utilised as an instrument of propaganda which is problematic.

The importance of the exhibition was such that an illustrated monograph was produced to accompany it, written by Charles Despiau, Breker’s old friend and former assistant to Rodin, and one of France’s most celebrated sculptors of the period.⁵ The idea of it being a propaganda tool with the choice of author being a significant part of this is highlighted by suggestions that Despiau merely offered his name to the work: ‘Despiau signed his name to a monograph glorifying the Third Reich’s sculptor, Arno Breker’ (Dorléac 2008, p. 84). The book, which traces, through the large number of photographic illustrations (120 in total) the way in which Breker’s sculpture had developed from the smaller and more roughly hewn examples of the Parisian years to the more stylised and idealised form which would bring him to the attention of Hitler and which would also continue to develop during this political patronage. The figures in

⁵ The monograph was published by Flammarion and this is accompanied by an additional account of Breker’s intervention, this time arranging for the protection of Mme Flammarion who was Jewish by origin. (Breker 1970, pp.150-151)

the exhibition were almost all male and have been described by one critic as ‘Aryan supermen in stone’ (Evans 2005, p.167).⁶

We have already seen in the pages of *La Gerbe* and *Comoedia* the emphasis which is placed on the influence of France on Breker’s work and this is also revisited in the monograph, one example being the following statement: ‘Il y a quelque chose de flatteur et d’émouvant pour nous, Français, pour nous artistes de sentir chez des étrangers ce frémissement, cet enthousiasme, que suscitent en eux les contacts avec notre art. Ce qu’Arno Breker demande à Paris, ce n’est pas des relations et des commandes, c’est l’étude des exemples’ (Despiau 1942, p.27). As well as photographs of Breker’s sculpture the monograph also includes a number of photographs of some of the people who attended the opening night of the exhibition, again making it a particularly useful propaganda instrument and highlighting why it remains such a controversial event, with suggestions that ‘le Tout-Paris’ was in attendance with one description stating that the exhibition had been ‘acclaimed by corrupt Parisian high society – political, financial, literary, and artistic’ (Dorléac 2008, p. 91). Breker in his memoirs refers to the photographs (both those included in the monograph and those seen in the press and in newsreel footage at the time) viewing them as proof of the ‘entente’ that existed, defending himself from the dismissal of the exhibition by Simone de Beauvoir whom he claims ‘prétend dans l’un de ses livres qu’aucun artiste français n’avait été présent à l’ouverture de l’exposition. Rien n’est plus faux, Jacques Chardonne le souligne, et les photographies qui furent prises pendant les discours officiels l’attestent’ (Breker 1970, p. 147). What he appears to be responding to here is the following assessment of the exhibition by Beauvoir: ‘Les Allemands faisaient de grands efforts pour créer une collaboration intellectuelle, mais sans succès. [...]

⁶ Cocteau saw a similarity between the idealized male figures and Jean Marais, writing on 19th May: ‘Rendez-vous Breker-Marais à l’Orangerie après la fermeture. Marais étant le type d’un personnage de Breker, je coulais le lui faire connaître’ (Cocteau 1989, p.130).

Presque toute l'intelligentsia française bouda l'exposition Arno Breker qu'ils organisèrent avec grand bruit à l'Orangerie' (Beauvoir 1960, p. 588). Breker seems to have misunderstood here that Beauvoir's evaluation of the exhibition does not contradict his own, she does not claim that French artists were not present but rather the 'intellegentsia française' boycotted it, with any French artist in attendance being dismissed from Beauvoir's definition of the 'intellegentsia', emphasising the way in which this event was viewed by some as a Collaborationist exercise.

In a profile of Breker's work printed in *Comoedia* (4 December, 1943) there is a quotation from the sculptor which sees him sharing the idiom of the Third Reich in response to why his sculpture is almost entirely given over to the male figure: 'Je n'ai pas encore réussi à trouver le corps féminin idéal: un nu qui serait en harmonie parfaite avec mes athlètes: je choisis toujours ceux-ci parmi des hommes splendides appartenant à une race renouvelée et très pure'. The change or development in style is catalogued in the monograph and whether this was political expediency on his part or a natural development on his part outside of any political influence (something he would insist upon in post-Occupation accounts) remains unclear, although the account that suggests opportunism is more compelling as an argument as one assessment states it, 'Breker had politicized his style on purpose, to suit the hour' (Pryce-Jones 1981, p.162).

The reminder of Breker's earlier association with France extended beyond the exhibition and articles in *La Gerbe* and *Comoedia* and was even to be found in the populist photo journal, *La Semaine* which in an illustrated article on Breker's work (published 14 May 1942, no 93) referred to him in the following terms: 'Arno Breker, sculpteur officiel du 3ème Reich mais pendant dix ans le Café-Crème à Montparnasse.' This emphasis on Breker's 'debt' to France was particularly prevalent during the Occupation. Sacha Guitry is said to have seen this in terms of German art paying homage to French art (Spotts 2008, p.239). And Cocteau notes in his journal, 'Maillol,

Français germanique. Breker, Allemand de France' (Cocteau 1989, p.141). Maillol's presence at the exhibition was seen as 'legitimizing the collaborationist aspect of the exhibition' (Pryce-Jones 1981, p.162). Although Maillol's presence appears to have been motivated by political expediency, according to several accounts it was Breker who arranged for the release of Maillol's model, Dina Vierny who was of Russian Jewish descent, from prison (Dorléac 2008, p.108). This element of pragmatism on Maillol's part is further emphasised in the account Heller gives of fetching the elderly sculptor from his home in the French Pyrenees, 'Maillol, connaissait bien Breker, qui avait été son élève, mais il ne voulait pas trop s'engager dans une appréciation de ses œuvres. Et lorsque je lui demandai s'il les connaissait, il m'a répondu assez évasivement: "Oui, on m'a dit que c'est grand!" En effet, Arno Breker s'était spécialisé dans le genre monumental, on pourrait même dire grandiloquent et cela ne correspondait guère aux goûts de Maillol' (Heller 1981, p. 124). In this account from Heller, Maillol can be seen acknowledging the monumentality which has replaced Breker's earlier work.

The 'Salut à Breker'

One of the legacies of Cocteau's article being omitted from his collected works is the way in which it has at times been misrepresented. With no recourse other than the newspaper archives, access to the article was limited until it was reproduced in the Journal which Cocteau kept during the Occupation which was published in 1989. There is a tendency to refer to the article rather than to quote from it directly and anomalies and variances become attached to its definition. It is referred to as a 'dithyrambic article in which he looked forward to the day when 'Brecker's [sic] statues would invade the Place de la Concorde' (Brown 1969, p.359); the incorrect year is assigned to its

publication date and it is referred to as ‘the publicity article he published in the newspaper *Comoedia* in May, 1943’ (Steegmuller 1986, p.440); ‘an extended eulogy of Breker’s exhibition’ (Pryce-Jones 1981, p. 165); referred to as a ‘speech’ (White 1993, p.220); and it is called a ‘pamphlet’ (Hayward 2000, p.162); a ‘preface’ written for the exhibition catalogue (Aldrich and Wotherspoon 2001, p.82); renamed as the ‘Eloge à Breker’ (J. S. Williams 2006, p.62); ‘a highly flattering address, which was later published’ (Krauss 2004, p.18); a ‘celebratory ode’ (Fiss 2009, p.203); a ‘paean to Breker’ (Riding 2010, p.186).

What this selection of examples demonstrates is the way in which the ‘Salut’ itself has become distanced from its original form and become one of what Julian Jackson in his assessment of the Occupation refers to as the ‘endlessly recycled half-truths’ on which reputations from the period can become based (Jackson 2003, p.301). Some of the descriptions are accurate but some demonstrate a lack of familiarity with the article itself and indicate the way in which the source can be obscured by earlier mis-representations which are then repeated. Jackson takes as one of his examples of this repetition of ‘half-truths’ Paul Claudel whose post-Occupation reputation was marred by what has become known as the ‘Ode à Pétain’ despite it having been published in *Le Figaro* in May 1941 as ‘Paroles au Maréchal’. I would argue that the lack of precision in referring to the ‘Salut’ when it becomes the basis for judgements made of Cocteau during the Occupation is problematic in the formation of any argument relating to it. A reading of Cocteau’s Journal from the period makes it clear that he was aware that there would be repercussions from the publication of the ‘Salut’. I would maintain that while there is a valid case to be made in considering it as a ‘dreadful error of judgment’ on Cocteau’s part, (J. S. Williams 2008, p.185), it is also worth re-considering it as an act of political expediency (which still allows for it to be seen as an error of judgement); this rather than excusing it will then allow for a reconsideration of

the poet who is dismissed as either a politically naïve or politically ambiguous figure from the period, in which the ‘Salut à Breker’ is seen as ‘the nearest he [Cocteau] came to burning his wings irremediably’ (Jackson 2003, p.311), as symbolic of his ‘repellent detachment’ (Stegmuller 1986, p.439), and as ‘a blunder he never lived down [...] a gratuitous act of osculation with a hated Invader’ (Spotts 2008, p.226). The short article is seen in broader terms of endorsement which extend beyond the ‘Salut’ itself in the following statement ‘his support of the Nazi sculptor Breker was infamous’ (Kaplan 2000, p.197) suggesting here that support extended beyond the publication of the article. The importance of the ‘Breker affair’, a phrase which Cocteau uses to refer to the scandal which accompanied the article, is such that the article in question should be the starting point for any argument which stems from it.

Reading the ‘Salut à Breker’

SALUT A BREKER par Jean Cocteau

Je vous salue, Breker. Je vous salue de la haute patrie des poètes, patrie où les patries n’existent pas, sauf dans la mesure où chacun y apporte le trésor du travail national.

Je vous salue, parce que vous réhabilitez les mille reliefs dont un arbre compose sa grandeur.

Parce que vous regardez vos modèles comme des arbres et que, loin de sacrifier aux volumes, vous douez vos bronzes et vos plâtres d’une sève délicate qui tourmente le bouclier d’Achille de leurs genoux, qui fait battre le système fluvial de leurs veines, qui frise le chèvrefeuille de leurs cheveux.

Parce que vous inventez un nouveau piège où se prendra l'esthétisme, ennemi des énigmes. Parce que vous rendez le droit de vivre aux statues mystérieuses de nos jardins publics. Parce que, sous le clair de lune, véritable soleil des statues, j'imagine vos personnages arrivant une nuit de printemps, place de la Concorde, avec le pas terrible de la Vénus d'Ille.

Parce que la grande main du David de Michel-Ange vous a montré votre route.

Parce que, dans la haute patrie où nous sommes compatriotes, vous me parlez de la France.

The 'Salut à Breker' appeared on the front page of *Comoedia* on 23rd May 1942, printed in capital letters. *Comoedia*, by the beginning of 1942, had a circulation of 50,000. (Venner 2000, pp.659-660). The controversy which accompanied the article at the time of its publication continues with references to the 'Salut à Breker' becoming a shorthand for what is seen by many to be Cocteau's political naivety during the Occupation.

David Andrew Jones, a rare example of one who does engage directly with the text, poses the following question: 'can we say that the "Salut" is overtly pro-Nazi?' (Jones 2007, p.146). He then continues his analysis by considering the title: 'The first indication of the questionable politics of this salute comes in the title itself, which translated into the German language of the sculptor would be 'Heil Breker' – certainly not a politically innocent formulation' (Jones 2007, p.147). The problem with this conclusion is that it is not in response to what Cocteau wrote. I would argue that it is problematic to attempt to analyse some of the political implications of the language of the 'Salut' in a virtual translation, or at least in a translation which does not

acknowledge the complexities associated with any such project. The ‘Salut à Breker’ could of course be translated as ‘Heil Breker’. However, this is to add a political dimension which does not necessarily exist in the French or at the very least can be seen to co-exist with other meanings. Reversing the translation exercise in this case suggests a possible limitation in so much as ‘Heil Breker!’ would be translated within the political context of the time as ‘Vive Breker!’ suggesting the chant ‘Vive Pétain’ which can be heard in contemporary newsreels of French crowds showing their support of the Maréchal. I would argue that what the ‘Salut à Breker’ evokes is the prayer ‘Je vous salue Marie’ of the Roman Catholic liturgy. This can then be seen again in the body of the article in which Cocteau repeats the phrase ‘je vous salue, Breker’. After all, this would not be the first time that he would invoke the prayer, having had his narrator do so in *Le Livre blanc* and having also used the phrase in the poem ‘Périscopé’.⁷

When it comes to any attempt at translation another problematic word in the ‘Salut’ is ‘patrie’ – a word repeated throughout the text. Jones translates this into English rather than German (as he did when analysing the phrase ‘Salut Breker’) and chooses the word ‘fatherland’; a word associated in English with the Third Reich. At first reading ‘fatherland’ is a direct equivalent to ‘Vaterland’ a term which was adopted by the Nazis in the phrase used to evoke the sacrifice for the perceived greater good made by its soldiers who died ‘für Führer und Vaterland’ which as Klemperer observes is an adaptation of the historical phrase, ‘for King and country’, ‘für König und Vaterland’ (Klemperer 2006, p.114). But is this necessarily what is associated with the French word ‘patrie’? The importance of language during a period of political oppression is such that I would argue that attempting to read the text in any language

⁷ ‘J’ai toujours été croyant. Ma croyance était confuse. [...] A la messe, lorsque l’astre du sacrifice domine l’autel et que les têtes se baissent, je priais avec ardeur la Vierge de me prendre sous Sa sainte garde: Je vous salue, Marie, murmurai-je; n’êtes-Vous pas la pureté même?’ Jean Cocteau, *Le Livre blanc* (Cocteau 2006, pp. 520-1). The phrase is also included in the poem ‘Périscopé’ from *Poésies 1917-1920* (Cocteau 1999, p.198).

other than that in which it is originally written is open to mis-reading. In Victor Klemperer's study of the language of the Third Reich one of the topics of discussion he returns to is the way in which words could be identified as being specifically Nazi from how they were utilized, 'In many cases Nazi language points to foreign influences and appropriates much of the rest from the German language before Hitler. But it changes the value of words and the frequency of their occurrence' (Klemperer 2006, p.14). When the suggestion is made that Cocteau's use of the word 'Fatherland' is contentious it therefore ignores the fact that the word he used was in fact 'patrie'. I would therefore like to consider the way in which this, in the context of the period in which it was written, is a politically ambiguous and problematic term, but as we have seen not in the way that is suggested by translating it as 'fatherland'.

'Patrie' in the same way as 'fatherland' and 'Vaterland' suggest the Latin root of 'pater' and this is the way in which it can be understood in the fundamental part it played in the rhetoric of Vichy. The motto of the Revolution of 1789 'liberté, égalité, fraternité' was after all replaced by the Vichy Government with 'travail, famille, patrie' (which in turn had been borrowed from the Parti social français). 'Patrie' can be seen to signify the patriarchal society which was at the heart of the Révolution nationale. It was a fundamental part of the ideology of the Révolution nationale to put into action a re-ordering of society which in its rhetoric involved a return to the (partly) mythical pre-Republic and much of the propaganda in the visual images produced by Vichy took the iconic figure of the mother as homemaker as well as the further iconic figure which dominated so much of the propaganda by having Pétain, the elder statesman, as the leader of this patriarchy. One reading which can therefore be given to Cocteau's use of the word 'patrie' is an engagement in part with the idiom not of the Third Reich but rather with Pétain's Révolution nationale. It is also necessary to acknowledge that 'patrie' can move away so easily from its Latin root of 'pater' in its usage in French

which goes far beyond the notion of ‘pays du père’ and one historian writing in English is not the first to recognize this, choosing to translate ‘travail’ and ‘famille’ into English but leaving ‘patrie’ untranslated and in italics (Jackson 2003, p. 43). It is interesting to note that the negative associations which are now understood by ‘fatherland’ mean that later editions of the Collins Robert dictionary, such as the fifth edition for example, do not include ‘fatherland’ as a suggested translation of ‘patrie’.

Rather, what is most problematic in the article is the reference to ‘la haute patrie des poètes, patrie où les patries n’existent pas’. Given the context of the Occupation and the way in which the exhibition was presented by both the Occupiers and the Collaborationists as an example of the way in which Germany and France had a legacy of exchange at the level of the arts, the notion of the eradication of borders sees Cocteau sharing the rhetoric of those who had planned the exhibition. Cocteau could well have had in mind the words of Alfred de Musset from his 1834 play, *Lorenzaccio*: ‘les grands artistes n’ont pas de patrie’ but within the context of the period the phrase becomes immediately associated with the rhetoric of the exhibition organisers and the impossibility of neutrality on the part of the artist is put into question. There is an ambiguity in the way in which the word ‘patrie’ is used here by Cocteau, in which he and Breker exist as artists where there are no homelands but there is still a reference to one’s own national treasure and the article ends with the ambiguous phrase, ‘vous me parlez de la France’; Germany is not named but France is, yet the way in which the colossal bronzes celebrated by Hitler speaks to Cocteau of France is not clarified.

Cocteau writes in the ‘Salut’ of ‘le trésor du travail national’ and it is interesting to note that rather than referring to what is seen at the exhibition, the completed product in the form of the sculpture, he chooses to refer to the labour that produced it, ‘travail’ rather than ‘travaux’. He then continues by drawing a comparison between the statues and trees, partly evoking the size of the sculptures, and also introducing the idea which

he then goes on to pursue of the sculpture needing to occupy public parks, to be seen outside rather than within the confines of the exhibition.⁸ This in turn engages with the rhetoric of the press at the time, for example as printed in *La Gerbe* on 21st May, 1942, ‘Comme les sculptures de la Grèce antique, comme “ymagiers” du moyen âge. Arno Breker a conçu ses vastes compositions pour le plein air. Comme les maîtres de ce passé lointain, il sait que la sculpture est faite pour “embellir la cité d’images exaltantes”, et que l’on n’y parvient que par l’union de la statuaire et de l’architecture.’ But Cocteau, having seemingly introduced the idea of Breker’s heroic sculpture being placed in the open air to inspire the public with its mythic proportions, then brings the literary allusion of Mérimée’s ‘Vénus de l’Ille’: ‘j’imagine vos personnages arrivant une nuit de printemps, place de la Concorde avec les pas terrible de la Vénus d’Ille [sic]’. The reference to the story by Merimée is one that was particularly familiar to Cocteau at the time of writing the ‘Salut’ as he was also in the process of writing a screenplay based on the story of the vengeful statue and furthermore it is familiar to readers of his earlier contributions to *Comoedia* having used it as an allusion when writing a review of Charles Münch conducting Bach’s ‘Magnificat’: ‘son pas est celui de la Vénus d’Ille’ (Cocteau 1951, p.388).⁹

To have Breker’s statues walk in the place de la Concorde is not a surprising choice on first reading, given that it was very close by to where the exhibition was taking place, however it is also worth taking into consideration that it was where German soldiers paraded every day during the Occupation, ‘everything came to a stop at dawn and dusk to allow passage of an ostentatious parade of German troops and the changing of guards at the main military command post (*Hauptwache*) on the corner of

⁸ Cocteau writing in his journal on 18 May, 1942, comments on the need for the sculptures to be seen outside: ‘Ce soir à cinq heures, été chercher Breker au Ritz. Nous allons avec sa femme à l’Orangerie après la fermeture. Sans la foule, les statues vivent. Il faudrait les exposer dehors, à l’ombre, au soleil’ (Cocteau 1989, p.126).

⁹ The date of this review is not given in the *Oeuvres Complètes* but from consulting the newspaper archives, the date of publication was 8th November, 1941.

the Rue de Rivoli and the Rue de Castiglione, near the Hôtel Meurice where the Commandant resided' (Mitchell 2008, p.14). Therefore whilst one argument sees this as 'certainly not a calming image given the circumstances' (Jones 2007, p.147) I would argue that this is perhaps to miss the point of the dangerous ground Cocteau is treading in the face of the Occupiers.

Cocteau then goes on to state that the 'grande main du David de Michel-Ange vous a montré votre route'. This at once is a familiar comparison but can also be read as Cocteau insisting, along the familiar lines of Breker's argument, that rather than subject to the directives of the Reich he is operating outside of such politics and is continuing an ancient tradition in sculpture of glorifying an idealised male form. The 'Salut' ends with the infamous and problematic phrase 'dans la haute patrie où nous sommes compatriotes, vous me parlez de la France'. If we consider the very final section, it sees Cocteau to a large extent echoing the rhetoric which accompanied the exhibition, that of Breker's debt to France, and in doing so reminds the reader of the long-standing friendship between Breker and France, and in particular between Breker and Cocteau. The idea of the 'haute patrie des poètes' however is a familiar allusion from Cocteau's earlier work and there are numerous examples of other writers using similar phraseology, particularly those who at the time of the Occupation, or in later years, would try to justify their association with the Occupiers as being outside of politics. Cocteau in his Journal writes on 21st June, 1942, ' " La terre, après tout, n'est pas ma patrie." Pierre Benoit me cite souvent ce vers de moi' (Cocteau 1989, p.161). The footnote to accompany this entry explains that a reference to the line of verse, 'fort prosaïque', has not been found, it is in fact from a poem by Cocteau entitled, 'Le Chevalier Perce-Neige' included in the collection *Allégories* which was originally published in 1941 (Cocteau 1999, p.621). Gerhard Heller, in his memoirs, includes the quotation attributed to Marcel Jouhandeau, 'L'amitié est ma patrie' (Heller 1981, p. 7).

And Cocteau writes the following entry in his Journal in March 1942, a few months before the Breker exhibition, following dinner with ‘Heller, Jünger et plusieurs Allemands de culture française très profonde. [...] Une patrie c’est la rencontre d’hommes qui se trouvent instantément au même niveau’ (Cocteau 1989, p.31). Jean Marais, always ready to protect Cocteau from any criticism, also evokes the notion of the poet without borders: ‘Pour Jean, l’amitié passait avant tout et n’avait pas de frontière’ (Marais 1975, p. 143). The notion of friendship as the starting point behind much of the collaboration which took place during the Occupation is also the recourse that Benoist-Méchin takes when explaining why he spoke at the Breker exhibition, the following response also reminds the reader of the entente which many, particularly of the far-Right in France had sought with Germany soon after the end of the First World War, ‘in May 1942 I spoke at the Breker exhibition; I’d been a friend of his since 1924, when I went to Germany on military service, and was for France-German rapprochement. I had known all the German leaders since Scheidemann and had been on the Comité France-Allemagne since its start. To do the Breker exhibition was just to continue an old friendship’ (Pryce-Jones 1981, p. 218). In Breker’s memoirs the significance of the exhibition was seen in relation to the success of the event as an exchange between France and Germany, but he also shares the idea of an exchange which could take place with an absence of borders, ‘On y fêtait en fait le triomphe de l’échange intellectuel à l’échelle internationale, caractérisé par une tolérance ignorant les frontières, et ouvert aux conceptions les plus variées’ (Breker 1970, p.291). What Breker fails to add here is that the exchange during the Occupation is no longer voluntary but subject to political control and associations which mean that this can no longer be seen in neutral terms.

Breker in Cocteau's Journal, 1942-1945

A reading of Cocteau's Journal from the period informs a reading of the 'Salut à Breker' in the way it suggests and, at times, explicitly refers to the bargaining which took place on Cocteau's part in agreeing to write it. The following entry from the Journal suggests that the way in which he employed the term 'haute patrie des poètes' was a way of distancing Breker from the Third Reich but also demonstrates his inability to accept that Breker was an integral part of the propaganda which formed a part of the German and the Collaborationist agenda.

Laval à Breker (discours): 'Nous vous remercions d'être venu à Paris.' Gaffe sur gaffe. C'était si simple de recevoir Breker comme un artiste et non pas comme l'ami du chef. C'est pourquoi j'ai publié le texte ci-contre. On me croira aux ordres. Je suis heureux, d'être attaqué par tous, libre (?) et sans le sou. J'aurais pu ajouter à mon 'Salut': parce qu'on vous écrase sous les éloges. (Cocteau 1989, p.132)

When reading Cocteau's Journal 1942-45, particularly in conjunction with the memoirs of Breker and Heller, it must not be forgotten that Cocteau's journal *intime* was not (necessarily) meant for publication and was not edited or modified by Cocteau. Both Breker and to a lesser extent Heller's memoirs can be read as attempts at rehabilitation. What one sees in both of these examples is an insistence on the role the French Collaborationists played in the Occupation and both emphasise the old friendships which were re-kindled during the period, which inadvertently, or perhaps by design, lays the responsibility of the success of the Occupation on the collaboration offered by French, and particularly, Parisian society. The importance of the Collaborationists is significant but the emphasis on their role in the memoirs serves to deflect attention and responsibility from the authors in question. There is a level of self-censorship which is

allowed by the memoir which was not available to Cocteau in his Journal. The emphasis on friendship and the way in which he interpreted this as being indebted to certain friends, in particular Breker, may well have served as self-justification to him but was not meant to offer justification to a post-war readership, and certainly was not used as a tool for his own rehabilitation. Breker's post-war reputation in Germany was damaged to such an extent that his memoirs were published in French rather than in German. Heller's memoirs were also published in French and present a version of the Occupation which he also presented in interviews, which sees him conjure up a vision of himself as the reluctant Occupier, as dismissive of the Collaborationists as he is of the Third Reich, aligning himself with Ernst Jünger, who it emerged, after the war, may have been in the outer circles of the plot to assassinate Hitler.¹⁰ He uses the familiar idea of being seduced by Paris: 'Je n'étais pas entré dans la ville en 1940 avec un esprit de conquête, mais plutôt avec beaucoup d'humilité. Je savais que Paris ne se conquiert pas, mais que l'on est conquis par lui' (Heller 1981, p. 208).¹¹ The Paris Heller evokes is one of literary salons where he would meet among others, Jean Cocteau (Heller 1981, p.57) and he attempts an apolitical stance of the culturally aware German in France – as if Nazism had nothing to do with the Occupation (Heller 1981, pp.72-73). He recounts with great excitement meeting Picasso for the first time (Heller 1981, p. 117) and expresses an anxiety regarding Céline – disgusted by his anti-semitism but unable to ban him (Heller 1981, p. 152). Nevertheless, arguably more objective studies of Heller have gone some way to contradicting the image he presented of himself, with one historian reminding the reader that Heller was 'zealous in applying the anti-Semitic instructions to literature' (Jackson 2003, p.309).

¹⁰ Cocteau notes the way in which Jünger is able to write against the ideology of the Nazis in one of his books which had been translated into French: 'Je me demande comment Jünger a pu donner ce livre [*Sur les falaises de marbre*] en Allemagne sans devenir suspect' (Cocteau 1989, p.61).

¹¹ Cocteau, following a conversation with Breker about his tour of Paris with Hitler in which the sculptor takes some of the credit for persuading Hitler not to destroy the city, notes in his Journal: 'La France doit beaucoup à Breker' (Cocteau 1989, p.127).

What both Heller and Breker had in their memoirs was an opportunity to revise and reconsider their involvement with the Third Reich. This is not an opportunity afforded to Cocteau in his Journal. Reading Cocteau's Journal from the period, what is striking is the way Breker, the 'Salut', the exhibition, the disappointment of his friends, and later the anxiety regarding post-war trials, occupy the entries to such an extent.¹² Before receiving the letter from Éluard, already quoted above, he writes that 'Marie-Laure [de Noailles] me raconte qu'Éluard a été révolté par mon article sur Breker' (Cocteau 1989, p.162) which can be seen as the prompt for Cocteau to write the following entry a few days later, 'Comment Éluard ne sent-il pas que j'aime Breker et que mon courage consiste à écrire cet article en pure perte?' (Cocteau 1989, p.169). As late as April, 1944, Cocteau learns that as well as Éluard, François Mauriac was also disappointed in his support of Breker, as he writes the following entry in his Journal: 'André Dubois me rapporte que François Mauriac est très monté contre moi. Il trouve que je n'ai pas opté politiquement et me reproche mon article sur Breker. [...] Moi on m'a ruiné avec l'affaire des *Parents terribles*, on m'a frappé et blessé l'œil, etc. Mauriac est riche. Il peut vivre. Il faut que je gagne ma vie' (Cocteau 1989, p.498). As justification here, Cocteau uses the argument that he needed the protection of Breker, the attacks in the press regarding *Les Parents terribles* having been extreme (as we will see when considering the theatre work of Cocteau during the Occupation). There is also the more prosaic reason of Cocteau's persistent lack of funds which was the reason he had continued to work during the Occupation.

In Steegmuller's biography of Cocteau, the motivation which lay behind the writing of the 'Salut' is speculated upon, the suggestion being that Cocteau had written it and associated himself publicly with Breker in order to obtain, 'the exemption of French employees from having to work in Germany' and continues with the tantalising

¹² Cocteau writes of being criticized by his friends for his support of Breker: 'Tous les gens que j'aime mépriseront l'art de Breker et c'est injuste (ma solitude)' (Cocteau 1989, p.128).

suggestion at the time, ‘he is said to have kept an “Occupation Journal,” still in manuscript, which may some day be published and cast more light on his activities’ (Steegmuller 1986, p.440). In fact what the Journal offered when it was eventually published was more ambiguous and complex, and obscured rather than shed light on a clear resolution. Only a few months before the Breker exhibition, Cocteau displayed a clear resolve not to engage publicly with a play being performed by a German theatre company in Paris, refusing to write on *Iphigénie*: ‘On me téléphone pour me demander articles et témoignages. Hélas, la situation actuelle les rend impossibles. J’aurais l’air opportuniste’ (Cocteau 1989, pp.87-88). But a short time later it appears that the offer of protection from Breker, particularly at a time when he is being attacked in the Collaborationist press, is enough to make Cocteau re-think his position: ‘Au moment où toute la presse germanophile m’insultait, Arno Breker, le sculpteur de Hitler, m’a donné le moyen de lui téléphoner par ligne spéciale à Berlin au cas où il arriverait quelque chose de grave à moi ou à Picasso’ (Cocteau 1989, p.112).¹³ When Chardonne calls him soon after ‘au nom du gouvernement Laval’ the expectation is that he will give the opening address at the exhibition: ‘Tout le monde est suspect. Ils doivent estimer qu’il n’y a que moi d’assez libre et d’assez fou pour prendre la parole. Et, comme Breker m’a rendu service, je le ferai. Le drame c’est sa sculpture. Elle doit être médiocre. J’attends le téléphone de Breker’ (Cocteau 1989, p.112). By the time of the opening night the welcome address was given instead by Abel Bonnard and by Laval.

It is only following the private viewing of the exhibition that Cocteau decides that he will write the ‘Salut’ writing the following in his Journal: ‘Sa dernière statue (*Le Blessé*) m’étonne par ses veines, par ses muscles, par son réalisme, son plus vrai que le vrai. On devine que tout lui vient du *David* de Michel-Ange. Je ferai la “Salut à Breker”. Je lui explique pourquoi je me cabrais contre l’idée d’écrire ces lignes sur

¹³ This is an unusual addition in the Journal, the explanation that Breker is ‘Hitler’s sculptor’ seems unnecessary when this is understood as a ‘journal intime’ which was not meant for publication.

commande. Je voulais avoir envie de les écrire. Mon goût des mauvaises postures. Ecrire avec tous et seul' (Cocteau 1989, p.126). On the same day, Breker invites Cocteau to travel to Berlin to have his bust sculpted, an offer he eventually took up in 1963, the summer before his death. A few days after Cocteau had introduced Jean Marais to Breker during a private visit to the exhibition, it becomes clear that Breker is ready to use his influence within the Third Reich to help his friends, writing on the 21st May that 'Breker a menacé de téléphoner à Berlin si Marais n'avait pas son laissez-passer avant midi demain. Transformation amusante de l'attitude, vis-à-vis de Marais, des officiers du bureau des théâtres' (Cocteau 1989, p.130). The following day Breker's influence is demonstrated in the Journal entry: 'Les laissez-passer sont obtenus (grâce à Breker)' (Cocteau 1989, p.131). Cocteau continues to be reassured and impressed by the power Breker wields within the Third Reich: 'À Berlin, on voulait écraser un architecte du Reich. Le chef demande conseil à Breker, Breker répond: "Il est honnête. Son travail est honnête. Lui enlever la commande serait injuste." En une minute la commande est maintenue' (Cocteau 1989, p.139). The paradox of such anecdotes is that while they acknowledge Breker's power, they also lie beneath Cocteau's anxiety regarding that judgement that is being passed on him, both by his peers, and later by any trials that will be held once the Occupiers have left France. In an entry at the end of the year that had marked the Breker affair, Cocteau writes again of the assistance Breker has given France, 'Il faudrait ne jamais oublier que Breker nous a rendu d'immenses services' (Cocteau 1989, p.223).

But in the days following the publication of the 'Salut' Cocteau writes of the drama surrounding the Breker exhibition and it seems that he has realised that this event will not be forgotten at the end of the war: 'L'histoire de Breker prend des proportions qui l'emportent sur celles de ses statues. On lui tourne la tête et on passe toute limite. On le reçoit comme un souverain. [...] J'avoue qu'il faut avoir mon calme et mon

détachement pour admettre sa valeur. Je comprends les personnes qui lisent vite et mal et qui m'accusent de paradoxe. J'ai salué Breker à cause de cet esprit qui me pousse toujours à ne pas prendre les positions de contraste pour des positions héroïques' (Cocteau 1989, p.137).

There is little mention made of Breker during the following year and it is not until August 1944 that he appears in the Journal again in any significant way. The end of the Occupation is inevitable and Cocteau's concerns turn to how he will be judged: 'Que me reproche-t-on? D'être l'ami d'Arno Breker. Certes, je connais Breker de longue date. Il a sans cesse mis son pouvoir auprès d'Hitler au service de la France. Il a sauvé d'innombrables prisonniers, plaidé notre cause, empêché qu'on ne nous traite comme la Pologne. Je n'avais rien à attendre de cet article sur Breker, car j'ai toujours refusé qu'il intervienne pour interrompre les campagnes d'une presse qui me traînait dans la boue' (Cocteau 1989, p.537).¹⁴ It is credible that Cocteau did not allow Breker to intervene in the attacks that were being made against him and his work in the Collaborationist press, given that they continued throughout the Occupation. He compares his own situation to that of Giraudoux, who owed the silence of the press to Ribbentrop and claims that when the same offer was made to him by Breker, he refused it 'je me félicitais d'être traîné dans la boue par la presse collaboratrice' (Cocteau 1989, p.537). While his anxiety about his association with Breker increases he lists, as if in the form of legal defence, the attacks, both in the press and physically, when he refused to salute the flag of the LVF, but nevertheless, concludes that despite this: 'ce qui compte, c'est Breker, l'article Breker, l'amitié Breker, le seul acte qui puisse servir à me pendre' (Cocteau 1989, p.537).

¹⁴ Dorléac states that Cocteau was indeed indebted to Breker (Dorléac 2008, p. 101).

By the time of the Liberation of Paris his situation becomes increasingly precarious, writing on the 8th September, 1944, ‘Les injures reprennent contre moi. Je l’avais prévu. C’était un rythme et un rythme dure. Les confrères profitent, pour m’atteindre, de mon amitié pour Breker. Cette amitié et cet article en échange duquel Breker m’a libéré tant de monde les aveuglent’ (Cocteau 1989, p.538). Having been attacked in the Collaborationist press during the Occupation, he is now being accused of Collaboration, and although the cases against him will be dismissed, he was living through a period in which many of those who had been present at the opening event of the exhibition were being imprisoned and put on trials for ‘Collaboration with the enemy’. For example, Jacques Chardonne who had asked him, on behalf of Laval, to give the welcome address was on trial and would be imprisoned, with his books being banned. Laval would be executed and Benoist-Méchin was sentenced to death but eventually pardoned in 1954; Fernand de Brinon was executed.

Despite his anxiety about the trials Cocteau was not found guilty of Collaboration and the tribunals he attended are only referred to in the Journal in passing, for example after attending the tribunal for cinema workers, he writes:

‘J’allais oublier l’épuration, voilà une étrange besogne. Jeudi dernier [22 Novembre], j’attendais à neuf heures du matin, pêle-mêle avec les habilleurs au cinquième étage du comité de libération du cinématographe en compagnie d’Anouilh, d’Achard, de Jeanson, d’Aurenche, de Marcel Aymé, etc. Après Chavance, je passe. J’entre dans une petite chambre. Derrière une table, siège le tribunal, composé des camarades: Lestringuez, Mathot, Arnoux. On m’épure en cinq minutes et je repasse devant les autres, très digne, un lys à la main’ (Journal pp. 578-9).

Reading the ‘Salut’ it appears that while one study evaluates it in the following terms, ‘In short, Cocteau was the only one to defend with such naïveté the apolitical virtues of cultural neutrality’ (Dorléac 2008, p. 102) what is clear from Cocteau’s notes in his Journal is that he became aware of the fact that during the Occupation, ‘cultural

neutrality' at such a notable event would be impossible. The language used by Cocteau is problematic and at certain points ambiguous, and his reference to a 'patrie des poètes' at a time when borders are being erased politically in war rather than merely metaphorically by the poets, does seem a poor and naive choice. However one is reminded that Cocteau was above all a poet, and concerned with words, by using the phrase 'patries des poètes' he continues to suggest that both he and Breker are from different countries while never mentioning the word 'Germany'. Nevertheless, most readings of the phrase, see it as representing an arrogance and naivety which is what allowed the exhibition to take place: 'Until the end of his trip, then, Parisian high society ("Tout-Paris"), like Cocteau's "fatherland of poets," assured Breker of its loyal friendship, scoffing at borders and trusting only in the still-civilized rules of the social world, in wartime as in peactime' (Dorléac 2008, p. 105).

.....

In reading the article, 'Salut à Breker' what we have seen is that it is more complex than the blanket condemnation of it generally allows. The most problematic aspect of the 'Salut' is Cocteau's repetition of the notion of the 'patrie des poètes'. As we have seen, this is an idea which extends beyond the Occupation for Cocteau, but nevertheless, the context of when the article was published demonstrates a naivety on his part. Reading the Journal, it seems that there was an element of political expediency involved in Cocteau's choice in writing that article and his awareness of the implications are quite clear. The refusal on his part to give the opening address shows the extent to which he was aware of this. The writing of the 'Salut' as a compromise on his part meant that in the reception to mark the opening of the exhibition his endorsement of Breker went no further than his presence at the event. But as he soon became aware, the amount of

news coverage given to the event meant that merely his presence was more misguided than he seemed to have at first realised. Breker insisted that through friendship he had offered protection to artists in Paris such as Cocteau and Picasso, however the extent to which the publication of the 'Salut' left Breker indebted to Cocteau is still unclear.

The omission of the article from the collected works has led to it being misrepresented and misunderstood. Reading the article emphasises Cocteau's poor political judgement but it is important that it is not ignored when it has become a shorthand for Cocteau's most ill-judged articles of the Occupation.

Chapter 2

Jean Cocteau and the Cinema of the Occupation

In this section I will consider Jean Cocteau's involvement with cinema during the Occupation and the Liberation, focussing on three films in particular, *L'Eternel retour* (Delannoy, 1943) for which he wrote the screenplay, *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* (Bresson, 1945) for which he wrote the dialogue, and *La Belle et la bête* (Cocteau, 1946) which he wrote and directed.

Defining what constitutes a film of the Occupation period leads to issues arising immediately. The protracted nature of film-making means that defining films clearly as belonging to the period of the Occupation or that of the Liberation is not a straightforward task as projects which had started during the Occupation could be delayed, meaning that they do not strictly fall within that period, as is the case with *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* and *La Belle et la bête*. However, in reading the Journal it becomes clear that both these latter projects were started before Paris had been liberated. One of the reasons that there is still some confusion over the list of films made during the Occupation is that the initial point of reference was the inventory of films printed in the journal *Le Film* on July 22nd 1944 and included films which had gone into production before June 1944, as well as one film which was never completed. *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* is included with a production start date of May 2nd 1944 although the film would not be released until 1945.

Cocteau's film projects during the Occupation

Cocteau spent much of his time during the Occupation involved with cinema. The Journal kept by Cocteau during the period serves as a source of information on some of

the film projects he was involved with, both those which were completed and those which were not and also offers an insight into Cocteau's growing interest in taking full control of future films, which he would eventually achieve with *La Belle et la bête*. Along with the *Journal intime* which was not necessarily meant for publication and which appeared posthumously, there is also the "public" diary in which he documents the making of the film and which was published to coincide with the film's eventual release in 1946. Cocteau's return to cinema during the Occupation marked an association which would continue well beyond the period, with the last film he wrote and directed, *Le Testament d'Orphée*, being shown for the first time in 1960. One section of Roger Régent's assessment of cinema during the Occupation is entitled 'Le retour au cinéma de l'enfant prodigue: Jean Cocteau' and in this Régent comments that it was Cocteau's involvement with *Le Baron fantôme* which gave the poet 'le goût du cinéma' (Régent 1975 [1948], p.161) and gives almost all the credit to Cocteau for the success of the film, making no mention of the original screenplay by Louis Chavance and Serge de Poligny. In reading Cocteau's Journal during the period it is apparent that it was indeed the disappointment in collaborations, such as in the case of *Le Baron fantôme*, which saw Cocteau decide that he must both write and direct his own films, as he had done in the case of his first film *Le Sang d'un poète*.

Cocteau's first surviving film is *Le Sang d'un poète* which was made in 1930, funded by the private patronage of the Comte and Comtesse de Noailles, but the Occupation saw him become associated with commercial cinema for the first time. In the case of *L'Eternel retour* Cocteau was involved with one of the most profitable films of the period and one which has provoked debate in the years since its initial release, in part due to the film's aesthetic, particularly as embodied by the two lead actors and what one scholar has described as 'their disturbingly Aryan appearance' (A. Williams 1992, p.320) and also because of the story it is based on, that of Tristan and Iseut, with one

assessment highlighting the ‘choice of Wagnerian or Germanic material with obvious connections to Nazi ideology’ (Fischlin 1998, p.73). Nevertheless, I would argue that the film is more complex than some have suggested and aligning it to Nazi ideology is not a straightforward task and in part is based on mis-readings of the origin of the story.

In reading *Comoedia* it is apparent that Cocteau’s involvement with cinema brought him a great deal of attention, with the periodical frequently updating the readers with news of upcoming projects which Cocteau was reported to be involved with during the period. Cocteau also wrote an article which appeared on the front page of the periodical on 18th September 1943 about the experience of making *L’Eternel retour*. The positive aspect of the coverage in *Comoedia* serves as a marked contrast to the negative reviews his work received in the more clearly defined Collaborationist newspapers and journals, as we will see in the case of *L’Eternel retour*.

Comoedia’s anticipation of Cocteau’s work in the cinema is an example of the sympathetic stance the journal took regarding the poet and serves as a reminder of Cocteau’s renown during the period. An article entitled ‘Aventures et mésaventures de *La Comédie du bonheur*’ which was published in the edition of 25th July, 1942, for example, goes in to some detail on the delay surrounding the film’s release which promises to be worth waiting for, assured as one is that this is *cinéma de qualité* with ‘le concours de collaborateurs aussi rares que Jacques Ibert, Jean Cocteau, etc’. Cocteau’s own assessment of the film stands as a marked contrast to the excitement generated in *Comoedia*, writing in his Journal after a preview of the film: ‘Hier soir le film de L’Herbier *La Comédie du bonheur*. On annonce les dialogues de moi. Je ne les ai pas faits. On me les a payés. Ce sont les mystères du cinéma. Je préférerais n’être pas dans la salle’ (Cocteau 1989, p.188). His lack of enthusiasm for the film is in marked contrast to his initial excitement about his next film project, *Le Baron fantôme*, for which he would write that dialogue and play the eponymous role. Part of the

enthusiasm came from the greater involvement he would have with the film initially, although this again was dampened once he saw the completed film.

Another of the film projects with which Cocteau was involved during the period was *Le Lit à colonnes*, which was directed by Roland Tual. While not credited, Cocteau supervised the dialogue, although his main interest in the film was that it offered a lead role for Jean Marais. His journal entries from the period illustrate this: ‘Pour ceux qui connaissent le génie d’acteur de Marais, *Le Lit à colonnes* est peu de chose. Pour les autres, c’est une révélation’ (Cocteau 1989, p.185). Cocteau seems to be drawn back into cinema by an interest in furthering the career of Jean Marais, rather than his own. He would also have another un-credited role providing additional dialogue to *Juliette ou la Clé des songes* (Carné, 1951). The film had originally been planned for 1942 but by the time the film was finally made in 1951 it diverged ‘considerably from both Neveux’s play and the screenplay which Cocteau and Jacques Viot drafted during the Occupation’ (Turk 1989, p.368). As Cocteau notes ‘Je suis heureux que le destin nous ait empêché de faire *Juliette ou la Clé des songes*’ (Cocteau 1989, p.341). The prospect of a collaboration between Carné and Cocteau had been the subject of the ‘projections et projets’ column of *Comoedia* (25th October, 1941), which looked forward to this ‘conte poétique et fantastique’. The postponement of the project is an example of the complex politics which pervaded filmmaking of the Occupation, in this instance it was linked to the machinations which went on at Continental, stemming from the refusal of Alfred Greven, the head of the film production company, to sign Cocteau on as a designer for one of the films Carné was scheduled to make for Continental. Through his refusal to sign, Cocteau gave Carné a reason to extricate himself from the contract at Continental and, by chance also saved Cocteau from being associated directly with the German-owned film company, something his reputation may not have so readily survived when remembered alongside the Breker article.

Cinema of the Occupation

To assess Cocteau's position during the Occupation it is necessary to consider the broader context of cinema during the period. Filmmaking was disrupted not only during the Occupation but had been stopped briefly by the French government at the outbreak of war in 1939, although some film projects were restarted when it was seen as a useful propaganda tool, serving as a distraction to the general population, a precursor to the dominant *cinéma d'évasion* which became one of the characteristic aspects of films made during the Occupation. The cinemas in Paris re-opened a few days after the city had been declared an Open City, showing only films which had been passed by the German Occupiers. The first ordinance regarding the cinema was not issued by the Germans until September 9th, 1940 and it stated that all films had to be submitted to the German authorities in the first instance. However this was preceded by a confiscation of all films which had associations with Jewish owned companies, film laboratories and distribution companies. This was part of the anti-Semitic policy which was being introduced into all areas of life in France by both the Occupiers and the Vichy regime.

At the beginning of the Occupation there was an attempt to show German films, including the notorious propaganda vehicle for the Third Reich, which had been commissioned by Joseph Goebbels, *Jud Süß* (Harlan, 1940). But for the majority of the period of the Occupation it would be French productions, made under the control of the German authorities, which would be shown in most cinemas and to the largest number of cinemagoers in the history of France up to that point, with one estimate contrasting the audience of 1938, which stood at 220 million, with an audience of more than 300 million by 1943 (Jackson 2003, p.318). The conditions leading up to the beginning of the Occupation meant that a number of established directors, writers and actors had been exiled from France and along with the Aryanization of cinema, as in all other areas of French society, there would be a further depletion of those who had worked in front

and behind the camera with the systematic banning of all films made by Jewish filmmakers and film companies. Two of French cinema's most famous stars of the pre-war period, Michèle Morgan and Jean Gabin, had left for Hollywood (although Gabin would later join General de Gaulle's *Forces Françaises Libres*) and new stars would emerge during the period, in particular Jean Marais, Cocteau's long-time collaborator with whom he shared his apartment in Le Palais-Royal. A number of new filmmakers would start to work during the period including Robert Bresson with Jean Giraudoux writing the dialogue for his first feature-length film, *Les Anges du péché* (1943) and Cocteau writing the dialogue for *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne*.

Ehrlich in her assessment of filmmaking during the period highlights the number who came to it from theatre backgrounds: 'Major figures of the theater turned their talents to the cinema, enriching it with new ideas; among them were playwrights Jean Giraudoux, Jean Anouilh, and Jean Cocteau, and actors Jean-Louis Barrault and Jean Marais' (Ehrlich 1985, p.x). In his assessment of filmmaking during the period Régent had already highlighted the addition of two writers more associated with theatre in the pre-Occupation years to filmmaking during the period, namely Cocteau and Giraudoux who had written the dialogue for *Le Baron fantôme* and *Les anges du Péché*, respectively, and who as Régent puts it, 'offrent aussi cette particularité de porter dans leur sein la pensée de deux hommes qui ne sont pas rompus aux servitudes du cinéma et dont les seuls noms ont tout pour effaroucher les producteurs et les vendeurs de films' (Régent 1975 [1948], p.158). Cocteau's suggested place in influencing filmmaking of the period is attributed to his background in the theatre and to his sense of the poetic in more general terms. Singling out Cocteau and Jean Giraudoux, both well known in the theatre preceding the Occupation and still associated with it during the period, Roger Régent considers their influence in the following terms: 'une certaine forme supérieure d'inspiration poétique inaccoutumée à l'écran' (Régent 1975 [1948], p.158). What

Régent suggests is that there was a new style of cinema which emerged during the period, in contradiction to the argument put forward by Jeancolas that the Occupation saw merely a continuation of the 1930s. There is a degree of mythology which has developed around the idea of cinema during the Occupation, both around the filmmaking community itself as well as in the notion of hidden messages of Resistance in the films themselves. The reputation of filmmakers during the period to resist any idea of informing is, for the most part, reduced to the story of the filmmaker Jean-Paul Le Chanois whose surname was in fact Dreyfus and who was of Jewish origin and yet not only continued to work throughout the Occupation but was involved with projects made by the German film company Continental, set up by Goebbels and with Alfred Greven as its director in Paris. This contrasts with other areas of French life where informing on people to the authorities was a more common practice. When it comes to a consideration of the films themselves, the idea of hidden messages of Resistance is still a subject of much debate and François Truffaut dismisses this myth completely in his introductory essay to Bazin's writing on the cinema of the Occupation: 'Il n'y avait pas de place pour la subversion ni la contestation dans le cinéma de cette époque, les sanctions auraient dépassé le stade de la Commission de Censure. [...] Toutefois, je n'adhère pas à la théorie patriotique exposée ici et là selon laquelle les films historiques ou fantastiques tournés pendant cette période auraient consciemment délivré un message courageux et codé en faveur de la Résistance' (Bazin 1975, p.28).

I will however argue that in *L'Eternel retour* there is an ambivalence towards the ideology of the Vichy and also of the German occupiers and in *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* a re-occupation of the streets of Paris which in the setting of the *contemporain vague* employs an indirect resistance to the Occupation.

Whether or not a distinct style of filmmaking emerged from the Occupation is very much a matter of debate. Jean-Pierre Jeancolas has argued that it was merely a continuation of the style of the 1930s, as he explains in the introductory passages of his book which was initially going to be a study of French cinema of the 1930s but which he expanded to include the cinema of the Occupation as he explains: 'Il s'agissait initialement d'un ouvrage sur le cinéma français des années trente dans sa relation avec la société française du temps. En avançant, je me suis aperçu que les années trente ne se terminaient pas en 1940' (Jeancolas 1983, p.7). This still remains an unresolved argument. However, what is apparent is that a number of significant films were made, and as one scholar has put it, 'the curious fact is that few, if any, periods of French film history have produced so many acknowledged masterpieces and near-masterpieces in so little time' (A. Williams 1992, p.262). Evelyn Ehrlich in her book on the cinema of the Occupation goes so far as to argue that it can be seen in terms of a renaissance in filmmaking, however unexpected this would seem: 'that a cultural blossoming should occur during a time of subjugation is a paradox' (Ehrlich 1985, p.x). Following on from a faltering start, French film production, particularly during the mid-years of the Occupation, succeeded in producing work which did not engage directly with the rhetoric of the Occupiers and, at the end of the war, when British film critics first had an opportunity to see films which had been made in France during the period, there was an appreciation of the quality of the films made, with one summing up a review of filmmaking during the period by referring to 'the French genius we have admired so much in the past', concluding that 'it is this which has enabled the cinema during these years of isolation not only to survive but to develop and to achieve some enduring work' (Hackett 1946, p.3). But even before British critics had finally been permitted to see French films from the period, there had been an attempt in France to review the cinema's development, with André Bazin writing in an article originally published on

23rd October, 1943, on the way in which French cinema could be viewed as flourishing: ‘Que le cinéma français ait pu, au milieu de difficultés sans cesse croissantes, produire en quelques mois six ou sept œuvres d’une telle qualité prouve, semble-t-il, plus que vitalité: une véritable volonté de renaissance et apporte la preuve qu’il possède le personnel technique et artistique capable de la mener bien’ (Bazin 1975, p.43). Ehrlich argues that many assessments of a discernable style during the Occupation period are based on a handful of films from the period (in which more than two hundred films were made) and as she puts it: ‘It is inevitable that an era of film history will be characterized by its “prestige” productions – those singled out at the time for critical comment, prizes and export’ (Ehrlich 1985, pp94-5). Attempts at discerning a style, or at least a direction in filmmaking, were being made during the Occupation, with an article entitled ‘Où va le cinéma français?’ written by Roger Régent appearing in *Comoedia* as early as 19 July, 1941. The article begins by locating the question of its title within what can be seen as the idiom of the far Right: ‘Le cinéma, comme le pays, est à la recherche d’une Constitution. Constitution organique, esthétique de forme, et d’inspiration, de tendances et de répercussions.’ The first paragraph ends with the question which still preoccupies today: ‘De toutes ces tentatives de résurrection naîtra-t-il une école cinématographique nouvelle?’ The conclusion in this article seems to be that a new lyricism and poetry is emerging, something which as we have already seen Régent associates with Cocteau’s involvement with cinema during the period, and concludes that ‘le cinéma pourrait être, justement à cette heure, le grand art populaire de l’évasion’. The question of export is singled out by Ehrlich as particularly important in the assessment of films outside of France in the Liberation period, where ‘audiences made a sharper distinction between pre-war and occupation-era production’ (Ehrlich 1985, p.95). An article which appeared in *The Penguin Film Review*, entitled ‘French Cinema takes stock’ asserts that ‘what the foreigner regards as “characteristic” in our

films is, in fact, the export variety of the French character – as with fashions in clothes – a character which accentuated on purpose is in the last analysis more traditional than national, more picturesque than truly authentic. This, for us, is the explanation of the success abroad of Pagnol in the rural field and Sacha Guitry in the urban. Each corresponds well in the aggregate with what, extra muros, France is supposed to be like' (Vedrès 1947, p.82). Ehrlich maintains that there is a 'common tone and style' (Ehrlich p. 97) in films that do not necessarily share a common theme or subject, and continues by engaging with the term *cinéma d'évasion*. But Ehrlich argues that this term can be misleading, for 'what characterizes this cinema is not simply its avoidance of subjects of daily life, but its sense of remove from this life' (Ehrlich 1985, p.97). This argument allows a generalisation of the themes and style of the films being made during the period: if the same preoccupation is to be found in the cinema of the fantastic as it is in the cinema of the 'real' then a commonality is suggested for the period as a whole, avoiding the usual distinction of Occupation films, between historical melodrama and films set in the *contemporain vague*.

A further element of filmmaking under German control was that with American and British films banned there was none of the usual competition or influence, something which Marcel L'Herbier, among others would write about at the time of the Occupation. The removal of such imports artificially created a favourable market and audience for Aryanized French cinema. As for the removal of American influence on filmmaking during the Occupation this can only be speculated on, but a selection of films made in 1941 and not shown in France at the time represents some key films and filmmakers: *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941), *Suspicion* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1941). And even the melodrama, *How Green was my Valley* (John Ford, 1941) represented significant innovation in the use of the un-seen narrator's voice-over. Marcel L'Herbier viewed the absence of such influence and

competition in terms of gain rather than loss to French cinema. L'Herbier had long campaigned for a dedicated training institution in France for filmmakers, according to Ehrlich he had originally proposed this in the 1920s (Ehrlich 1985, p.108) and it was during this period that this would finally be created in the form of the Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques (IDHEC) of which L'Herbier would be the first director and Cocteau was invited as a guest speaker at the institute as he recalls in his *Journal* (Cocteau 1989, p.443). L'Herbier was the director of *La Comédie du bonheur*, the first film Cocteau was associated with during the Occupation, credited as the dialogue writer. L'Herbier's article appeared in *La Gerbe* on 9th January, 1941, under the heading 'L'ennemi cinématographique numéro 1' with the following editorial preamble, 'Pendant vingt ans, le cinématographe français a attendu vainement une organisation, un ordre, un statut' and this prefatory statement ends using *La Gerbe's* usual rhetoric: 'Marcel L'Herbier se contente ici, par un saisissant aperçu rétrospectif, de dévoiler les forces secrètes qui ont fait, pendant vingt ans, du cinématographe français, la terre élue de l'anarchie et du désordre.' L'Herbier traces in the article the way in which the influence of American cinema has, at times, worked against the development of French cinema. He draws the full-page article to a close with a proclamation regarding the new situation facing filmmaking and filmmakers in France, including legislation regarding the facilitation of film production under German control: 'Et, nous félicitant à nouveau de ce qu'une Loi réparatrice, une Loi française vient de laver les vieux outrages faits à la liberté de notre profession, trouvons loyal de reconnaître qu'en attendant cette Loi, et comme pour la préparer, nous avons vu l'Allemagne..., curieux paradoxe de la vie des peuples..., l'Allemagne, notre ennemie d'hier, imposer ici, dès notre défaite la plupart des mesures salutaires qu'elle savait que nous réclamions pour notre cinématographe: qu'elle savait également que nous n'avions pu arracher pendant vingt ans à la souriante opposition de notre alliée'. The

sympathetic stance of L'Herbier towards the Occupiers in this article, which also shares the rhetoric of the Collaborationists, demonstrates the most extreme example of the paradox of the cinema of the Occupation in so much as the removal of American influence, and more importantly competition, was something which had been called for before the war and would again be a contentious issue following on from the war, that is to say the threat of American dominance of the French film market. When the Blum-Byrnes agreement was signed in 1946, the pre-cursor to a certain degree of the Marshall plan, the French government was forced to agree to film quotas which favoured the American film market at the expense of the French product.

The same sentiment regarding the effect of the removal of American films from the market was to be found in the writing of the critic Georges Charensol, as this following extract from his assessment of French film published a few years after the end of the war, 'Pourquoi la France a-t-elle pu, à partir de 1941, faire un tel effort? C'est qu'elle était coupée de l'Amérique: livré à lui-même, privé à la fois de l'influence et de la concurrence d'Hollywood, notre cinéma retrouvait sa prospérité d'antan; l'argent rentrait dans les caisses des producteurs au lieu de franchir l'Atlantique et les industriels français donnaient leur chance à de nouveaux venus' (Charensol 1947, p.14). These assessments omit the problematic element of the 'Aryanization' of the film industry which had taken place but what they do identify is the difference which can be perceived in filmmaking of the Occupation.

The period saw the rise of a *cinéma de qualité*, the costume dramas and the literary adaptations which gained popularity, partly as an escape from the quotidian realities of the audience, but also as a way of avoiding the censors. Films with what appears at first to be a contemporary setting on closer inspection are in fact examples of what Jeancolas has termed as the *contemporain vague*, that is to say that while the sets,

the costumes, the conversation may be familiar there is no reference to the reality of the war and to the presence of the German occupiers.

L'Eternel retour

L'Eternel retour may lend itself to readings which place it within Nazi rhetoric, or at least to accusations of having borrowed from this rhetoric, but it also lends itself to be seen within the work of Cocteau as a whole, repeating some of the visual and linguistic 'ticks' of his opus. The statuesque presence of both lead actors, whose otherness is emphatically stated throughout the film, is part of a general aesthetic particular to the work of Cocteau, and not limited to the period of the Occupation. There is no 'beating heart' at the end of *L'Eternel retour*, merely the suggestion that life is elsewhere, an ending which is repeated in *La Belle et la bête*. In his 'Adresse aux jeunes écrivains' Cocteau called for the young writers of France to continue writing. Within the politics of Cocteau, to continue writing and creating is the most important act against History. In this article from the first few months of the Occupation Cocteau anticipated the responses that would accompany the Liberation, and beyond: 'L'Histoire est faite de perspectives qui s'emboîtent et qui s'organisent avec le recul. Vivre l'Histoire est dur parce que c'est vivre au milieu d'un chaos de détails qui disparaissent à la longue et de vacarmes auxquels succède le silence auguste.'

As we have already seen, Cocteau has been accused of having Collaborationist tendencies and just as his endorsement of Breker's sculpture, in the form of the article, 'Salut à Breker', was seen as an endorsement of the Third Reich's aesthetic, this is also the case in a number of readings of the film, *L'Eternel retour*. As one of the most successful films of the Occupation it was given much attention at the time and yet in the years which have followed it has been dismissed, partly due to the film's perceived

Germanic roots and also because of the striking visual aspect, particularly of the two ultra-blonde, statuesque leading actors.

A two-part article surveying French cinema from the Occupation, published in *Sight and Sound* in early 1946, demonstrates the limitations of such a study at that time because of the lack of availability of the films both in the UK and in France. The article considers a dozen films which were made available to the article's author by the Cinémathèque Française as well as films which the author admits she has not seen. The films which were included in such studies at the time and those which were included in surveys in France, such as Roger Régent's for example, shaped this field of study of Occupation films for the following decades. The *Sight and Sound* article looks at *L'Eternel retour* in some detail, under the sub-heading: 'A tonic to the sickened' (Hackett 1946, p.2) Along with *Les Visiteurs du soir* and *Le Corbeau*, the film is grouped as one of the three films that caused the most "bruit" and notes the controversy which surrounded the film in its interpretation as either a great 'art-film' or as a piece of 'Wagnerian melodrama', and is summarised as quite 'un-French' (Hackett 1946, p.3), a particularly serious accusation in any assessment of films made during the Occupation. The reception of *L'Eternel retour* in Britain did not go unnoticed in France and Régent's study includes a section dedicated to the film's reception abroad (on reading it becomes apparent that for 'abroad' one can read 'Britain'). Régent describes the reception of the film by British critics as 'stupéfiante' (Régent 1975 [1948], p.205). He focuses in particular on reviews in *The Daily Express* and *The Telegraph*, somewhat puzzlingly omitting the review in *The Times* (which had been more favourable). The reception of the film abroad and its reporting in the Régent study are relevant to the way in which the film was perceived at the time and how it has been perceived since in France. Echoing the article from *Sight and Sound*, the *Daily Express* is concerned with the notion of the film being 'un-French': 'il n'y a rien de français ici...' as Régent

translates it (Régent 1975 [1948], pp.205-7). There are concerns regarding the Aryan appearance of the two lead actors Sologne and Marais with their matching ultra-blonde hair. In the review which appeared in *The Telegraph* the reviewer is concerned by the German ideology which marks the film. The reception of the film by British critics was not lost on Cocteau: 'J'ai beaucoup ri de certains articles de Londres où l'on accusait *L'Eternel retour* d'être d'une inspiration germanique' (Cocteau 2003, p.258).

Some of the debate surrounding the film has been regarding its 'authorship'. Directed by Delannoy, it gained most attention for the association with Cocteau. In an entry for April 1942 Cocteau writes regarding *L'Eternel retour*: 'J'invente le film, je le découpe moi-même et j'écris les dialogues. J'ai choisi mon metteur en scène (Delannoy) et mes interprètes. Nous proposerons ce bloc au producteur' (Cocteau 1989, p.28). The film is very much a 'Cocteau' production; with the implication of the Journal entry being that Delannoy will be merely carrying out Cocteau's instructions. Régent in his book on French cinema during the Occupation refers to the film as being by Cocteau and Delannoy. Wakhevitch, the film's set designer, writes (decades later) in terms of Cocteau, rather than Delannoy, as the 'creator' of the film, making no mention at all of the film's director:

Je connaissais Jean Cocteau de vue et l'admirais énormément. Collaborer avec lui m'intimidait et me rassurait à la fois. Le premier contact avec cette intelligence supérieure fut assez froid car Cocteau avait des idées très précises sur la façon de créer un cadre pour l'action de son film. Il recherchait le réalisme poétique, bannissait la banalité et voulait que chaque objet, chaque meuble signifiât, par sa présence, une utilité à créer l'action et l'atmosphère du film à constituer un invisible écran pour abuter les personnages (Wakhevitch 1977, p.173).

In the edition of *Comoedia* which appeared 15th August, 1942, there is an example of one of the many references made to the upcoming Delannoy / Cocteau project, and the film is featured in the 'projections et projets' column under the

subheading: 'Jean Cocteau cinégraphiste... Jean Cocteau est l'auteur du prochain film de Jean Delannoy.' Further down the column news is announced of another film, *Ma Sœur Anne* (the initial title for *Le Baron fantôme*) in which the expectation of Cocteau's influence is again emphasised: 'Serge de Poligny en sera le metteur en scène, mais il ne serait pas impossible que Cocteau s'attachât plus que de coutume à la transposition en images de son œuvre'.

As part of Cocteau's promotion of the film, he wrote a front-page article for *Comoedia* which was entitled 'L'équipe de *L'Eternel retour*', again presenting the film as a 'group effort' with Cocteau as the creative force behind the project, bringing together the team which would translate his screenplay to the screen: 'J'ai eu la chance, une fois mon mécanisme au point, de pouvoir réunir les hommes capables de le mettre en marche: Jean Delannoy et Roger Hubert.' (Cocteau 1947, p.197-99). From the letters to Marais, it is apparent that Cocteau had wanted to direct as well as write *L'Eternel retour* but was unable to persuade Paulvé, the film's producer (Cocteau 1987, p.166). Eventually it would be decided that Delannoy would be the director but with Cocteau remaining involved throughout the film's production, although as late as September 1942 it was a possibility that Cocteau would be the director of the film (Cocteau 1989, p.213). At this stage in his career, Cocteau lacked the experience needed for commercial backing, a marked contrast to the private patronage which allowed *Le Sang d'un poète* to be made. Delannoy was at this stage a successful director in commercial terms. Nevertheless, with Delannoy as director, Cocteau continued to express concerns in his journal regarding the director and his ability to translate his screenplay on to the screen: 'Le drame de *L'Eternel retour*' as he refers to it (Cocteau 1989, p.209). This lack of confidence in Delannoy was never expressed in any of the published references Cocteau made to the film at the time in which he consistently referred to the 'team-work' which had gone into making the film, and I

have not found any examples of Delannoy discussing the collaboration in a negative way, or of him being perturbed by Cocteau's championing of the film, with examples such as the front-page article in *Comoedia* positioning Cocteau as the author of the film and furthermore as its spokesperson.

As far as Marais is concerned, Cocteau's influence on the production of the film went beyond that usually associated with the author of the screenplay. He relates in his memoirs the effect Cocteau had once he arrived on set: 'Lorsque Jean Cocteau vint nous rejoindre après le grand succès de *Renaud et Armide* rien n'eut l'air de changer. Il assistait aux prises de vue sans se mêler de la mise en scène. Il demanda seulement d'enlever une reproduction de 'La Laitière de Greuze', trop célèbre, ainsi qu'un abat-jour un peu trop chichi, mais ses ondes agissaient et le film prit un autre style. Sans nous en apercevoir, nous jouions autrement. Delannoy dirigeait d'une autre façon, la lumière devenait différente' (Marais 1996, pp. 25-6). Cocteau also writes to Marais about the differences in approach between Delannoy and himself: 'J'ai écrit à Delannoy mes critiques sur les petits changements de texte (peu de chose) mais il ne se rend pas compte qu'un mot changé ou ajouté enlève le rythme assez spécial que j'ai imprimé à l'œuvre' (Cocteau 1987, p.172).

Part of the 'drame' as Cocteau put it illustrates the reality of censorship in Occupied France. The delay in the start of filming of *L'Eternel retour* was because Delannoy, in the late summer of 1942, was re-shooting scenes for his film *Macao*. The film was originally made in 1939, but the German censors had insisted that all scenes which included the actor Erich Von Stroheim be re-shot as he had been black-listed by the Occupiers because of his public anti-Nazi stance and this was the only way the film could be granted an official release during the Occupation. Ehrlich states that the censor-friendly version of *Macao*, under the new title, *L'Enfer du jeu* was released in 1941 (Ehrlich 1985, p.59), but according to Cocteau's Journal, Delannoy would not be

back from re-filming the scenes with Pierre Renoir taking the place of Von Stroheim until October 1942 (Cocteau 1989, p.196). Cocteau was familiar with the original version, *Macao*, and even organised clandestine projections of the film as he notes in his Journal (Cocteau 1989, p.80). The original version used for these clandestine screenings was eventually released after the Occupation, although neither version appears on the list of Occupation films which was printed in *Le Film*. What is remarkable about these clandestine screenings of a banned film is that a profile of Delannoy which appeared on the front page of *Comoedia*, 29th August, 1942, included a reference to the article's author, Bernard Zimmer, being introduced to the director's work for the first time by Cocteau when he invited him to a secret screening of *Macao*, something which must have occurred during the early period of the Occupation as Zimmer had worked on the dialogue of Delannoy's film *Pontcarral, Colonel d'Empire* (1942) serving as anecdotal evidence that the German censors would allow a certain amount of diversion from their directives. The collaboration with Cocteau, when recalled many years later by Delannoy, is traced back to Cocteau's great admiration for *Macao*, a film which according to the director, Cocteau had seen on eighteen occasions by the time they met to discuss *L'Eternel retour* (Gilles 2000, p.85). But despite this admiration for Delannoy's work, the frustration that Cocteau experienced in not having the 'final word' on the film, in not being its director, is clear from reading his Journal. An example of the dissatisfaction can be seen in the following extract from the Journal, to take one example: Le metteur en scène gagne toujours et donne son niveau. Quoi que je fasse, *L'Eternel retour* sera un film de Delannoy. Je ne ferai plus de films ou je les mettrai en scène' (Cocteau 1989, p.286). Other realities of the control exercised by the German occupiers over filmmaking can be seen in the problems which Delannoy and Cocteau encountered regarding the location of some of the filming. James S. Williams suggests that the German occupiers were unhappy with the film being made and

therefore refused permission for some of the scenes to be shot on the coast of Brittany, one of the sources of the legend (J. S. Williams 2006, p.57). There was also the problem that due to the building of the Atlantic Wall, French filmmakers were refused permits by the Filmprüfstelle to work anywhere along the coast of Brittany, and in *L'Eternel retour*, Lake Annecy is used as a substitute (Ehrlich 1985, p.163). I would argue that had it been filmed on location in Brittany, with its recognizable coastline, this may have served as a reminder of the story's Celtic and French origins.

‘Il s’agissait de copier un chef-d’œuvre et de retrouver avec un trait noir la perte du détail et des couleurs. Mais sans rien changer’ (Cocteau 2003, p.327). Cocteau was referring to his re-working of the story of Antigone when he wrote the preceding sentences and yet it also applies just as readily to the reworking of the myth which was at the source of *L'Eternel retour*. The film transposes the story of Tristan and Iseult to the present day but it is a present which does not make room for the reality of the German Occupation and this ‘reality’ is in many ways as unreal as the mythology of the medieval romance from which it originates. To single out a point of origin for the tale is impossible. Nevertheless the persistent myths around the Germanic origins of the tale which Cocteau based his film adaptation on are largely inaccurate and come from the association with Wagner who had based the libretto for his opera, *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), on the Gottfried von Strassburg version of the tale. The film may be considered as part of the *cinéma d’évasion* which was characteristic of the period, but it is more than simply an example of the use of the *contemporain vague*. On the surface it may look like contemporary France, from the clothes being worn for example, but it is also an imagined present of the medieval tale from which it stems, with medieval feudal structure still in place. For the audiences of the period it seems to have been, however, largely a distraction and a source of escapism. Delannoy, in his memoirs, regards the success of the film at the time as being due to the escapism it offered, ‘[...] les

spectateurs sont très émus par le film qui les aide à oublier les restrictions alimentaires et toutes les contraintes dues à l'Occupation. Beaucoup vont revoir le film deux ou trois fois de suite' (Delannoy 2002, p.69). And it is clear from reading Cocteau's Journal that there was a mania for the new star of the film, Jean Marais. The film can also be seen as part of the renewed interest in Medieval literature which one scholar has argued emerged during the Occupation particularly among poets of the Resistance, 'All French patriots and expatriates, wherever they found themselves after the Armistice in June 1940, whether in internal or foreign exile, looked to their national literature for the expression of shared hopes to liberate France one day' (Rosenstein 1998, p.502). A parallel is drawn between the troubadour's songs during the Crusades and the 'determination to recover a beloved homeland overwhelmed by barbaric foreign powers' (Rosenstein 1998, p.504). The fact that much of the criticism of the film has been based on the assumption that it is based on a Germanic tale explains, to a certain degree, why *L'Eternel retour* has not been read as an example of a film recalling national literature.

The medieval tales were not a new source to Cocteau, with his play *Les Chevaliers de la Table ronde*, having first been performed in October 1937, the medieval source being an apparent departure from what Cocteau describes in the preface to the play as 'une sorte de manie de la Grèce' (Cocteau 2003, p.575). *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde* was written and first performed before the Second World War, but one can speculate that the resurgence in interest in tales from medieval French sources would have been one of the reasons that Cocteau produced an illustrated version of the play which was published in 1941. And the Occupation also saw the writing and performance of his play *Renaud et Armide*, his second play to make direct use of medieval sources.

Another example of a renewed interest in Medieval sources can be seen in one of the most celebrated films of the Occupation, *Les Visiteurs du soir* (Carné, 1942), which offered an ersatz medieval setting that facilitated a Resistance reading, as an allegory of France during the Occupation with the Devil being read as Hitler. It is the Devil / Hitler figure who at the end of the film turns the two lovers to stone although their hearts still continue to beat (Ehrlich 1985, p.103). The continuing beating hearts in the otherwise defeated couple was read at the time by many, and continues to be done so today, as the spirit of Resistance in France, and the film forms part of the argument that the historical settings of certain films during the Occupation allowed for the exploration of elements of French Resistance without the interference of the censors. Unlike *Les Visiteurs du soir*, in *L'Éternel retour*, the medieval source of the story is not referred to directly in the costumes and setting. Nevertheless, while having elements of the 'present' day, the setting on closer inspection remains ambiguous. The viewer is unsure of the location of the film, both in time and place as discussed above and the film is also physically removed from the Occupied city. The city, particularly Paris, had become an enduring image of the period in part due to the German newsreels that showed the streets occupied by German soldiers, and later with German language sign posts, and these images of the capital city became the symbol of a 'defeated nation'. Though removed from the city, the film is not relocated in the countryside of Vichy France. The propaganda posters of Vichy use the countryside as a visual shorthand for the 'patrie' set in opposition to the decadence of the corrupt city. The countryside in the rhetoric of the Révolution Nationale was that of productive agricultural land rather than the bucolic landscapes which would serve as the locations of holidays for city dwellers. The absence of the city in most imagery associated with Vichy propaganda can also, I would suggest, be read as something outside the dichotomy of city versus countryside, but also as an avoidance of reference to the city, and as such the defeated city.

The film not only marks Cocteau's increasing engagement with commercial cinema but also a continuation of his development of the career of Jean Marais. He had already championed Marais in the theatre since their first meeting in 1937. The role of Patrice, the film's equivalent of Tristan, had been written expressly for Marais, and although this was not the first time Cocteau had written a part expressly for Marais, this project was designed to turn Marais into a film star. As Marais recounts in his memoirs: 'Jean, furieux des films qu'on me proposait, avait décidé d'écrire "mon film". "Il te faut un héros et une grande histoire d'amour. Depuis que la littérature existe, il n'y a eu que deux grands sujets d'amour, *Roméo et Juliette* et *Tristan et Iseult*. Tu dois être, tu es Tristan "' (Marais 1975, p.144). Given that Cocteau had already written his version of *Romeo and Juliet* for the stage in 1924, it was the story of Tristan and Iseut that he chose to use as the basis for his screenplay. The role allows Marais to display his physicality, leaping from horses for example, and also his physical beauty, something which Cocteau would describe in his book on Jean Marais in the following terms: 'Jean Marais offre toutes les caractéristiques de ces hyperboréens aux yeux bleus dont parle la mythologie grecque' and following on from the comparison of Marais with the idealized male figures of Greek mythology, we are reminded that Cocteau took Marais to meet Arno Breker and to view the exhibition of the sculptor's work in 1942, as he believed Marais shared the physical characteristics of Breker's idealized forms. Cocteau continues in his description, 'sa charpente d'athlète est de naissance. Elle lui fut donnée. Je le répète, c'est le costume de sa belle âme' (Cocteau 1951, pp.29-30). The association being made between his physical beauty and that of his soul is notable in the way that this contrasts with Cocteau's descriptions of himself, in which the physical failures he sees in himself are associated with flaws in his character, as in his essay 'De mon physique':

Trop de tempêtes internes, de souffrances, de crises de doute, de révoltes matées à la force du poignet, de gifles du sort m'ont chiffonné le front, creusé entre les sourcils une ride profonde, tordu les sourcils, drapé lourdement les paupières, molli les joues creuses, abaissé les coins de la bouche, de telle sorte que si je me penche sur une glace basse je vois mon masque se détacher de l'os et prendre une forme informe. (Cocteau 2003 [1947], p.35).

The contrast between the two descriptions is such that Marais seems to be located in Cocteau's work as the physical embodiment of all that the poet is not.

The opening credits of *L'Eternel retour* appear over a disembodied hand, palm forward, fingers pointing skyward. There is a close-up of the hand until only the palm is seen and the lines of palmistry are in clear focus, as if the viewer being invited into the world of fate lines and pre-ordination. The next image is that of the familiar handwriting of Cocteau, offering an explanatory preface to the film, and in particular the title, while also placing the poet's signature on Delannoy's film. How Cocteau arrived at the title of the film is recounted in the Journal. Having favoured 'Tristan', reminding one again that this film was initially conceived by Cocteau as a vehicle for Marais, Cocteau finally decides on *L'Eternel retour*, although in an entry for 15th January, 1943 he writes that he has decided on a title for the film: *Ecrit dans les astres* (Cocteau 1989, p.239). This title reinforces the impression of the opening credit sequence: one has no control over one's destiny. By the 5th June 1943 the title is confirmed, somewhat reluctantly, by Cocteau:

Je l'ai appelé *L'Eternel retour*, à cause de Nietzsche. Mais les salles de cinéma ne connaissent pas Nietzsche, et ce titre a l'air d'un mauvais titre de film. Mais on a pris l'habitude de dire *L'Eternel retour*. C'est écrit sur les voitures, les camions, les papiers à lettres de la firme. J'aurai donc toutes les peines du monde à changer ce titre que je n'aime plus et dont personne de nous ne voulait. Le film devrait s'appeler Tristan. J'y joindrai, après le générique, quelques lignes explicatives. D'autre part, si j'annonce Tristan, on trouvera que l'histoire est réduite et elle paraîtra dépourvue de son appareil de magnificence. (Journal p. 307)

While Cocteau worries that an audience will have too many pre-conceived expectations if the title is left as *Tristan*, there also seems to be the possibility that there will be the association with the Wagner opera, as I've already suggested. Cocteau's 'preface' to the film, the 'quelques lignes explicatives' provides the explanatory note which he perceives is needed by an audience unfamiliar with Nietzsche and what he takes the phrase from the philosopher to mean: 'Ce titre, emprunté à Nietzsche, veut dire, ici, que les mêmes légendes peuvent renaître, sans que leurs héros s'en doutent. Eternel retour de circonstances très simples qui composent la plus célèbre de toutes les grandes histoires du cœur.' He avoids making any reference by name to the medieval tale of Tristan and Iseut and having changed their names to Patrice and Natalie in the film, there is a shorthand in use here which assumes that the viewer will be aware of the Breton legend that Cocteau has translated to the screen. Regarding the name changes by Cocteau of the two main characters, one scholar has argued that that there is a 'sensitive use of linguistic sound play to evoke the legendary characters similar to the onomatopoeic devices employed in medieval music. Tristan, played by Jean Marais, is called Patrice, and Iseut, played by Madeleine Solange, is called Nathalie. [sic] The last syllable of each name suggests the first syllable of the name of the character's medieval counterpart' (McMunn 2002, p.214). I would suggest that while the name Patrice refers to the Irish element within the medieval versions, the name Natalie is further associated for Cocteau with Princesse Natalie Paley, with whom he was romantically associated in the 1930s. She was certainly on his mind during the period of the Occupation, an entry in the journal for March 31st 1942 is of particular note: 'Je pense à Natalie et à notre enfant et que cet enfant aurait dix ans et qu'il faudrait le faire vivre' (Cocteau 1989, p.64). According to the footnote in the Journal, Natalie Paley denied having ever had the abortion which Cocteau refers to in this entry.

But while a certain confusion remains as to the ‘national identity’ of the tale in both contemporary and later criticism, the fact that Cocteau makes no direct reference to the story and yet assumes that it is known in one of its forms by the audience supports the view that, for a French audience at least, this is a story of French origin which forms a part of French culture which has continued over centuries, something which takes on a particular importance during the Occupation. The Bédier version, which I have already suggested formed the basis of Cocteau’s reinterpretation of the myth, is interesting and informative to read alongside Cocteau’s *Journal* and elsewhere about his version. In the preface, Bédier states: ‘j’ai tâché d’éviter tout mélange de l’ancien et du moderne’ and the preface goes on to elaborate that he has collected several versions of the story, including fragments, to shape it into a coherent tale and in doing so, ‘Ecarter les disparates, les anachronismes, le clinquant, vérifier sur soi-même le *Vetusta scribendi nescio quo pacto antiquus fit animus*, ne jamais mêler nos conceptions modernes aux antiques formes de penser et de sentir, tel a été mon dessein, mon effort, et sans doute, hélas ! ma chimère’ (Bédier 1946[1900], p.xii). In the early stages of the screenplay Cocteau refers to the difficulty of ‘garder l’imagerie et le ton de la légende sans que cela paraisse ridicule à notre époque’ (Cocteau 1989, p.76). Bédier’s version reclaims the Tristan story as a French text, and the editor’s note at the front of the 1946 version refers to the exercise in the following terms: ‘Ce travail de reconstitution de la célèbre légende française d’après les fragments conservés des poèmes français du douzième siècle et leurs imitations étrangères, a été entrepris par Joseph Bédier’. This adds to the idea of the nationalistic and patriotic pride associated with identifying the story as French.

There is no ‘original tale’ as such for Cocteau to borrow his cast of characters from, and this version is part of a long tradition of re-writing and re-telling of the stories which make up, in this case, part of the medieval inheritance of French literary culture.

In the preface to his ballet, or as Cocteau phrases it, his ‘tragédie chorégraphique’ *Phèdre*, he writes, ‘un mythe est un mythe parce que les poètes le reprennent et l’empêchent de mourir’ (Cocteau 2003, p.75). Of course, Cocteau’s screenplay is written on a palimpsest on which the traces of numerous previous versions exist. The tale is not even French per se which made possible, as has already been seen, the reading of the film as Germanic in its roots. Bédier’s rendering was an amalgam of several different variations, with some surviving only in fragment form. Adapting it to another age and another medium is therefore something which had happened to the tale before. Nevertheless, the characters are versions of those to be found in the Bédier edition, which was based on a collection of French versions of the story. Cocteau notes at the end of his article for *Comoedia*, 18 September, 1943, ‘L’équipe de *L’Eternel retour*’: Je n’ai gardé que le nom de Marc qui n’est plus roi, et le nom du nain Frocin (joué par Piéral) que je donne à la famille dont il est le fils et qui représente le parti des traîtres, en lutte contre les amants.’ Therefore with a slight adaptation from Cocteau the dwarf, Frocin gives his name to the Frossin family. The figure of the dwarf has been recast as Achille (returning to Cocteau’s ‘manie de la Grèce’). While in Greek mythology Achille has one physical area of vulnerability, in his heel, Achille in the film can be seen in a very problematic aspect of the film to embody the weakness of the family itself, and sets the tragedy in motion when he puts the potion in Natalie and Patrice’s drink. The Frossins, Achille the son, Gertrude the mother (and sister-in-law of Marc) as well as the husband Amédée make up the ‘court’ of (King) Marc, occupying the castle by the grace of Marc and anxious about their precarious situation. They perceive Achille as their area of weakness, fearful from the opening scenes when we find out that Achille has killed the dog belonging to Claude (Marc’s servant). Gertrude and her husband Amédée’s conversation regarding their wayward son becomes a

discussion with contemporary resonance, being a thinly veiled debate around Achille's physical difference.

We have already seen how much of the criticism of the film has engaged with the 'Aryan' appearance of the two lead actors, however I would argue that the presence of Achille, and the family's dialogue which surrounds him in the film is problematic in its engagement with debates surrounding eugenics from the period. If anything, this may be seen to be more problematic than the aesthetic of the two blonde lead actors.

Eugenics was part of Nazi ideology shared by the Vichy regime and Alexis Carrel (a Nobel prize-winner within medical science in 1912) returned to France during the Occupation and headed-up the Fondation Française pour l'Etude des Problèmes Humains, which focussed for the most part on the elimination of certain groups and individuals that were deemed to be outside the accepted norm (Reggiani 2000).

Amédée's reminder to Gertrude that Achille is a dwarf and not a child evolves into a discourse of genetic predetermination in which we see Amédée putting the 'blame' for their child's 'abnormality' on Gertrude while she in turn refers to his great-grandfather the hunchback. They are engaging here with a debate that was bound up with both the Nazi and the Vichy regime's politics of defining and categorising the Other. It brings to mind the exhibition held in Paris which codified the physical differences in minute detail of the physiognomy of the 'Jewish race' as defined by the Third Reich in its pseudo-scientific rhetoric. The Occupation saw a series of well-attended exhibitions which constructed definitions of race and otherness and codified these distinctions in a quasi-scientific form.

The Frossins, and in particular Achille, serve as a reference point from which Patrice and Natalie can be contrasted with the rest of the characters. As Meredith T. McMunn states: 'the dwarf Achille is both physically and psychologically unnatural as

well as hostile to the world of nature' (McMunn 2002, p.212). The difference is constantly emphasised by the opposition of Achille and Patrice, with camera angles and lighting playing as much a part in presenting this contrast as the action of the film. Achille is often lit from below, and the shadows produced become a marker for the evil and dark dealings of this nefarious character, playing on an archetype rather than a fully developed character. Patrice is more often seen in outdoor shots with full daylight and extra lighting illuminating his lighter hair and clothing. At the beginning of the film, once the prefatory remarks are complete, there is a point of view shot from Achille's hiding place amongst the shadows when his mother is seeking him out to reprimand him, while when we first see Patrice it is an overhead shot which places him outside of the shadowy confines of the castle and presents him within nature and attuned to it, as he arrives on a galloping horse. The fair complexion of Natalie is a reference to the medieval versions of the tale and from Bédier in which Iseut is known as Iseut la Blonde, partly to distinguish her from the other Iseut of the tale, Iseut aux blanches mains, whom Tristan eventually marries. In the Cocteau version he is engaged to the 'blonde' Natalie's counterpart, Natalie la brune, the physical contrast here being centered around the difference between the blonde, straight-haired Natalie (Madeleine Sologne) and the dark, curly-haired Natalie II (Junie Astor).

Cocteau was interested in changing the location of the love affair to the less mythical environs of a garage, for example, but not at the expense of his two physically perfectly matched leads. *L'Eternel retour* has been described as having the 'dubious privilege of being the most Aryan-looking work of French cinema during the Occupation, especially with the lovers' ultra-blond hair and statuesque poses' (J. S. Williams 2008, p.183). Another commentator refers to 'their disturbingly Aryan appearance' (A. Williams 1992, p.320), and there is even the assertion that Delannoy, 'speaking out boldly for the Resistance in *Pontacarral* in 1942, inexplicably becomes

Jean Delannoy, the Aryan apologist, of *The Eternal Return* (*L'Eternel retour*, 1943) the very next year,' (Lanzoni 1992, p.140) and again one sees the term 'Aryan apologist' appearing next to Delannoy's name in a short survey of filmmaking from the Occupation (Armes 1989, p.127). It would seem that the phrase 'Aryan apologist' is being used in these examples as a way of explaining that the two blonde leads are emblematic of the physical ideal which has come to be read as shorthand for engagement with Nazi ideology. The hair colour of the two lead actors which, according to critical consensus, gives the film its 'Aryan look' was not arrived at by accident, but was an important element of the film's production, something in which Cocteau took a great deal of interest. Marais, in his autobiography, recalls the painstaking process which was involved in the production of this look; he and Madeleine Sologne were sent to the hairdresser's at the same time to ensure that their hair colour would match (Marais 1975, p.148). The film represents Natalie and Patrice as being outside the rules that govern the behaviour of the rest of society, and while the matching hair explicitly emphasises the difference it is only one of the elements involved in creating this opposition.

As well as the physical appearance of Natalie and Patrice, there are other aspects of the film which invite us to consider the film beyond this limited view. Reducing the problematic aspects of the film to one facet limits the reading of it and ignores other features which can be read in conjunction with the film's aesthetic in the form of the two blonde actors. Once the prefatory remarks have disappeared from the screen we see an outdoor shot of the castle. Despite presenting a mixture of architectural styles, the original medieval part of the castle is adequately visible, such that any suggestion of the film's modern setting is not yet visible. It is only when Gertrude (Yvonne de Bray) looks out of the window that we see that the familiar tale has been transposed to a version of the contemporary. We first see the face of Patrice in the photograph in his

room – a matinée idol-style headshot which prefigures the screaming fans that will besiege Cocteau and Marais' home once the film is released and Marais has become a film star. But the viewer is reminded of the courtly pedigree of the tale by the photograph frame, which bears the repeated design of the variant on the chevrefeuille of medieval symbols with a cross extending from the top - which will later be seen on the pull-over Patrice wears in the scene when he and Natalie drink the potion. When he arrives on screen in person his arrival is first indicated by the sound of a horse's hooves and barking dog, the latter contrasting with the dead dog, killed at Achille's hands which we see at the beginning of the film. The horse is the means of transport associated with a medieval hero. When Marc arrives it is by car, suggesting that only Patrice has arrived in this apparently contemporary version of the tale with the accoutrements of the medieval knight intact, and by suggestion that he will be vulnerable to the magical powers of potions of the tales from which such knights emerge. This juxtaposition of the light and dark between Patrice and Achille is highlighted before Patrice has even appeared on screen when we see Achille in Patrice's empty bedroom. The wardrobe, in which he will eventually hide from Patrice, contains the collection of lightly coloured jackets which contrast with the darker clothes of Achille. The room itself is seen as the location of magical and unexplained happenings which we do not see elsewhere in the castle, as the important shot of the model sailing boat with its white sails which prefigures the boat at the end of the film which will be associated with the death of Patrice. Again, it becomes apparent that the blonde hair which gives the film its 'Aryan look' is only one of the elements which set the lovers apart from the other characters in the film.

In the Medieval style, Patrice sets off on a quest to find his uncle a wife and also combines this with a visit to the island where he will collect taxes on behalf of his uncle, and the audience will have its first sight of Natalie, similarly positioned 'outside'

those around her. In the bar where she is first seen, she is alone in being a woman, and stands out with her blonde hair and white blouse against a darker dress. Morolt (a name retained from the Bédier version) tries to force Natalie to drink. Her refusal will initially be echoed when Patrice offers her the cocktail-potion later in the film. Patrice steps in as the Knight Errant saving his damsel and in turn incurs the wrath of Morolt, who inflicts the wound which will keep him on the island to be nursed by Natalie. He is carried from the bar prostrate, his head hanging back, which like the toy boat seen earlier in the film, prefigures the pose he takes at the end of the film when dying. The film continues in its adaptation and re-interpretation of the many versions of the story, taking a different view similar to his account in the preface to his stage version of the story of Antigone, referring to the different view he has taken of Greece, a bird's eye view from an aeroplane: 'Peut-être mon expérience est-elle un moyen de faire vivre les vieux chefs-d'œuvre. A force d'y habiter nous les contemplons distraitemment, mais parce que je survole un texte célèbre, chacun croit l'entendre pour la première fois' (Cocteau 2003, p.305).

Carrie Tarr argues that the omission of *L'Eternel Retour* from the canon of classic French films in contrast to its popularity on its immediate release suggests 'that its concerns may be more "actuels" than Cocteau could have consciously envisaged' (Tarr 1998, p.55). Tarr then contrasts *L'Eternel retour* with the fully canonical *Les Enfants du paradis* (Carné 1945). The film is very much a production of the Occupation and a product of the period too, but it was not released until 1945 (the production was shut down on several occasions, with filming having initially started in August 1943). The comparison of the film's lasting success in contrast with *L'Eternel retour* is therefore problematic: in terms of its reception at least, *Les Enfants du paradis* is a film of the Liberation period, a vast film which emerged from a newly liberated France. Nevertheless, the notion that *L'Eternel retour* may have failed to transcend its

association with the period of the Occupation may well highlight Cocteau's failure to be the poet of the inactuel, as argued by Tarr. I think that its rejection, for the most part, by British and American critics once it was released in the post-war period, with references to the Aryan look of the film rooted it within a discourse too closely associated with the rhetoric of the German Occupiers.

The success of Marais as the film's star became disassociated from the film itself; having entered the Occupation as an actor with a certain following from his stage performances he emerged from the period as a film star. Audience-reception at the time of the film's release supports a view of it as part of the move towards 'cinéma d'évasion'; from descriptions of the crowds which came to Le Palais Royal to catch a glimpse of Marais in the home he shared with Cocteau, it seems that the Occupation had been forgotten, momentarily at least. As Marais recounts in his memoirs: '*L'Eternel retour* remporta un triomphe. A l'image finale, le public se lève et acclame. Le succès du film augmente chaque jour. La queue devant le cinéma Colisée va jusqu'au Rond Point des Champs-Élysées. Une atmosphère d'émeute, des femmes s'évanouissent. On appelle Police secours, on organise des services d'ordre, on casse les vitrines du cinéma pour voler les photos du film' (Marais 1996, p.26). The film itself created a certain distraction from quotidian reality and the 'celebrity-couple' formed by Marais and Cocteau also played a part in extending this interest further. Certainly there had already been significant interest in Marais's film work, helped by his photogenic good-looks as displayed on the cover of popular magazines such as *La Semaine*, which featured him on the cover and also carried reports on his upcoming projects and in one example, 31st May, 1942, included a photo-report on the seasonal reopening of the outdoor swimming pools in Paris. *L'Eternel retour* led to a much greater following of Marais by his ardent fans. Marais describes the large number of (mostly) young women who invaded the otherwise tranquil square of the Palais Royal: 'Des jeunes filles

couchaient dans mon escalier. [...] Les admiratrices campaient à la fois dans la rue Montpensier et les jardins du Palais Royal. Nous étions cernés. Quand je sortais, elles m'escortaient, entraient dans le métro avec moi, remontaient à la suite' (Marais 1957, pp.135-6). That a film should be accompanied by such a frenzy of interest and then seemingly forgotten in the years that followed is perhaps not so surprising when one reads such accounts by Marais, and one realises that the reaction was to him more than the film itself; Marais remained a film star although the film which had propelled his career was largely forgotten. In the accounts of the crowds outside the cinema waiting to see the film, the disruption is caused by attempts to steal the photographic stills from the film, from which one might conclude that the hysteria was generated by Marais, not necessarily the film. Cocteau himself sees its success in terms of the success of Marais: 'Le succès extraordinaire de *L'Eternel Retour*. [...] Jean Marais, reconnu grande vedette' (Cocteau 1989, p.383). The film was subject to a special gala-screening to Vichy officials, attended by Marais and Sologne but not, interestingly, by Cocteau (Cocteau 1989, p.377). Although he makes no comment as to why he does not attend, a reasonable assumption would be that, after the Breker affair of the previous year, he is consciously distancing himself from overtly political situations.

Although *L'Eternel retour* has been left out of the canon of classic French cinema, some specialists did argue the case of its importance. In a volume of 'Cahiers Jean Cocteau' dedicated to his work in cinema Georges Charensol wrote: '*L'Eternel retour* est, avec *Le Corbeau* de Clouzot, *Les Anges du péché* de Bresson et *Les Visiteurs du soir*, l'œuvre la plus importante réalisée dans les studios français pendant l'occupation. Comme le film de Carné et Prévert, il témoigne d'une tendance à évoquer un passé mythique pour échapper aux éprouvantes pressions du présent' (Charensol 1972, p.11). This was not a revised response on the part of Charensol. In his book on French cinema published during the early post-Liberation years he had already referred

to the film as one of the ‘révélations’ in French filmmaking during the Occupation. (Charensol 1947, p.15). The film was deemed important in Charensol’s view as it belonged to a renaissance in French cinema evident to him in 1945 and 1946 which he pre-dated to developments in French cinema during the Occupation (Charensol 1947, p.7). Charensol’s, however, was a rare voice of commendation within the context of a retrospective overview of French cinema.

While the film was a success with audiences at the time of its release, contemporary reviews were not all favourable. Of course, the collaborationist press, or ‘la bande ignoble’ as Cocteau puts it (Cocteau 1989, p.381) were reviewing a film with two elements which were bound to elicit the vitriol of a reviewer’s pen: Cocteau and Marais. For the most part Cocteau’s journal focuses on the positive response of the audiences to the film and has little time for responding to the acerbic reviews: ‘M. Rebatet-Vinneuil nous juge’ (Cocteau 1989, p.386-7). The vitriolic review by Vinneuil which appeared in *Je suis partout*, 13 October, 1943, is a largely personal attack on Cocteau and is a reminder of the precarious position Cocteau and Marais were in during the Occupation as an openly gay couple. According to the rhetoric of *Je suis partout* the defeat of France was a ‘punishment’ for past failures and weaknesses. The failure of the Third Republic had been its decadence which, to the fascist and collaborationist contributors of *Je suis partout* was embodied in the ‘Jew’ and the ‘homosexual’ in particular. As one analysis of the journal puts it: ‘sections within the radical Right, including the Parisian literary fascists involved with the collaborationist weekly *Je suis partout*, staged an elaborate revenge on all that the Third Republic had symbolised’ (Tumblety 1999, p.11). Tumblety argues a need among the Collaborationists of *Je suis partout* to construct a ‘hierarchy of masculinities, in which some men (such as homosexuals) were to be ridiculed as “unmanly”, emasculated and effeminate’ (Tumblety 1999, p.12). Taking a single sentence from Vinneuil’s article it is striking to

see the repetition of phrases from an idiom in which Cocteau is presented in the terms suggested by Tumblety ‘ce pitre morbide [...] les grimaces de cette intelligence perpétuellement invertie, pour cette vieille girouette du troisième sexe qui virevolte dans ses caprices femelles’.

At the end of the first few paragraphs of the review which are there merely to attack Cocteau, including such problematic references to him as ‘cette vieille girouette du troisième sexe’, ‘une coquette frénétique’ and ‘ce clown’, Vinneuil writes that ‘Nous pouvons donc nous occuper de *L’Eternel Retour* comme d’un film où le cas Cocteau ne joue plus qu’un rôle accessoire.’ The irony of dedicating several long paragraphs to mocking and attacking Cocteau in what is ostensibly a review of Delannoy’s film seems to be lost on Vinneuil, and despite stating that he can now occupy himself with the film itself, there are then several more paragraphs, and several hundred words which still continue to focus on Cocteau rather than Delannoy, and although there is some concession that the film may have some merit it is stated clearly that this is in no way due to the influence of Cocteau. Marais summed up the attacks by critics, and one can only imagine that he had this article from *Je suis partout* in mind, as following the lines of: ‘Malgré Jean Cocteau et Jean Marais le film est admirable’ (Marais 1975, p.150). The review is now mostly remembered for referring to ‘un Tristan en chandail’ a reminder that another influence of the film was on fashion, particularly the pull-over which Marais wears in the film when the ‘potion’ is about to be drunk. While Vinneuil is preoccupied with attacking Cocteau at every opportunity, he does concede that the film is the product of ‘un véritable artiste’, by whom he means Delannoy. Vinneuil continues by celebrating this new interest that French cinema is showing in ‘la poésie’ now that France is cut off from Hollywood influence, continuing that France will emerge from the war ‘devant un cinéma français infiniment plus original qu’auparavant’.

Vinneuil attacks Cocteau rather than the film, which the critic holds in some esteem, with certain caveats, such as the ‘épisode du garage’. This was an aspect of the film that on several occasions Cocteau defended against the critics: ‘Dans *L’Eternel retour*, le château des amants leur semble propre à la poésie. Le garage du frère et de la sœur impropre. Ils le condamnent. Etrange sottise. Car c’est justement dans ce garage que la poésie fonctionne le mieux. En effet, à comprendre l’abandon du frère et de la sœur, à leur méconnaissance innée et comme organique de la grâce, on la touche du doigt et j’approche des terribles mystères de l’amour’ (Cocteau 2003 [1947], p.71). The unlikely pairing of theme and setting runs through his work; two decades earlier, for example, Cocteau had written the following in the preface to *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel*: ‘Dans un lieu féerique, les fées n’apparaissent pas. Elles s’y promènent invisibles. Elles ne peuvent apparaître aux mortels que sur le plancher des vaches’ (Cocteau 2003, p.33). The review by Vinneuil continues as an attempt to discredit Cocteau and goes on to point out that Patrice’s dying words are taken from Bédier’s version, and that they should not be attributed to Cocteau. He is correct in locating the words, ‘Je ne puis retenir ma vie plus longtemps’ as coming from Bédier (Bédier 1946[1900], p.246) although with a slight change from Cocteau which emphasises the negative a little more: ‘Je ne peux pas retenir ma vie... plus longtemps’. In Cocteau’s version this is almost where the story ends (unlike in that of Bédier). Having already died he is joined by Natalie and they lie side by side, with the boathouse magically transformed into a mausoleum, and the upturned boat (referring us to Nordic versions of the tale) ready to transport them to the afterlife. Unlike the Bédier version in which the remaining characters still have a place within the narrative, for Cocteau, the story comes to an end with the deaths of Natalie and Patrice, whose only escape from the reality of their situation is death. With the transformation of the boathouse into a sepulchre the possibility of a life beyond death for these mythic characters whose story lends itself to

being told and retold, reinvented and altered and calls to mind Cocteau's on-screen prefatory notes: '*L'Eternel Retour* de circonstances très simples qui composent la plus célèbre de toutes les grandes histoires du coeur.' Their death is caused by the lie told by Natalie II, telling Patrice that the white scarf cannot be seen flying from the boat and therefore that Natalie I has not come to see him. This lie is enough for Patrice to give up all hope and he dies, while Natalie I on seeing Patrice also dies once she is lying next to her beloved. This is one aspect of the previous versions of the tale not changed by Cocteau. Despite this, the scene is open to a new interpretation during the Occupation where the subject of betrayal takes on a new significance.

But there is no suggestion in Cocteau's Journal that *L'Eternel retour* is a criticism of betrayal among French people in France but rather it is a continuation of themes from his earlier works: 'Ce matin nous devons tourner la dernière image du film. L'appareil s'envole et laisse Jeannot et Madeleine, morts côte à côte, sur la barque, dans le vide. J'avais souvent pensé à cela en écoutant Tristan. Marc et ceux qui vivent ont l'air d'éloigner, de rapetisser à vue d'œil. C'est la fin des *Enfants terribles*' (Cocteau 1989, p.308). At the end of the novel *Les Enfants terribles* (another tale of love which is impossible within the constraints of the real) the death scene is as follows: 'Ils montent, montent, côte à côte. Elisabeth emporte sa proie. Sur les hauts patins des acteurs grecs, ils quittent l'enfer des Atrides. Déjà l'intelligence du tribunal divin ne suffirait pas; ils ne peuvent compter que sur son génie. Encore quelques secondes de courage et ils aboutiront où les chairs se dissolvent, où les âmes s'épousent, où l'inceste ne rôde plus' (Cocteau 2006, p.637). In *Les Enfants terribles* the other characters are unable to hear the protagonists' death cries because, in the section which immediately precedes the above, 'ses cris retentissent au-dessous de la gamme dont ils composent leur chant de mort' (Cocteau 2006, p.637). Cocteau makes a direct link between a previous work and a current work, with the reworking of the Tristan myth placed firmly

within the poet's own poetic mythology, confirming, at least to the poet himself, his belief that his work existed outside of 'l'actuel'. Having continued to create during the Occupation, being blind to the fact that his work was engaging, or could be perceived to be engaging, with the rhetoric of both the Occupiers and the Vichy regime, Cocteau would not be likely to insert a 'hidden' Resistance message, the type of message which could pass the censors.

We have already referred to Truffaut's assertion that direct rallying calls to Resistance would be cut by the censors. Much attention has been paid to the hidden messages in certain films and is largely part of the revisionist myth which was developed in the immediate aftermath of the war. I would argue that one such hidden message can be gleaned from the musical score of *L'Eternel retour* which surprisingly did not attract the attention of the censors.

Auric was Cocteau's long-term collaborator, and one of Les Six, the group of composers championed by Cocteau during the First World War and the ensuing years. Accompanying the opening titles of the film, the music beginning in the discordant fluctuates between that and the melodic, oscillating between the two without ever settling in one mode for a significant time, lending itself well to the action of the film to come. The music is militaristic, emphasising the brass section while the strings are at times barely audible. The tone becomes triumphant, this time with the military-band style piccolos, then momentarily Romantic when filled out with the sweeping glissandi of harps, contrasted on this occasion against the sinister sounding string section. Following this disconcerting mixture of style and tone in the musical accompaniment to the opening titles, when the familiar handwriting of Cocteau appears on screen penning the prefatory remarks to the film the opening motif of 'La Marseillaise' can just be heard. This hint of the anthem of the French Revolution would seem to include the subtle Resistance which could be found in films during the period, although its subtlety

means it escaped the censors and the intention of Auric (if there was one) is not alluded to by Cocteau in his Journal or any other writing on the film.

One of the most remarkable aspects of *L'Eternel retour* is the fact that it escaped the German and Vichy censors to the degree, as has already been noted, that it was given a 'gala' showing in Vichy itself. That a film so removed from 'travail, patrie, famille' could be celebrated when it negates all the elements of the new French State is noteworthy. There is very little 'travail' being done as such, there is no defined 'patrie', and any representation of 'famille' is far from ideal. The one family unit which is left 'whole' in so much as there is a father, mother and child is that of the Frossins, who could not be further from the notion of the model family. Cocteau seems to have made no compromises: the 'orphans' of *Les Enfants terribles* have been replaced by a new set in *L'Eternel retour*, in so doing Cocteau has moved from the Third Republic to the new French state and Occupied Paris, untouched by state-run censorship in the case of his screenplay for *L'Eternel retour*.

Readings of the film which limit themselves to the 'fascist aesthetic' and the (perceived) Germanic origins of the tale it is based upon, miss out on the potential of alternative readings of the film. I would argue that the film's engagement with aspects of the eugenics debate of the period is potentially as problematic as the film's aesthetic. Cocteau's insistence on continuing to create during the Occupation, and the way this is framed in certain texts, such as the 'Adresse aux jeunes écrivains' in *La Gerbe*, suggests that he was unaware of the extent to which *L'Eternel retour* can be seen to be engaging with the rhetoric of the Occupiers and that of the Vichy regime. On the other hand, the film, through the musical score, which as we have seen can be read as masking a hidden Resistance message, offers a further reading of the film, which goes beyond the 'look' of the film's two leading actors.

Les Dames du bois de Boulogne

As we have seen, the controversy of *L'Eternel retour* was largely located in the visual rhetoric of the film as well as in the perceived Germanic origins of the tale of Tristan and Iseut. Following on from *L'Eternel retour*, the next film Cocteau was involved with was *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne*. In this section I will consider the way in which there is a possibility of reading the film in terms of resistance and re-occupation of the streets of Paris. Cocteau began and finished writing the dialogue for Bresson's *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* in February 1944, still several months from the Liberation but at a point when the general consensus was that the Occupation of France would soon be coming to an end. The film itself would be delayed because of the Liberation and finally, due to several further delays, not least those caused by the arrival of Allied troops, ended up not being completed until after the Occupation. It is a film which is as much part of one period as it is of the other, and in itself emphasises the way in which the demarcation lines between what is Occupation and post-war cinema are less clearly delineated than may at first be imagined.

Bresson had come to the attention of the cinema-going public with *Les anges du péché* (1943), his first feature film. The film had also brought him to the attention of Cocteau, who describes *Les Anges du péché* as 'une merveille', although it is worth noting that at this point he refers to it as 'le film de Giraudoux' (Cocteau 1989, p.13). Bresson, the archetypal 'auteur' would, after the Liberation, no longer employ a 'professional' writer to write the dialogue for his films, but this is 'Bresson before Bresson' (Sémolué 1993, p.31). Although Cocteau had seen this first film when he agreed to write the dialogue for Bresson's second feature film, it appears from Cocteau's journal that his decision was influenced by a more practical preoccupation with the state of his finances: 'Bresson me demande un coup de main pour son film. Je

veux bien l'aider si Ploquin me paie très cher. Car ce travail dérange mon travail'
(Cocteau 1989, p.471).

Despite having declared in his journal after his experience with *Le Baron fantôme*, and again after *L'Eternel retour*: 'Je ne ferai plus de films ou je les mettrai en scène' (Cocteau 1989, p.286). Cocteau agrees in February 1944, with the first reference appearing on the 11th February but the 24th of February he writes: 'Fini hier les dialogues du film' (Cocteau 1989, p.476). Nevertheless, he allowed his own work to be interrupted (he is referring mainly to the plans for *La Belle et la bête*) and undertook the task of supplying the dialogue for the film; and this is all. Unlike in the case of *L'Eternel retour*, this is not a project which has been conceived by Cocteau, and unlike in the case of *Le Baron fantôme*, he is fully aware that this is the director's film and not his; there is no 'drame' to report in the journal and no criticism of the director for failing to convey the 'atmosphere' of his script. Guth records Cocteau's opening remarks to him in which he enthuses about the latest project he is involved with and Cocteau's journal reflects the same un-jaded attitude despite his disappointment with the (as he saw it) failed collaboration with Poligny. This is a commission which he is happy to take on (partly) for the money and perhaps, most importantly, because the film he will direct and write, *La Belle et la bête*, is going ahead (he cannot be aware at the point he agrees to write for Bresson of the delays which lay ahead with his own project). *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* is in keeping with an Occupation tendency in French filmmaking towards literary adaptation, in this case an adaptation of an episode from Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste*. If 'coded messages' are to be read into such adaptations the choice of Diderot alone would be significant, as an Encyclopédiste and, as such, in historical shorthand, the fire behind the Revolution of 1789. When it comes to Cocteau's role as dialogue writer, Truffaut called him a 'rewriter de génie' (Truffaut 1975, p.209). The episode which forms the basis of *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* is

that of Mme de la Pommeraye who seeks revenge once spurned by the Marquis des Arcis. The outline of the story is similar, and Cocteau summarises it thus: 'Le film est inspiré par ce conte de Diderot où une femme se venge d'un homme en lui faisant épouser une jeune fille qui est une grue' (Cocteau 1989, p.473). Rather than, as was the case with Delannoy's *Pontcarral*, which was seen by some as a recollection of France's 'glorious past' in an attempt to bypass the censors, I would argue that it can better be seen as an indication that the Occupation is visibly in its last stages, including female characters who are in opposition to Vichy notions of the 'ideal woman'. Cocteau has little to say in his journal regarding the film, despite several entries, because during this period he is far more occupied by his own project, *La Belle et la bête*.

One document which is associated with the film is the diary kept by the writer, Paul Guth, who was invited by Bresson to accompany him on set. The diary, originally published in 1945, documents Bresson's technique as a director at this early stage of his career, as well as recording the practical hardships of filmmaking in the time of war, with references to power cuts, film stock shortages and other concerns affecting the film's progress (Guth 1989 [1945]). The first problems in filming appear in May 1944 when electricity supplies are cut regularly and filming at times has to be suspended completely (Guth, p.89). There is also the difficulty caused by having an unreliable and variable electrical current so that it may be possible to film but impossible to register the sound (Guth, p.90) by July 1944 the film has been suspended indefinitely (Guth, p.112). And while he records the church bells ringing out on 24th August 1944, filming does not restart until November of the same year, when the electricity supply is back on, although still not reliable (Guth, p.114). Even later into this second part of the shooting of the film the daily reality of post-Occupation France is still interfering with the film: noise interrupting their work is guessed at as being several things until rightly understood as a convoy of American army trucks (Guth, p.145). The closing paragraph

of this account of the making of the film sums up the struggle which the project represented and ends with praise for the heroic efforts of the team: the struggle ‘à travers la guerre universelle, le rêve tenace de hommes’ (Guth, p.209).

The first entry in Guth’s diary of the film is 10th April 1944 and has Bresson on the pavement outside Les Deux Magots inviting Guth to follow and record the project: ‘Vous pourrez suivre mon prochain film. Les dialogues sont de Cocteau’ (Guth, p.11). According to his account of the first meeting he has with Cocteau, the poet explained at length his own motivation for adapting the piece and his view on Diderot, although there is no mention in Cocteau’s Journal of Guth. ‘Cocteau parle’ as Guth puts it the brevity of the two-word phrase contrasting with the ‘speech’ which Cocteau then proceeds to give (at least according to Guth’s account). Cocteau begins with the familiar reason (for readers of the Journal) that he has agreed to write the dialogue ‘par amitié pour Bresson’, and continues by stating that the film will be Bresson’s. ‘Moi je n’aime pas Diderot. Pour moi, il y a deux grands courants dans la littérature: les poètes et les autres. Les Encyclopédistes ont combattu chez Rousseau le poète. [...] Voltaire est un élabousseur, Rousseau un élaboussé. Moi je suis toujours pour les élaboussés. Pour une fois me voilà le complice d’un élabousseur. Mais c’est par amitié pour Bresson. J’ai voulu me donner une discipline qui ne concorde pas avec mes aptitudes’ (Guth, p.13). The diary is then given over to the daily accounts of the shooting of the film, with little mention of Cocteau again and his involvement with the film once the dialogue was handed over to Bresson contrasts with his presence on the set and on location for the filming of *L’Eternel retour*. The next interview recorded in the diary has Cocteau characterising as ‘presque nul’ his role as writer of the dialogue although he continues by negating this to a certain degree when he expands on the difficulty of retaining ‘le ton des Encyclopédistes, dans l’atmosphère très écrite d’aujourd’hui’ (Guth, p.37).

The dialogue which Cocteau writes for the film is concise and aphoristic and the elegance of the language matched by the elegance of the main protagonist, H  l  ne (Maria Casar  s), the twentieth-century version of Mme de la Pommeraye. The opening scene, for example, when Jacques tells H  l  ne that Jean is no longer in love with her: ‘Il n’y a pas d’amour, H  l  ne, il n’y a que des preuves d’amour.’ Having learnt that her lover Jean (Paul Bernard) is no longer in love with her she pre-emptively announces that she is no longer in love with him; the plan being to elicit his love again when he is faced with losing her. Instead his response is one of relief: ‘Tout ce que vous vous   tes dit, je me le suis dit. Je me taisais, je souffrais, je n’osais pas vous en ouvrir la bouche. Quelle le  on!’ The tone is set for the rest of the film. In the next scene, we see H  l  ne, the following morning, in her bedroom: ‘Je me vengerai.’ H  l  ne proceeds through the rest of the story, seeking revenge by duping Jacques into marrying Agn  s, a ‘woman of ill repute’. H  l  ne delivers the final verbal blow to Jacques after he has married Agn  s: ‘Rien de plus simple, vous avez   pous   une grue.’ As in the original Diderot episode, the plan fails, and Jacques returns to Agn  s (who is lying in bed, apparently close to death): ‘Je t’aime... Tu ne peux pas me quitter... Tu ne peux pas partir... Lutte...’ To which Agn  s replies: ‘Je lutte.’ Jean S  molu   wrote about Bresson’s adaptation of Diderot in the following terms: ‘Dans l’  tonnante construction de Diderot, Bresson a vu de purs motifs, dont l’encha  nement, les proportions ont une beaut   propre, comme celle d’un th  or  me. La modernisation a extrait ces motifs de leur motivation par l’environnement, anticl  rical, satirique; mais, en   liminant toute anecdote, elle maintient, et m  me renforce, des rapports sociaux fond  s sur l’argent et la volont  ’ (S  molu   1977, p.5). This could equally apply to Cocteau, whose dialogue achieves a pithy and concise style, far-removed from that of the Diderot text.

Can one say, based on the line ‘Je lutte’, that this is a film of Resistance, the only French film of Resistance, according to Godard? Keith Reader claims that: ‘The

film ends on her [Agnès] words ‘Je reste’. Godard, in a characteristically coat-trailing gesture, invoked her previous line, ‘Je lutte’, to claim that *Les Dames* was the “only” film of the French Resistance’ (Reader 2000, p.23). According to Guth’s account, the final scene of the film was shot on 4th January, 1945 when Paris was no longer an Occupied city. It is true that the Resistance did not come to an end on 26th August, 1944, when De Gaulle marched at the head of the parade from the Arc-de-Triomphe to Notre-Dame, nevertheless this is beyond the period when hidden, or even overt messages of Resistance are being sought out in films. Godard’s actual words illuminate this somewhat: ‘Le seul qui ait dit: “*Je lutte*” pendant la guerre, c’est Bresson dans *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne*, par la voix d’Elina Labourdette. Cette phrase a été enregistrée dans les studios de Billancourt sous l’égide d’un producteur pétainiste, *grosso modo* dans le temps même où De Gaulle tenait ses discours les plus violents à Londres, sur le ton d’Homère et de Saturnin Fabre à la fois’ (Godard 1998, p.444).

There are further elements of the film which oppose the Occupation and can be read as resistance from the opening scene: *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* re-occupies the streets of Paris, loudly and ostentatiously. The most striking element of the film, given the fact that it was written during the Occupation, is the way in which the urban landscape and soundscape are occupied throughout the film. When the traffic cannot be seen it can at least be heard. There is constant movement across the city. During the Occupation the curfews and the strict petrol-rationing meant that the sight of French cars on the roads had become unusual; after an evening at the theatre or cinema, audiences would rush for the last metro rather than, as is seen in *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne*, for their cars. Electricity cuts were so commonplace that they were beginning to affect audiences who had come to the cinema to escape from such inconveniences of the war. A series of headlines on *Comoedia* appeared over a three-week period in 1943 announcing that smoking would have to be banned in cinemas in

order to save on electricity – stronger lighting was needed as the screen was obscured by the clouds of cigarette smoke inside the cinema.

When H  l  ne is first seen in her apartment the fire is burning in the grate and the lights are on, that is to say there are no signs of power cuts and no shortages of heating fuel. The clock on the mantelpiece reads midnight yet Jacques will soon be leaving the apartment despite the night-time curfew (which was in place when this scene was written and filmed). Of course cinema was a distraction from everyday life and one is already familiar with the notion of *cin  ma d'  vasion* from the period as well as with the notion of the *contemporain vague*, but this film stands out as an example in which were brought to the screen all the elements of daily life which could be taken for granted in the pre-war France of the upper classes. In a city where the power cuts are frequent, the luxury of the working lift in H  l  ne's building is as much a divergence from quotidian reality for the cinema-going public as the somewhat decadent lifestyle of the two main protagonists. Although this element of Resistance running throughout the film is obscured due to delays in filming and eventual release, given that from Guth's and Cocteau's journals there is no evidence of changes made to the pre-Liberation screenplay.

Les Dames du bois de Boulogne is an Occupation film in which Paris is reoccupied. The *contemporain vague* ethos promotes the idea of a film in which no direct reference to the Germans is made, but in this example their presence is being erased with each car horn. The narrative is driven by the characters' ability to travel around Paris: the action is almost invariably a reaction and response to visits from other characters. And while for the most part the streets appearing in the film are studio recreations, there is one outside shot which was filmed on location in the Bois de Boulogne. According to Guth's account, this was at the insistence of Cocteau rather

than Bresson; all at once the re-occupation becomes literal rather than merely imagined, the resistance of this *contemporain vague* lies in resisting the status quo. The importance of the location itself, with all the inconveniences of filming on the site of the waterfall, is emphasised by Cocteau, as recorded by Guth: ‘J’ai poussé Bresson à tourner dans la grotte du Bois de Boulogne. J’ai écrit un dialogue qui ne sert à rien, couvert par le bruit de la cascade’ (Guth, p.37). After Guth had been on location for the filming in the park he comments that the grotto could have been recreated in the studio, but this would have meant that the surrounding scenery would have been lost; what would be lost is not just the beauty of the park but also the freedom of not filming in a confined space (Guth, p.200). Emphasising again the importance of this location within the film, when they come to filming the scenes at the waterfall in the park the water has to be turned back on for the first time since the Occupation (Guth, p.199). The significance of filming on location and having the waterfall turned on is emphasised by Guth who writes: ‘On n’entendra pas leurs paroles. La cascade sera le principal personnage du dialogue’ (Guth, p.201). In the way that *Le Corbeau* (Clouzot, 1943) can be seen to invert the Vichy ideal of the countryside as the ‘heart’ of the ‘new France’ which has emerged from the failed Third Republic, *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* seems to affirm a notion of the city as the locus of decadence and extravagance.

I would argue that the recurring motif in the soundscape of the film of the car horns and engines emphasises the potential of movement throughout the film, a motif which is repeated in the scenario as characters jump into cars or take taxis from one side of Paris to the other. And I would add that this movement is contrasted with the lack of social upward mobility apparently available to the character of Agnès. When the narrative’s revenge theme is overtaken by the notion of forgiveness, the dialogue pre-empted similar themes in political dialogue post-Occupation. When Hélène quietly announces: ‘Je me vengerai’, the quick-fire sound of dancing shoes heard off-screen

could well be machine-gun fire. As Agnès becomes part of the machinations of Hélène, her words of comfort become prophetic of the reality of France in the period of the *épuration*, the period in which the film will find its first audiences. ‘Effacez trois ans sur la page de votre vie’ is the (false) offer Hélène makes to Agnès; Cocteau is preempting the offer made by de Gaulle, if a little less directly, to the French people in the project of France’s re-invention that followed the Occupation. While the words of Agnès may apply universally, they prefigure the sentiment that will be behind many of the calls to pardon those found guilty of collaborating: ‘Mais enfin, maman, explique-moi. Je n’y comprends rien. Est-ce que la vie consiste à porter éternellement le poids d’une erreur qu’on a commise? C’est injuste’. At the same time talk of heroism seems to mock the Liberation period myth of a brave France during the Occupation when the whole population had valiantly and boldly resisted, when in the film that heroism relates only to Hélène’s revenge: ‘Je peux être héroïque s’il le faut.’

It would appear that Cocteau’s refusal to engage openly with the politics of the day leave the film open to several readings. Cocteau insisted on his position outside politics, but during the period of the Occupation in particular, such a position is an impossibility.

Les Dames du bois de Boulogne was not a commercial success at the time of its release. It was championed by Cocteau when it was included in the Objectif ’49 Festival du Film maudit: ‘ce sera l’occasion d’une rédecouverte’ (d’Hugues 2005, p.218). Truffaut sums up the initial failure of the film thus: ‘Le public ne vint pas ou, s’il vint, ce fut pour saluer d’un ricanement, l’un après l’autre, toutes les répliques de Cocteau. Le producteur Raoul Ploquin fut ruiné et mit sept ans à se relever. L’échec était total: *Les Dames* n’eurent pas droit à la plus modeste bataille d’Hernani’ (Truffaut 1975, p.208). At the end of his collaboration with Bresson, Cocteau wrote again in his journal: ‘C’est la dernière fois que je travaille sans faire l’ensemble tout seul’.

Cocteau's next film project would be, finally, his first feature-length film as both director and writer, *La Belle et la bête*.

La Belle et la bête

La Belle et la bête can be read in terms of a progression in Cocteau's involvement with film during the Occupation and the Liberation period. The redemptive figure of the leonine Beast is one aspect of the film which I will consider in relation to the period in which the scenario was written by Cocteau and when it was finally released. Following the promise Cocteau had made to himself to be the director as well as the writer of the next film he would be involved with, following the disappointment of *Le Baron fantôme* and, to a lesser degree, that of *L'Eternel retour*, and the distraction from his other work caused by his involvement with *Les Dames des bois de Boulogne*, it was not until 1946 that his name would appear thus in the opening titles of *La Belle et la bête*: 'histoire, paroles et mise en scène de Jean Cocteau d'après le conte de Mme Leprince de Beaumont.' While it was initially conceived as a film of the Occupation, Cocteau's first fully-authored feature would become one of the first post-Liberation films to be seen outside of France.

When it comes to pinpointing an exact date for when Cocteau first thought of *La Belle et la bête* as a film project, it does not suffice to say that it was conceived during the Occupation; trying to trace back Cocteau's interest in the tale to any specific date can be little more than speculation. The project that takes him from the Occupation to the post-war period via the ambiguous no-man's land of the Liberation is documented not only in the end product, the film itself, but also in that of the diary which he kept while making it. Details in the diary of the film serves as a reminder that France needed to reconstruct herself not only politically but also physically: the Liberation did not mean that daily life was easier for the population, and there were certain aspects which

were much worse once the Occupiers had left. The electricity cuts continued and this time there were no Germans to blame: ‘Au lieu de prévenir à l’avance, la ville coupe le courant à sa guise et ruine le travail. Elle s’en moque. Jadis on se disait: “Ce sont les Allemands.” Aujourd’hui on se demande par quelle malice, par quel sabotage, le travail français se désorganise’ (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.109). Cocteau gives himself a forum within which to discuss post-Occupation France’s identity and his own in the guise of a film diary. The diary also stands as testament to Cocteau’s suffering to get the film made: ‘Encore une fois je brûle mes paupières et mes joues aux arcs. Brûlure sur brûlures. J’aurai payé ce film très cher’ (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.194). Therefore while the diary itself has to some extent become known as a handbook for filmmakers, due to the anecdote that Truffaut handed out a copy to each of his team before shooting began on his films (Lange 1989, p.287), it also bears witness to the realities of filmmaking in post-Occupation France, and to the difficulties of a displaced poet, once again accused and misunderstood. Oxenhandler sees the choice of the story of Beauty and the Beast in the following terms: ‘This fable suggests to us, I think, the yearning of a man who has secretly felt himself an exile from society and dramatizes his triumphant acceptance by society’ (Oxenhandler 1956, p.18). This is a plausible reading, although Cocteau had not necessarily felt himself ‘secretly in exile’. The subject of the misunderstood poet, emerged not only in the diary of *La Belle et la bête* but also in *La Difficulté d’être* (1947) and in *Journal d’un inconnu* (1953).

There is a sense of isolation recorded in the diary which reflects a fear of anything which exists outside the reality of the film and the filmmaking process. As his illnesses increase and their physical symptoms show up on his face visibly, this adds to a fear of being seen by anyone other than those directly involved with the project: ‘A vrai dire sans le travail du film, je ne sais plus quoi faire. Je suis incapable de me réveiller de ce rêve et de sauter à pieds joints dans la vie. En outre, je ne suis pas

présentable que dans un milieu habitué à mes misères. Mon front, mes yeux, ma barbe blanche me rendent bizarre' (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.115).

The first direct reference Cocteau makes in his Journal of his plans to write and direct a screenplay of his version of the fairy tale is 11th January, 1944. Susan Hayward claims that '*La Belle et la bête*' was two years in the making, with the discussions and preparations dating back still earlier to 1943' (Hayward 2000, p.161). There is a possibility in this case that the date of December 1943 comes from an entry in Cocteau's Journal in which he refers to *La Belle et la bête*, although a footnote explains that this was the title being used at the time for Cocteau's *L'Aigle à deux têtes* (Cocteau 1989, p.420). Cocteau continues to note the preparatory work he is carrying out on the film with the next note in the Journal being: 'Je voudrais préparer le film *La Belle et la Bête*. On m'apporte le conte ce matin. Je vais voir comment le traiter' (Cocteau 1989, p.434). The next entry follows quickly: 'J'ai relu *La Belle et la bête*. C'est une merveille et rien qu'à la lire les idées d'un film m'arrivent en foule' (Cocteau 1989, p.435). The project was conceived during the Occupation, and while at one point it looked as if filming would begin before the end of the Occupation, production was delayed and the shooting of the film did not start until August 1945, ending in January 1946. The film was then in post-production until April 1946, delaying the release date of the film even further than had been expected.

For some critics and audiences, the film, on its release, was a mere distraction or frivolity. As Betsy Hearne puts it: 'At the time it came out, however, it shocked a population devastated by World War II with its focus on what seemed of slight importance – a fairy tale – compared to the harsh realities of survival' (Hearne 1989, p.101). Susan Hayward goes further, seeing the film as evidence of Cocteau's lack of political awareness and engagement: 'Cocteau's scenario seemed an irrelevance. His films, like other aspects of his life, were totally disengaged from the socio-political

climate of the time. His activities during the Occupation make this abundantly clear' (Hayward 2000, p.161). Hayward does not elaborate extensively on his so-called damning activities, which goes some way to illustrating the shorthand which exists around Cocteau in which he is seen as an unwitting collaborator.

For Cocteau at least the writing of the film had been a form of distraction during the Occupation, as he wrote in January 1944: 'Je vais me mettre au film: *La Belle et la bête*. Dans le travail il se forme un monde où rien n'arrive de cette ville en berne et de l'Europe' (Cocteau 1989, p.439). In this entry, Cocteau appears to recognise rather than engage with the political reality at the time of writing the screenplay and his response to the reality of the city is to form an alternative world which is untouched by what is happening outside of his own preoccupations with his work. And yet it is the delays caused by such realities which turn this Occupation project into a post-Liberation / post-war product. The heading to a review in *The Times*, which was published on November 3rd 1947, is 'Cocteau in Fairyland' and indicates the way in which the film was being interpreted by the time of its release in Britain as a break from realism, or as the critic in the case puts it, 'so-called realism' devoting itself instead 'deliberately to the cult of the artificial'.

It was one of Cocteau's long-standing friends and collaborators, Christian Bérard who introduced Cocteau to Mme Leprince de Beaumont's version of *La Belle et la bête* (Journal p. 448). From the entry for 'Beauty and the Beast' in the *Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, it is apparent that Cocteau's version of the film is only one of the many adaptations of the story; from Cupid and Psyche (in itself a re-telling of an ancient Indian myth) to several European versions which would most likely be what Cocteau would have been familiar with from his childhood, including the version by the Brothers Grimm known as 'The Singing Ringing Tree', and the Perrault retelling called 'Riquet à la Houppe' (Zipes 2000). The tale's starting point within Greek mythology, a

recurring source within the work of Cocteau, becomes in turn the starting point for one of Susan Hayward's studies of the film (Hayward 1990, p.127). However, it is not a film which readily falls into the category of Cocteau's 'manie de la Grèce', although there is a reading of the film which groups *La Belle et la bête* with the Greek-sourced *Orphée* in considering the 'vocabulary of windows, doorways, hatches, and arches as images of the descent to the underworld' (Smith 1996, p.241). One of the more immediately apparent Greek references is to be seen in one of Cocteau's additions to the tale when Diana shoots her arrows at the end of the film.

Cocteau's *La Belle et la bête* has had a profound influence on the visual aspect of the fairy tale, particularly regarding images of the Beast. 'Cocteau has done for the Beast what Bela Lugosi did for Nosferatu', is one conclusion regarding the influence of Cocteau's visualisation of the Beast in the film (Hains 1989, p.82). The leonine figure of Cocteau's Beast is now such familiar a rendering that it is associated with the tale but tracing the history of the illustrations which have traditionally accompanied versions of the story reveals that the leonine figure did not become a familiar image in the illustrations until the post-Second-World-War period, until, more precisely, the period following Cocteau's adaptation (Hearne 1989, p.137). Robert Hammond's essay accompanying the published version of the screenplay considers the numerous illustrations which have accompanied the tale, particularly the different images of the beast, and finds only two leonine precedents, neither of which seems likely to have been known to Cocteau (Cocteau 1990, p.173) and unlike the version by Cocteau they are not composite beasts. The de Beaumont version of the tale, unlike its earlier and longer predecessor by de Villeneuve, contains no physical description of the beast, readers are told that he is a beast and that he is ugly, with the rest left to the imagination, allowing the reader's fears to be projected onto the face of the monster.

Betsy Hearne's study of the versions of the tale includes a detailed and comprehensive survey of the different illustrations which have been included in published editions of the story. She comments that 'Most early engravings and copperplates, like those in the edition of Charles Lamb's book (1811), show formal restraint in conceptualizing the Beast [...] Edmund Dulac's monster moves towards a troubling combination of human and animal that reaches a climax in Jean Cocteau's conflicted Beast' (Hearne 1989, p.137). Despite earlier composite beasts it is Cocteau's which is the first to use a lion's head with the body of a man, plus feline paws and claws. Marais describes in the preface to the screenplay an essential difference in Cocteau's Beast that would manifest itself in its physical appearance, and its mannerisms: he is a carnivore rather than an herbivore (Cocteau 1990, p.24). This is also reiterated by Cocteau in his Journal where he reports that Marcel Pagnol's advice to him, having read the screenplay, was the same: that this beast would have to be a carnivore and that, 'ta Bête doit effrayer le public' (Cocteau 1989, p.494). And the next day, according again to the Journal, Bérard would make the same remark and add: 'Il faut à Marais le mufle du lion, des yeux clairs et superbes, une chevelure qui rayonne, des griffes, des crocs' (Cocteau 1989, p.495). The introduction of the carnivorous beast to the tale adds a dimension which is absent from the earlier versions; while the Beast is noble (and more noble than those supposedly less beastly around him), he is nevertheless capable of murder. Cocteau offers a more complex Beast, not just a beast on the outside and good on the inside in the usual fairy-tale dichotomy, but, just like human beings, capable of terrible violence at times.

The lion is, of course, not the only carnivorous animal. Notions of redemption and transformation, particularly relevant in a film conceived during the Occupation and made during the Liberation, relate in this instance to the image of the lion. The lion is a mobile signifier but is associated in post-New Testament readings of the Bible with

Christ. Unrecognised by the doubting Thomases of Belle's family but appreciated for his true nature by Belle herself, the leonine aspect of this Christ-like beast evokes instances such as the Book of Revelations where Christ is referred to in the following terms: 'Weep not: Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.' The lion has also been associated with Christ through allegorical stories of the early Christians in early versions of what later became Medieval Bestiaries. It is the Beast, after all, who demonstrates compassion while having the power to destroy. By associated Christian imagery Cocteau is adding a further layer to the story of compassion and redemption, making it all the more a film of its time.

In one entry in the diary of the making of *La Belle et la bête*, Cocteau reflects on the potential of filming in colour. Having finally been able to see *Gone with the Wind* (the film having been made in 1939 and not having been available to audiences in France during the Occupation, he announces: 'Ce film, de toute façon, prouve que le film noir est mort. C'est en couleurs qu'il faudrait exécuter *La Belle et la bête*. Dans le film en couleur, le noir existe. Mais, excités par la couleur, les Américains n'emploient le noir que rarement. (La robe de veuve de Scarlett.) Le rêve, pour *La Belle*, serait de faire un film noir et d'amener la couleur comme une surprise: une robe bleue, une flamme, un regard, du sang' (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.582). That the film was made at all was astonishing enough, given the shortage of film stock; the wish to make the film in the even more expensive and still rarer colour stock was never more than a pipe dream for Cocteau. No mention is made again in the Journal of using colour although he regrets the constraints of using black and white in the diary of the film. A journal

entry from 1952 discusses the possibility of *La Belle et la Bête* being remade in colour.¹⁵

The project becomes the subject of many Journal entries and there is a particular concern that it will be delayed again because of a lack of money, forcing him to sign up to other, less personal projects. Writing in February 1944 he sounds determined that the project will progress: ‘Il est capital de se défendre et de ne plus accepter aucun travail accessoire. Garder le fil rouge en main et le suivre. Le reste et de la gloriole, de la faiblesse et du temps perdu’ (Cocteau 1989, p.477). And, having finally turned down the offer, for example, to work on a film adaptation of *Le Père Goriot*, he decides to set to work on *La Belle et la bête*, despite beginning to be plagued by the ill health that will escalate further when he begins filming. While he becomes increasingly excited about the project his ailments increase which, along with other distractions, means the writing is somewhat delayed. He recognises the psychosomatic elements of the illnesses, acknowledging that they are part of what precede any ‘gros travail’ (Cocteau 1989, p.48). Nevertheless, despite having no way of controlling the ailments he may be suffering from, he does at least try to control his working environment. Having originally been lent an apartment belonging to his friends the Vaudables, who had the upstairs floor of the building where he lived in the Palais Royal, partly to escape his tiny living-space in the same building, he has been offered by the following month an office belonging to Gaumont on the Champs-Élysées, partly so he can escape the groups of young girls who are still flocking to the Palais Royal for a glimpse of Marais, or of him at least (Cocteau 1989, p.485). By the end of March he is back with the Vaudables

¹⁵ The entry from October 1952 reads as follows: ‘Pierre Peyraud me téléphone que Londres veut tourner *La Belle et la bête* en couleurs et me demande non seulement le script mais la mise en scène. Cela représente une petite fortune. Mais quelle serait mon infortune si le film anglais ne correspondait pas à mon film original. J’accepte, si le metteur en scène anglais est capable de me *traduire* dans la langue des images. Bérard est mort. Les ouvrières géniales de Paquin sont mortes. Quel acteur consentirait à un maquillage de Bête qui durerait cinq heures ? Et il n’est pas question que je “refasse” quelque chose que j’ai déjà fait. Pour nos agences, pour nos sociétés, il n’y a que l’argent qui compte. Pour moi qui me contente de vivre, il est nul.’ (Cocteau 1983, pp. 365-6)

having eventually ended up living with them for a short while as he was ‘si malade et si faible’. The physical relocation worked and the screenplay was completed: ‘Je m’y suis enfermé avec mon travail du film. J’ai terminé *La Belle et la Bête* hier soir. Je suis très fier de ce travail où je garde, d’un bout à l’autre, la fraîcheur enfantine du conte’ (Cocteau 1989, p.489).

Cocteau made some small but significant changes to the structure of the narrative. De Beaumont had already pared down de Villeneuve’s earlier telling of the story having removed a number of characters and background details. The most significant change made by Cocteau to the de Beaumont version he was working from was the addition of Avenant, who becomes an additional suitor to Belle and who is not to be found in earlier versions of the tale. Belle’s perspective is reduced but not removed from the story, with Cocteau’s version told from a male perspective, further exaggerated by the same actor playing both the Beast and Avenant. Such a shift in the narrative perspective seems to derive from Cocteau’s continuing project to turn Marais into a film star. Rather than having an alternative suitor for Belle, played by another actor, he is played by Marais, and in turn rather than the audience being faced with an alternative screen-presence to Marais, we are simply offered Marais again, and then again when he emerges in his third incarnation at the end of the film as Prince Charming. Cynthia Erb, in her consideration of variations of the story, considers the Cocteau version to be particularly concerned with a male perspective: ‘At the visual level, the business of displaying Marais or hiding him beneath the Beast’s mask indicates that the issue of having beauty or not having it is largely a male concern of this film’ (Erb 1995, p.54). But Marais is not so much hidden beneath a mask as made to become part of it, with the painstakingly long and painful process of having the part-prosthetic and part-make-up mask applied. And of course in Cocteau’s version, the Beast is as handsome as Avenant, the other prospective suitor, and as Prince Charming,

the transformed Beast, at the end of the film. The audience is exclaiming at the end of the film, along with Belle: 'Où est ma Bête?' Cocteau's response to complaints regarding the metamorphosis at the end of the film was to explain it in terms of it representing 'combien est naïf le monde des fées et pourquoi il ne s'approche plus de nos personnes.' As he continues in his explanation, these 'naïve fairies' think they are punishing Avenant by causing him and the Beast to exchange appearances. In answer to any critics including the 'girls of 1946' who have been writing to complain to him about the film's ending he explains that the marriage is possible because: 'Avenant, la Bête et le prince ne forment qu'un. Sinon Belle prendrait la fuite en face du bel inconnu' (Cocteau 2003, pp.175-6). It is what Michael Popkin calls the film's 'ambiguity' (Popkin 1982, p.101) and David Galef puts it in the following terms: 'After the anticipation of magic and sexuality, only the realization is left - with a prince who looks more like a dandelion than a man. From the perspective of magic and mythic eros, he was more interesting as a beast' (Galef 1984, p.105). Cocteau on another occasion in which he discussed the disappointment surrounding the transformed Beast writes: Mon but était de rendre la Bête si humaine, si sympathique, si supérieure aux hommes, que sa transformation en prince charmant soit, pour la Belle, une déception terrible et l'oblige, en quelque sorte, au mariage de raison et à un avenir que résume la dernière phrase des contes de fées: "et ils eurent beaucoup d'enfants"' (Cocteau 2003, pp.185-6).

But like another teller of fairy tales, Charles Perrault, it seems that Cocteau offers an alternative, secondary reading at the end of the tale when he writes his 'épilogue à un film trop tard', something similar to the short 'moralité' which would in turn be followed by an 'autre moralité' at the end of Perrault's tales. Cocteau's alternative ending to the film, originally published in 1946, and reproduced in *L'Avant scène cinéma* offers the following alternative ending:

La Bête mourante d'amour devait implorer la Belle de lui faire l'aveu qui lui permet de revivre en Prince Charmant. Belle ferait cet aveu de tout son cœur, mais la Bête a demandé encore une fois un aveu qui doit venir de lui-même. En outre, la Belle ne veut pas perdre sa bonne bête. Cette transformation ne l'enchanté pas; elle ne la souhaite pas. Et la Bête ne se transforme pas. Et elle meurt. Belle reste seule au monde, en deuil du monstre. Elle n'aura que le souvenir d'une étonnante aventure. Elle ne voudra ni prince, ni mari, ni beaucoup d'enfants. Le conte y perdrait de son exactitude et ce conformisme des contes des fées auquel j'ai voulu me soumettre. Il y gagnerait en humanité. (Cocteau 1977)

This version would have seen Cocteau subvert the fairy tale ending and leave us with a radical re-invention of the female expectations as prescribed by the fairy tale. It is an ending which disturbs the convention of the fairy tale and yet would also have been part of the genre's traditional legacy, offering a channel for discussing social change, particularly as regards the trope of the reluctant bride. But, as Cocteau writes in the synopsis of the film included at the beginning of the film diary: 'la fin d'un conte de fées est la fin d'un conte des fées' (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.13).

The death and rebirth scene sees the Beast lying by the water (an element which Cocteau repeats from de Beaumont). Christian imagery returns to surface level in the film as the lake takes on baptismal aspects; sin is washed away and the beast, in this instance, is reborn. That the film should end at a point when the Beast has been redeemed and the curse which had been put upon him broken seems to make *La Belle et la Bête* a timely film for a French audience in post-Occupation France. The film may represent Cocteau's personal exploration of the poet's death closely followed by rebirth, but at the time of the film's release the scale is necessarily more national than personal.

As has already been mentioned, the diary of the film documents the increasing number of physical ailments Cocteau was suffering from during the filming as well as recording aspects of the technicalities of making the film. The ailments are very far from imagined, with the poet close to death at one point, as Marais recorded in his

memoirs: ‘Le professeur Mondor me téléphone au studio pour me dire que si on n’arrêtait pas le film pour hospitaliser Jean à Pasteur, celui-ci pouvait mourir d’un empoisonnement du sang dans les quarante-huit heures’ (Marais 1996, p.30). The diary is a catalogue of the mounting ailments afflicting Cocteau, and it culminates in a mixture of martyrdom and masochism: ‘En outre, n’est-il pas dans ma ligne que mon visage se détruit, enfle, craque, se couvre de blessures et de poils, que ma main saigne et suinte, puisque je couvre le visage et la main de Marais d’une carapace si douloureuse que le démaquillage ressemble au supplice de mes pansements?’ (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.148). Several years later Marais recounts a similar response from Cocteau, with the added trait of a language more directly reflecting the Christian imagery lying under the surface of Cocteau’s writing: ‘Me voyant souffrir de mon maquillage, il me disait: “Tu vois le bon Dieu me punit de t’infliger un supplice. Il me couvre de poil à mon tour”’ (Marais 1996, p.30). A cult of suffering can be discerned in the diary and Cocteau himself recognises this; it is not just a catalogue of his woes, but is interspersed with self-awareness, preventing it from being a purely self-absorbed exercise. As one reading concludes: ‘Cocteau ne fut son propre analyste, mais il se fit secrétaire de son symptôme’ (Jejcic 2007). And as Cocteau himself remarks in the diary, regarding this fascination with his own body and the pain it is causing him: ‘La nature nous a donné des nerfs pour souffrir et prévenir, une intelligence pour savoir souffrir et nous mettre en garde. La lutte contre la souffrance m’intéresse au même titre que le travail du film’ (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.164).

On top of the hospitalisation, the endless visits to doctors and the sleepless nights, there is another element to this physical suffering, one which Cocteau himself recognises during the making of the film. It is tied up with the creative process for Cocteau and related to what Marais is enduring with his painful transformation from man to beast. While Cocteau may talk of punishment regarding his treatment of Marais,

I would argue that he also aligns his suffering to the national level when comparing his own physical state with that of France: ‘Rougeurs des doigts. Rougeurs sur la joue. “se faire de mauvaise sang”, “se faire de la bile”, tout cela est vrai. Je paie cinq années de bile et de mauvais sang’ (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.84). And he continues along the same lines, if somewhat more blatantly, when later reflecting upon the idea that all of France is paying for the Occupation, where he uses the same term which he has used regarding himself and his sickness to describe the whole of France:

Nous sommes en train, tous, de payer cinq ans insupportables. ‘Se faire de mauvais sang’ n’est pas une façon de parler. Nous nous sommes fait du mauvais sang et ce mauvais sang nous désagrège. Cinq ans de haine, de craintes, de réveils en plein cauchemar. Cinq ans de honte et de boue. Nous en étions éclaboussés, barbouillés jusqu’à l’âme. Il fallait tenir. Attendre. C’est cette attente nerveuse que nous payons cher. C’est cette attente qu’il importe de rattraper quels que soient les obstacles. La France doit briller coûte que coûte. (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.112)

That France had endured five years’ suffering bring Occupation, Liberation and *épuration* together as one period, a fusion that informs a remark a few years later in his journal: ‘La Libération, honte de la France’ (Cocteau 1983, p.55).

The diary, as can be seen from the extracts discussed above, is a mixture of the personal, the professional and the political, at times as much a pronouncement on France’s recent political experience as it is an account of the intimate details of Cocteau’s illnesses, or the problems of filmmaking. The last few entries are given over almost entirely to a discussion of France which is described in the following terms: ‘impropre au système de masses, véritable collectivité d’individus, ne sera vivable que pour les êtres exceptionnels, fussent-ils de simples escrocs’ (Cocteau, p.231). In these last few notes Cocteau seems to view France as having emerged from the war with the people of the country unoccupied, even if the country itself had been: the French themselves had not fallen under the rule of the Occupants in the same way that they

would not fall into line with any French government, or any organised attempt at dictating to them: it seems that in this version of affairs France had, after all, been a country of Resistance. He aligns himself with what he seems to perceive as a true Resistance which he is attempting to place outside the realities of the quotidian, identifying a response to a defeated France re-emerging from the Liberation with a more generalised belief regarding his work in relation to artistic freedom: ‘J’ai la chance d’être un de ces empêcheurs de danser en rond et je compte m’y tenir (je mourrais joyeusement pour ce sacerdoce de la liberté totale)’ (Cocteau, p.231). To evoke the rallying cry of a brave soldier, the willingness to die for freedom, only months following the end of the War, does not suggest an a-political stance on Cocteau’s part, but rather a comment on what happened in France during that War: the Occupation and the Liberation. This is the shameful side of the Liberation to which Cocteau will allude: the idea that one injustice replaces another. And in an acknowledgement and rebuttal of his detractors he continues with the following pronouncement: ‘Ainsi servirai-je la France davantage que ceux qui croient le servir’ (Cocteau, p.231).

One divergence from De Beaumont’s version has caused concern in one particular reading of the film, the introduction of the character of the usurer. Daniel Fischlin declares: ‘The usurer in the film, a clearly racist ‘caricature’ of the hook-nosed Jew, is used by Cocteau to lend pathos to the figure of the merchant, whose daughter Belle ultimately pays, however indirectly, the price of the merchant’s business misfortunes’ (Fischlin 1998, p.69). The question asked at the beginning of this article is: ‘What possessed Cocteau when he saw fit to include such an image in his film?’ (Fischlin 1998, p.69). This is of course an important question which cannot be ignored and it is somewhat surprising that it has not arisen in previous analyses of the film; particularly given the assertion that ‘the racist caricature is first injected into the story by Cocteau, then perpetuated by his successors’ (Fischlin 1998, p.70). As is pointed

out, the fact that this new caricature figure arrived in post-Holocaust France is of particular significance. First of all, the influence of this aspect of Cocteau's version should be considered. Fischlin only gives a single example, from the Disney version, in which 'the avaricious money-lender threatening Belle's father has shapeshifted into the villainous Monsieur D'Arque, director of the village's insane asylum', of whom Fischlin goes on to say: 'his name signifying the "nez-arqué" or the hook nose that is one of his prominent characteristics' (Fischlin 1998, p.70) There are several problems with the assumptions made in identifying these two characters here, the first being that Mr D'Arque has a far more prominent role in the Disney version than does the usurer in Cocteau's version. Furthermore, the direct succession, and moreover an anti-Semitic succession, from Cocteau's draper to Disney's Mr D'Arque is established by focussing on the latter's name, but this fails to leave room for reading of the name as Mr Dark which is how it is experienced aurally.

To return to Fischlin's question: what are we to make of its reinstatement of the stereotypical Jew as "parasitical alien"? The image derives from clichéd representations that had served to construct an Otherness as grounds for the persecution of Jewish people. The representation of a previous era of Jewish persecution re-created in a post-Holocaust world brings an added problematic to the inclusion of this excluded figure. The usurer has very few lines in the final film, and the words were eventually provided by Cocteau in a final voice-over; an instance in which we see Cocteau identify himself with someone presented as outside of society. He pronounces in a rather matter of fact way that he has come to collect what his due to him, and while the visual imagery owes much to stereotypical depictions, the money lender himself is seen as carrying out his business without any added malice. The image of the usurer can appear at the forefront of a discussion of the scene in itself, but the scene, as part of the narrative, is also about the failure of the men in Belle's family. While I certainly would

not dispute the problematic of the representation of the usurer, I would submit that the appearance of a Jewish character on screen at this period paradoxically serves as a reminder of the marginalised role of the Jewish person in a society which persecutes and excludes, especially since in France this follows a period when any reference to Jewish people in the cinema had been erased, through the deportation and persecution of figures who worked within the film industry, as well as in every other sphere of life in France.

While Cocteau may have attempted to avoid engaging with the *actuel*, this is not always the way in which his work is read by his audience and critics; the fairy story itself has been seen as an allegorical retelling of France and Germany during the Occupation. One such reading of the film, from Rebecca Pauly, suggests that Cocteau's request at the beginning of the film that we should return to the magic words from childhood of 'once upon a time' makes a twofold suggestion: first, that Cocteau can recapture the 'child's creative imagination', and second, that it represents his 'wish to return to the world of creative freedom and vitality which had been so crushed by World War Two and the German occupation' (Pauly 1989, p.86). Putting to one side the idea that the pre-war period had marked a particular 'vitality' in Cocteau's creativity, perhaps there is the possibility that it is the audience of post-war France seeking reassurance by regressing to the more innocent state of childhood, an attempt to recapture a state of blamelessness. However this ignores the idea that fairy tales are the location for processing deep-seated fears from childhood, for facing demons rather than escaping from them.

Pauly then continues: 'one could stretch the fable to a parable of France during the war, with the Beast as Germany and the rose and Beauty as the flower of youth sacrificed, or regard Vichy France as the Beast under the evil spell covering its fundamental goodness' (Pauly p. 86). The first suggestion had already been adopted as

an interpretation of the situation of Occupied France by the German officer in Vercors' *Le Silence de la mer*. Before looking at Pauly's suggestion that this is a bi-partite parable, it is worth considering an observation made earlier in the same article, that in De Beaumont's 'original' tale the 'Beast suffers his fate from a curse upon his parents, who did not believe in the powers of magic'. In fact this is an addition on Cocteau's part. In De Beaumont's version of the tale the Prince, newly transformed from the Beast, explains that he was under a spell from a wicked fairy. In Cocteau's version the spell has been put on the Prince for a reason; because his father did not believe in magic: 'Le roi, mon père, ne croyait pas aux fées. Elles l'ont puni en ma personne' (Cocteau 1990, p.375). The fairy's motivation is explained and it is not a tale of arbitrary actions devoid of responsibility, but rather a tale in which actions and beliefs (or lack of them) have consequences. The analogy could therefore be stretched and, following a variation on Pauly's argument, in Cocteau's adaptation the Vichy Beast is not under the evil spell for no apparent reason but rather as a punishment.

La Belle et la bête was made while Cocteau proceeded to reinvent himself for the post-Occupation period; the diary played an important role in recording the procedure. At the end of the Occupation Journal which immediately precedes the film diary a transition is affected from anxiety surrounding the retribution of the Liberation trials to relief, or even nonchalance, once he has been exonerated. Following the release of the film Cocteau presented himself publicly in the diary to accompany the film. There were none of the problematic attempts to 'understand' Hitler as can be seen in the 'private' Cocteau of the Occupation. The 'public' and published Cocteau positions himself at the vanguard of a resurgence in French film and emerges from the Occupation having endured the period along with his fellow Frenchmen. As if satisfying any doubters and detractors, the published diary sees him present himself as being punished, highlighted by the rhetoric he uses in the diary in association with his

illnesses: he is being punished not only physically but also visibly. The disfigurement of his face draws obvious parallels with the Beast, and also with the public humiliation of women in the *épuration sauvage*. But alongside this he identifies in a somewhat contradictory way as an important French filmmaker: ‘Hier, au bistro d’Epinay, Paulvé déjeunait avec des personnalités importantes de son Conseil d’administration et du journalisme. Mounier me dit: “on compte sur votre film pour relever le cinéma français.”’ And then, in what is by now familiar Cocteau style to readers of the diary, he continues the story with a reference to himself as the misunderstood, vilified poet who nevertheless will do his best to create a film which is art, more than something designed to please a large audience: ‘Je lui réponde: “Il est drôle qu’on m’attaque partout en France et qu’en même temps on compte sur moi pour sauver le prestige de ce pays qui m’engueule. Je ferai de mon mieux pour que ce film me plaise et plaise à ceux que j’aime, je ne vous promets rien de plus”’ (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.105). Having faced a tribunal at the end of the Occupation, he faces a metaphorical one at the end of the diary: ‘Je m’obstine contre le tribunal qui condamne l’exceptionnel à la torture. J’accomplirai l’exceptionnel. C’est le seul privilège qui reste à la France’ (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p.132).

The last entry in the diary of the film sees Cocteau having dinner in the Palais Royal after the first screening of the completed film. The dinner party is made up of part of the team which created the film with Cocteau and a promise is made that they will all work together again in the future. One of the interesting aspects of the diary is the extent to which it emphasises the importance of the group in making the film; though a cynical view might attribute this to Cocteau’s lack of experience in the technical aspects of filmmaking, yet this idea is little different from his attitude towards the creative process of creating a play. If one were to replace ‘theatre’ in the following with ‘film’ it could be inserted directly into the film diary: ‘Une pièce de théâtre devrait

être écrite, décorée, costumée, accompagnée de musique, jouée, dansée par un seul homme. Cet athlète complet n'existe pas. Il importe donc de remplacer l'individu par ce qui ressemble le plus à un individu: un groupe amical' (Cocteau 2003, p.38).

The film begins and ends with an arrow and for Cocteau the possibilities of what can count as the beginning of a film seems to expand far beyond the usual. The opening credits are in Cocteau's familiar handwriting, and Cocteau is in full-view when writing them on the black board, with Jean Marais and Josette Day in contemporary clothing and in teacher's pet mode, wiping the board for the master. Alongside Cocteau's handwriting are his drawings, and there is little doubt that this is Cocteau's film from the beginning. The hand-written on-screen credits are unusual in themselves, but added to this is the second 'disruption' to the expected format, when, just as the credits have ended and the audience is prepared for the beginning of the film, the clapper board interrupts and the technician's voice is heard. Cocteau's second statement of authorship occurs as the preface appears on screen. Galef concludes that Cocteau 'begins and ends the tale with the written element, symbolizing the affinity with the original tale' (Galef 1984, p.105). The word 'Fin' ended up on screen in a typed version, but this aside, as well as making a direct reference to the written tale which preceded Cocteau's version it also and I would suggest more importantly emphasises Cocteau's role as the source of this version: the complete *auteur*. The story may be part of a shared inheritance with the audience but this version is Cocteau's, and it is he who directs the audience's response to his film with his own hand when the following instruction appears on screen, accompanied by Auric's militaristic drum roll:

L'enfance croit ce qu'on lui raconte et ne le met pas en doute. Elle croit qu'une rose qu'on cueille peut attirer des drames dans une famille. Elle croit que les mains d'une bête humaine qui tue se mettent à fumer et que cette bête en a honte lorsqu'une jeune fille habite sa maison. Elle croit mille autres choses bien naïves.

C'est un peu de cette naïveté que je vous demande, et pour nos porter de chance à tous, laissez-moi vous dire quatre mots magiques, véritable Sésame ouvre-toi de l'enfance:

Il était une fois.....

Jean Cocteau

The film marked Cocteau's successful attempt to reinvent himself as a filmmaker. This would give him a new and bigger audience, internationally as well as in France (where he would, for example, be awarded the Louis-Delluc prize).

Cocteau emerged from the Occupation as a filmmaker, the publication of the diary and release of the film affirming his role as an author, both of the written word and of the filmic. The film requests the audience to revert to a certain point in childhood, to the innocence involved in following the narrative thread of a fairy tale, while the diary seems to be asking readers to believe in an unambiguous Occupation from which France can re-emerge unscathed: both film and diary are about transformation, and about the re-telling of an *histoire*.

To conclude, Cocteau's renewed involvement with cinema during the Occupation led to an interest in filmmaking which continued until his death. *L'Eternel retour* is a film which has become tied to the era in which it was made to such an extent that it struggles to be seen as anything other than being too closely aligned with an unacceptable aesthetic of the period, too clearly associated with Nazi rhetoric and dogma. While a clear argument has been made by a number of critics regarding this aspect of the film, this can at times mean that the problematic engagement with the notions of eugenics which occurs in the film is ignored as is the refusal to engage with the familial ideal presented in the ideology of Vichy. *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne*, I have argued, can be read as a defiant re-occupation of the streets of the Occupied city. *La Belle et la bête*, by the merit of having been delayed until after the Occupation, as

much as for not having any obviously Germanic references. However, it is the accompanying diary which sees Cocteau engage most directly and publicly with the political situation of the period and reflect upon the Occupation.

Chapter 3

Cocteau and the Theatre of the Occupation

In this section I will consider Cocteau's work performed in the theatre during the Occupation: his new plays, *La Machine à écrire* (first performed 29th April, 1941) and *Renaud et Armide* (first performed 13th April 1943) and a revival of his controversial play from 1938, *Les Parents terribles*. At the time of their performance there was much controversy surrounding the plays and Cocteau became as much a target of the right-wing, Collaborationist press, as he was of the German and Vichy censors.

La Machine à écrire is based on the same true story of anonymous letter-writing as the film *Le Corbeau* (Clouzot, 1943) which was one of the most controversial films of the period, with a number of those associated with it, from Henri-Georges Clouzot the film's director, to the actor Pierre Fresnay being imprisoned following the Liberation and the trials of the *épuration*. *La Machine à écrire* was equally controversial at the time of the first performances, however this controversy did not continue beyond the Occupation. By the time of the *épuration* it was for the most part forgotten, this being a comment at once on the immediacy of theatre in comparison to film as well as on the play itself, an experiment in genres which by Cocteau's own admission was for the most part a failure. *Renaud et Armide* was Cocteau's first play in verse and drew on Medieval sources once more, an ambitious play which formed part of the argument which Cocteau developed in an article which appeared on the front page of *Comoedia*, 3rd April 1943, regarding the importance of 'la tragédie' during the Occupation. In reviving *Les Parents terribles*, Cocteau would once more be the focus of attacks in the Collaborationist press and somewhat ironically, it was the negative reviews of this work which would indirectly form part of his defence at the end of the Occupation. The theatre of the period of the Occupation became the most controversial

arena for his work, with his plays being either banned or making him the target of vitriolic attacks in the newspapers. In his 1962 book, *Le Cordon ombilical*, he recalls the audience of *La Machine à écrire* as ‘une salle des moralistes de cette Occupation dont j’étais la tête de Turc...’ (Cocteau 1962, p.30). The unfavourable reviews of the plays are often marked by a personal attack on Cocteau in addition to any critical evaluation of the production and in this way are no different to some of the film reviews which we have already discussed. It therefore becomes apparent that many of the problems that Cocteau encountered were not due to any clear-cut dictates from the Occupiers regarding what could and could not be performed, but rather from the critics who were campaigning against what they perceived as ‘degenerates’ of the III Republic. Although the guiding principle that the stage should be ‘Aryanized’ remained firm, certain areas of censorship and control lacked clarity and, it seems, could be easily swayed by opinions of a newspaper theatre critic.

While I have already argued that it was his ‘Salut à Breker’ which has endured as the most contentious piece of work produced by Cocteau during the period of the Occupation, I would suggest at the time the controversy which surrounded the performance of his plays had much greater repercussions for Cocteau. Whereas the Occupation saw Cocteau’s involvement with commercial filmmaking for the first time, he had long been associated with the theatre and stage work in more general terms and it was in this area that there had been the most controversy surrounding his work, from the theatrical ‘event’ of *Parade* in 1917 onwards. As well as his direct involvement in theatre with the staging of his three plays, Cocteau was also involved in the theatre of Paris during the Occupation as a critic, with the majority of his articles for *Comoedia* being on the theatre. He also produced work as a set and costume designer for a production of Feydeau’s *La main passe* at the Comédie Française in 1941, and he took to the stage to introduce Jean Marais who was acting in his own production of Racine’s

Britannicus, in 1941. Simone de Beauvoir, who attended the production, wrote the following in a letter dated 14 March, 1941, to Jean-Paul Sartre: ‘J’ai vu *Britannicus*, précédé d’une éhontée préface parlée de Cocteau, mais avec Marais qui était excellent’ (Beauvoir 1990, p.240).

In the preface to *La Machine à écrire* Cocteau includes a list of some, although not all, of the stage-works which he had already written at this point. The preface serves as a reminder of the significant number of plays and other less easily categorised works he had already produced for the stage in the preceding decades: ‘*Antigone, Roméo et Juliette, Orphée, Le Bœuf sur le toit, Parade, Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel, La Machine infernale, Les Chevaliers de la Table ronde...*’ (Cocteau 2003, p.873). The list includes a ‘ballet satirique’ in the form of *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel*, for example. Cocteau therefore entered the Occupation as a familiar playwright in French theatre as well as being familiar with controversy on the stage. *Parade*, first performed in 1917, the ‘ballet réaliste’, as described on the programme created by Cocteau and which saw him collaborate with Picasso (who was the designer), Léonide Massine (who danced and choreographed the ballet), Eric Satie (who composed the music) and Apollinaire (who wrote some of the text for the programme).

The Theatre in Paris during the Occupation

In order to situate Cocteau’s work for the theatre during the Occupation, it is necessary to consider the theatre of the period in more general terms. The Occupying forces authorised the first reopening of a Paris theatre for the 6th July 1940 and by mid-September 1940 most of the theatres in Paris were staging plays and attracting larger audiences than they had at any time before the war (Marsh 1998, p.142). One estimate suggests that more than 400 plays were performed during the period (Jackson 2003,

p.310). As we have already seen, cinema production had stopped long before the German invasion, going back to the beginning of the war, whereas the theatres were still open until the final few days leading up to Paris being declared an 'open city'. A matinée performance on June 9th, 1940 was the last performance at the Comédie Française, for example. The theatre during the Occupation shared one thing in common with cinema in so much as it was, paradoxically, something of a golden age, at least when it came to ticket sales, with theatre tickets being one of the few things left in Paris which were not affected by shortages and rationing. During the Occupation the theatre was for the most part one of the 'beneficiaries of the relationship between the German Occupiers and the French State' as Krauss states, who goes so far as to use the term 'flourish' in relation to the theatre during this period (Krauss 2004, p.xiii).

Theatre was the subject of censorship and control by the German Occupiers as were all other areas of the arts in France during the Occupation. The process of Aryanization was no different, and the approval sought from the censors for any public performance meant that playwrights engaged with the Occupiers to the same degree as any other writers during the period. During the period plays by Racine and Molière were performed but also new playwrights would have their work performed on the French stage for the first time, including Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Mouches* (1943) and *Huis clos* (1944). It has been argued that the censorship of plays was more complex than that of other areas of the arts and left the German censors 'nervous' (Spotts 2008, p.236). The main argument surrounds the way in which a play exists both in the form of the text which would be passed to the censors and in the form of the performance in which 'inuendo, not just acting but intonation of the spoken line,[...] could drastically change the effect of the written text' (Spotts 2008, p.236). This explains why the German censors would not only have to approve the text of the play but would also continue to censor work by attending performances of any play which had been given

approval to be sure that the text was not being manipulated in its staging and performance. In the case of Cocteau, where the censors would permit the performance (none of Cocteau's work having been refused a licence by the Occupiers) the Collaborationist press would instead condemn the work and serve as a further level of censorship. Described as the 'bane of Jean Cocteau' (Spotts 2008, p.237), these critics, by calling for the performances to be curtailed, go some way to adding to the argument that the attacks were not against the plays but rather against the playwright himself in these cases.

As Patrick Marsh describes the situation in his assessment: 'many traditional leisure-time activities were necessarily curtailed by the war and occupation: dinner parties, excursions in the car, weekends at the sea were things of the past' (Marsh 1998, p.142). Marsh continues with the notion that not only does the theatre building itself offer an escape but that the play being performed is of the greatest importance: 'on entering the theatre, one was among Frenchmen taking part in an essentially French experience which the horrors of war could not, temporarily at least, affect' (Marsh 1998, p.143). The aspect of the theatre which is 'essentially a French experience' is not clarified fully but there is a suggestion of what the meaning may be in a further point to the effect that the theatre was 'an escape into antiquity, heroic legend, an unreal world where France and Frenchmen could be great once again' (Marsh 1998, p.143). This seems to suggest that the theatre was much freer than the cinema in what it could continue to stage during the Occupation, that there was less control by the Occupiers and by Vichy censors. Yet could this be true, particularly when one thinks of the controversy which surrounded Cocteau and the theatre of the Occupation? I would point out that the emphasis on the traditional, classical canon was as much to do with the practicalities of war-time Paris. New plays required new sets and, in a period when

set-building materials were in short supply, this would cause practical problems for a theatre.

Marsh takes the example of the re-opening of the Folies-Bergère at the beginning of July 1940, 'barely two weeks after the fall of Paris, as evidence that the Germans 'preferred unintellectual entertainment' (Marsh 1998, p.143). This may well have been the case; although another explanation for the relatively swift reopening of such venues is the aspect of language, with a show at the Folies-Bergère requiring a less firm grasp of French than watching a performance at the Comédie Française of *Le Misanthrope*, for example. But the theatre was nevertheless there as a distraction for the French population, and part of a plan to pacify them as well, to keep them entertained. That the theatre attracted large audiences notwithstanding the fact that it was difficult and dangerous for an audience to be out on the streets of Paris to see a performance is a testament to the attraction of the theatre: the bombing, blackouts, air-raids, electricity cuts, and to end the evening rushing for the last metro and avoiding arrest for being out on the streets without authorisation – these are just some of the obstacles which stood between the audience and a theatre performance. There is a belief that the theatre offered a kind of refuge, as Krauss states: 'The French language and culture united French spectators, and in spite of their political differences, spectators in Paris sat through plays with a sense that they were not in a territory of the Third Reich but once again in France' (Krauss 2004, p.xxii). Of course, such an experience would not only be particular to the theatre and there seems to be no reason why it could not be replicated in the cinema or even at a musical performance, for example.

The theatre was similar to other areas of work in France during the Occupation to the extent that outright collaboration was limited, and rather what was to be found was an acceptance of the situation which tolerated anti-Semitism, and accepted the new censorship procedures that had been put in place. Krauss sums up the situation thus:

‘the French theatre during the war was not a totally shameful institution, nor was it by any means one that played a thoroughly heroic role’ (Krauss 2004, pp.xiv-xv).

Somewhere between shame and heroism lies the middle and at times murky ground that the theatre occupied in which moral relativism thrived, even if it was mostly back-stage rather than on stage. The theatre, like every other area of life under the Occupation, was subject to anti-Semitism, and just as the film industry in France saw the persecution of Jewish people so did the theatre. Marsh selects some of the very worst elements of the persecution which took place on the French stage, as well as the disturbing statistics that were collected, ‘disturbing’ in so much as they are a reminder of the level of insistence which prevailed during this period of sanctioned, official anti-Semitism. He reproduces the statistical analysis which was presented at a press conference in 1941 of the number instances of rape, adultery, murders, and so forth which were to be found in works which formed part of the ‘répertoire juif’ (Marsh 1998, p.149). This example is particularly disconcerting as unsuitable topics included in the list are of course to be found in the classical plays which were permitted to be performed during the Occupation. The removal of Jewish work from the repertory was not only of work originally written by Jewish authors or based on Jewish subject matter, such as Racine’s *Esther* and *Athalie*, but also, as Marsh points out it included works which had been translated by anyone of perceived Jewish origin, meaning that *Hamlet*, as translated by Eugène Morand and Marcel Schwob, could not be performed (Marsh 1998, p.150).

And while there is a possibility that not everyone would have been fully aware of, or perhaps more precisely would not have made themselves aware of such policies, there were other aspects of the policies which were less hidden, such as the renaming of theatres in Paris, as part of the ‘Aryanization’ policy.

French filmmakers working in France during the Occupation may have taken some pride in the fact that they never made any outright propaganda films for either the

Reich or Vichy, and the theatre was in much the same position. There are, not surprisingly, a number of plays as well as films which can be read in different ways, which are ambiguous in their approach to the politics of the period. One exception on the French stage where there is no ambiguity regarding the political rhetoric and ideology with which the playwright is engaged was the play, *Les Pirates de Paris* by Michel Daxiat, who was also known as the theatre critic Alain Laubreaux. The play had the subtitle *L’Affaire Stavisky*, and as Marsh puts it ‘gave Laubreaux the opportunity to attack both the Jews and the Third Republic’ (Marsh 1998, p.158). The play had a short run. Although by most accounts it was a badly constructed play, this cannot necessarily be taken as evidence that the French theatre audiences shunned the play purely because it was an anti-Semitic propaganda piece. Cocteau recounts a version of the circumstances surrounding the play which are equal to the intrigue of the initial Stavisky affair, with politics at the very centre of the question of whether or not the play would be authorised (Cocteau 1989, pp.27-8).

La Machine à écrire

Before looking at Cocteau’s play I shall outline the critical response to it at the time. Krauss examines the controversy which surrounded the performance of *La Machine à écrire* when it was first staged in 1941. There is a tendency to assume that it was a personal attack aimed at Cocteau, and as Krauss puts it that ‘the brawl was a reaction not to the play but to the playwright’ (Krauss 2004, p.xix). But this could be an oversimplification, and there is a possibility that a re-examination of the play would suggest that the uproar was directed as much at the play as it was at Cocteau. One of the more familiar aspects of the affair surrounding the play and the vitriolic reviews it received is the story of Marais physically attacking Laubreaux, familiar from Marais’

autobiographical writings and from the re-working of the story in Truffaut's film *Le Dernier Métro* (1980). Krauss suggests that part of the reason for the 'melodramatic vignette' (Krauss 2004, p.16) is Marais needing to reaffirm his masculinity; if Cocteau were being attacked based on his sexuality, then Marais would be 'guilty by association'. He continues by stating that the 'Jeannot needed to maintain his identity of a handsome young man who was attractive (and attracted) to females. While the attack may appear to have its basis in the politics of culture, economics seems to have been a cause as well' (Krauss 2004, p.17). But of course 'the power of the collabo press did not harm Marais the movie star' for, as he points out, the teenage girls continue to flock to see Marais at the Palais Royal apartment he shared with Cocteau (Krauss 2004, p.17) although I would suggest that it would always take more than a prejudiced and vitriolic theatre critic to stop hordes of teenagers flocking to catch a glimpse of their latest crush. Krauss offers an interesting and novel reading of the incident, which contrasts with the way in which it is related by Marais, (with Marais serving as protector to the physically weaker Cocteau), I would suggest that Krauss is in fact responding to the Truffaut version of the story as seen in *Le Dernier métro*, rather than to the Marais version. Whatever the case may be, Marais did little to detract or distract from his relationship with Cocteau, and the soon-to-be matinee idol did not take to running around Paris with a female companion (as would have often been the case of a would-be film star trying to hide his homosexuality), but rather continued to be photographed and seen openly with Cocteau (even when their initial relationship had ended). Nevertheless, they were in a precarious position during the Occupation when 'homosexuality' had been criminalised for the first time since its decriminalisation by the Napoleonic code.

Krauss reads the play as a covert discussion of homosexuality in so much as 'French culture drove homosexuals to hide their sexuality; an analogous need to

maintain a cover surfaces in Cocteau's script through repeated depictions of characters engaged in role-playing often in a broadly theatricalised manner, to mask their true identities' (Krauss 2004, p.27). This reading appears to be more analogous to the idea of the public and private faces and the hypocrisy of the social milieu in which the play is set. Yet the characters are not claiming a respectability which is not theirs but rather implicating themselves in a crime which they have not committed.

Jean Marais was one of the driving forces behind Cocteau's theatre work, as he was for his film work and *La Machine à écrire* would give Marais the double role of the identical twins, Pascal and Maxime. Marais also provided the set designs for this production. There are several versions of the play in existence. It had been written initially in 1939, but Cocteau then went back to re-write certain sections during the exodus. A detailed account of the various variants which are in existence is to be found in the notes on the play (Cocteau 2003, pp.1746-1758). The view that the negative response to *La Machine à écrire* was in reaction to the playwright rather than to the play is problematic as it suggests that any work associated with Cocteau during the period would have elicited the same response. As we will see, however, this is not entirely the case.

I have examined in some detail reviews of the play and they are particularly hostile and are very much a personal attack against Cocteau. While Krauss argued that the reaction was in part against the gay subtext of the play, there is no avoiding the particularly personal attacks against Cocteau in the press. Vinneuil even went so far as writing a second negative review, this time after some changes had been made to the play, and yet apparently none of the changes are enough to salvage anything from the play. As Vinneuil writes: 'Mais ces coupures de détail n'enlèvent rien à l'abjection de l'ouvrage. Elle ne tient pas seulement au choix du plus ignoble des sujets, la lettre anonyme. Elle est dans chaque mot, dans chaque trait des personnages.' It continues

in a similar manner with references to ‘les turpitudes du corps et de l’âme’, along with ‘les perversions physiques’, until arriving at a paragraph whose first phrase sets the article in the true context of the politics being put forward here: ‘Céline est notre homme’. The review continues on the theme of a certain lost talent in Cocteau. While he pronounces Cocteau to be a ‘lost cause’, he nevertheless states that he did once have talent and much intelligence, and looks back to a time when ‘nous savourions les ingénieux aphorismes, les vifs tableaux de *Carte blanche*, du *Coq et l’Arlequin*, du *Secret professionnel*’. But the review returns to its outright attack on Cocteau which seems to have little to do with the play itself. Indeed Vinneuil finds it impossible to separate the work from the author: a ‘clown’ at fifty years old, ‘l’age de la pleine maturité pour les vrais hommes, ce n’est plus qu’un jocrisse dégénéré’ (Jean-Jacques Kihm 1968, pp.423-426). Such a review exemplifies the trend for the attack against *La Machine à écrire* to be an attack against Cocteau.

Having seen what the response of one of the critics was, let us consider the play itself. Cocteau wrote in the preface written for the play in January 1941 that he wanted to ‘retrouver l’équilibre perdu entre la salle et la scène’ (Cocteau 2003, p.873). His project appears to be twofold; he wants to reclaim the detective story as a genre but he also wants to offer a critique of the hypocrisy of the provinces. As Cocteau writes in the preface: ‘En écrivant *Les Parents terribles*, j’écrivais une tragédie, mais j’atteignais la masse par une attaque contre les désordres d’une bourgeoisie décadente.’ He then continues with his plan to manipulate the genre of the detective story: ‘Avec *La Machine à écrire*, une fausse intrigue policière me permet de peindre la terrible province féodale d’avant la débâcle, province dont les vices et l’hypocrisie poussent les uns à se défendre mal, les autres (la jeunesse romanesque) à devenir mythomanes’ (Cocteau 2003, p.874).

The confusion or blurring of genre lines, as outlined in the preface, becomes a source of tension within the play itself which, according to some, was what led to the failure of the play: 'Cocteau in writing the melodrama, tried to exploit the popular murder-mystery genre and at the same time attempted to use the established form for his own purposes, to articulate serious social statements (or so he claims). Such a mix of commercial and serious drama was problematic, for audiences of the former often scorned the latter and vice versa' (Krauss 2004, p.23). So would this supposed blurring of genre dividing lines be enough to cause uproar amongst an audience and lead to the play being closed down? From the 'so he claims' of the preceding quotation, we can deduce that Krauss considers the notion of Cocteau choosing to express 'serious social statements' anywhere unlikely. His judgment is presumably based either on a mistrust of the idea that Cocteau was capable of engagement with the political or on an assumption that Cocteau would be unlikely to include such a polemic within his own version of a detective story. I would suggest that the political engagement which takes place in the play happens somewhat inadvertently. It has already been seen how certain elements of the preface to the play could be considered as political and the play itself is no different in the resistance it demonstrates towards the Occupiers and the new political situation in France in 1941.

There is little evidence explaining what exactly in the play may have led to the hostile response it generated. There are variations in the biographical studies of Cocteau as to the circumstances by which the play was taken off the stage in 1941, a situation which as Krauss points out is not clarified by Marais, who had a very different account of the situation which led to the performances being stopped. Krauss also remarks that there are surprisingly few references to be found in the reviews as to what happened at the opening night performance (Krauss 2004, pp.1-2). Unfortunately, Cocteau did not start keeping his journal during the Occupation until the following year,

but the version of the play performed on the first evening is included in the 2003 collection of the plays, and therefore at least it is possible to look at some of the elements which may have caused such a negative response.

One of the most striking aspects of *La Machine à écrire* is the similarity in plot with Clouzot's *Le Corbeau*, and what is then most surprising is that Cocteau and Clouzot had such different fates when it came to the trials of the *épuration*. Both stories are based on a real-life incident involving poison-pen letters sent in a small town in Tulle which received widespread newspaper coverage at the time (the 1920s) and became a notorious incident known throughout France, with Cocteau having even visited the town after hearing the story, according to one account: 'Là aussi, l'affaire d'Angèle Laval n'est pas inconnu du dramaturge qui confie avoir songé à l'adapter et qui s'est rendu un jour à Tulle pour s'imprégner de l'atmosphère de cette ville qui lui apparaît comme diabolique' (Naour 2006, p.191). Both play and film are set in an unspecified, small, provincial town 'somewhere in France', to paraphrase the opening titles from *Le Corbeau*, and both were also written before the Occupation (the screenplay was co-written by Louis Chavance). As for any suggestion that Clouzot had in a way 'stolen' the idea from Cocteau, it is interesting to read an entry from Cocteau's journal when, coming back from seeing *Le Corbeau*, he notes that when he saw Clouzot on arriving back in Paris following the exodus he had told him that there were two film ideas which interested him: one being Tristan and Yseult, the other the story of the poison pen letters in Tulle. 'J'ai fait un Tristan (moderne) et il a fait l'autre' (Cocteau 1989, p.370). Part of Chavance's defence during the *épuration* was that the first version of the screenplay had been written by him and pre-dated the war.

The hostile reviews may well have saved Cocteau when it came to the time of the trials of the *épuration*. By almost completely disregarding the play in order to discredit its author, the reviews also played a part in Cocteau emerging from the

Occupation as a victim of the collaborationist press. If the trials are understood as a way to rid the country of a collective guilt and this could be done most effectively at the time by choosing individual ‘moments’ from the period, and when it came to the arts, a film such as *Le Corbeau* served as such an example, something on which several accusations could be pinned. The film by Clouzot had been associated with far too much controversy at the time of its release to be forgotten about and pushed to one side, and there had been no ‘personal attacks’ against Clouzot to offer some sort of cancelling out process as there had been for Cocteau. In the perception at the time Cocteau came out of the Occupation having been victimised during the period as much as he had collaborated with it. The trials of the *épuration* were preceded by a hearing which then decided if the individual called up in front of them could be accused of a crime which would then lead to a trial. The first part was thus informal enough to allow a person to be dismissed, with no further action sought after the briefest of hearings. Cocteau describes the experience of the hearing from his point of view both in the Journal and in writing to Marais. In a letter dated 7th December, 1944, Cocteau refers to the experience, in this example at the hearing for filmmakers: ‘T’ai-je raconté que j’étais passé au comité d’épuration du cinéma devant Lestringuez. C’était très drôle. Sans mon inquiétude permanente à ton sujet, l’époque m’offrirait de curieux spectacles. Hélas, je ne suis pas en état de les goûter et d’en rire’ (Cocteau 1987, p.189). In the Journal Cocteau notes that Chavance, the co-author of *Le Corbeau*, was having his case heard at the same tribunal: ‘J’allais oublier l’épuration. Voilà une étrange besogne. Jeudi dernier, j’attendais à neuf heures du matin, pêle-mêle avec les habilleurs au cinquième étage du Comité de libération du cinématographe en compagnie d’Anouilh, d’Achard, de Jeanson, d’Aurenche, de Marcel Aymé, etc. Après Chavance, je passe le tribunal composé de camarades: Lestringuez, Mathot, Arnoux. On m’épure en cinq minutes et je repasse devant les autres, très digne, un lys à la main’ (Cocteau 1989,

pp.578-9). This gives an insight into the way in which the tribunals were carried out quickly and from his account, almost as a bureaucratic formality, and yet the reference to Chavance is a reminder that this was not everyone's experience of the process. As writer of the original screenplay and co-writer of the screenplay which would be made into *Le Corbeau* Chavance was banned from professional filmmaking, although this was later reduced, as in the case of Clouzot and the actors who were sentenced. Judith Mayne points out that *Le Corbeau* only made up a part of the accusations which were made against Clouzot but, as she also remarks: 'The fact remains, nonetheless, that *Le Corbeau* was highly visible as the embodiment of collaboration, punishment and retribution in the cinema' (Mayne 2007, p.84).

The characters on Cocteau's stage are less ambivalent than those of *Le Corbeau*. In Clouzot's film, the tension and suspense lie in the possibility that at any point some hidden facet of a character's make-up could be revealed, giving the audience another possible candidate as to who may be the author of the poison-pen letters. The characters in *La Machine à écrire* in comparison could all be the perpetrators of the crime and rather than trying to deny this a number of them announce themselves to be the author of the letter. The starting point in *Le Corbeau* with a number of the characters is that they are initially held up as exemplary members of a small town, with previously hidden 'crimes' being revealed as the film progresses. Subsequently this was one of the most problematic elements of the film on its release and in the aftermath of the Occupation, as this complexity and ambiguity were pivotal to the arguments against the film at the time of the trial.

The darkness of Cocteau's characterization makes it all the more surprising that it received permission to be staged. As this brief synopsis shows, all the characters infringe social rules. The play, as first performed in April 1941, was made up of a cast of seven characters with two of these played by Marais. Margot is the first to appear on

stage. We learn that she is not one of the children, although she has grown up in the house where the first scene takes place. Then there is Didier, who is the next to appear on stage along with Fred. The audience learn that they are both old friends. Fred is a policeman, although even with what would appear to be a respectable job, we learn that there is some hidden scandal behind the fact that he has returned from China where he had been working. He is in the town at the request of Didier, to investigate the anonymous letters. Pascal is the son of Didier and supposedly in love with Margot. And then there is Solange, who lives in the local château, and used to be in love with Didier. She is a widow, and has a son who is still at school. We discover that she is in love with Maxime whom she is sheltering in her château. Maxime is Pascal's identical twin brother. We discover that Maxime has been in prison and has secretly returned to the town. He is blamed for worrying his mother to death. Finally we have Monique (la demoiselle des Postes) who is brought in at the end of the play as a red herring (she does not appear in later editions of the play). As well as the characters seen on stage there is also the unseen Judith. She is Didier's dead wife (and mother of the twins) but remains a presence throughout the play; Margot has taken over her room and is given to dressing up in costumes that once belonged to her.

Margot, is the first character seen on stage, and in a parody of the idealised images of the healthy mind, healthy body of the far right, the notion of *santé morale* and *santé de corps*, we see her exercising and, as the stage directions indicate: 'Au lieu de compter, elle crie à tue-tête', and what she is shouting is a series of swear words. It is surprising that the play got past the censors. The audience is told of the atmosphere of suspicion which exists in the town due to the anonymous letters which are being sent. The first scene draws to a close with an exchange between Margot and Fred which ends with his following pronouncement: 'D'accord! Je déteste les Groupes. Vive l'Anarchie et les bombes. Je veux dire les gaffes, les scandales, les pieds dans le plat. Il n'y a rien

de tel pour changer l'air' (Cocteau 2003, p.880). This is likely to be the only instance in which a character shouts on stage in a play staged during the Occupation, 'Vive l'Anarchie et les bombes'. And to add to what is already shocking about the phrase within the context of the period, the audience discovers in the next scene that the injunction is declared by a policeman, and that this is a policeman who has returned from China because of a scandal which had involved opium. Further criticism of the authorities can be gleaned from when Pascal first comes on stage he is complaining about the police and their ineptitude in getting no closer to solving the mystery of the poison-pen letters. Once again Cocteau seems to be taunting the censors and the authorities when he has Pascal state the following: 'La police. Il est honteux que la police ne fasse rien et laisse une ville dans un état pareil!...' (Cocteau 2003, p.884).

Didier declares that 'le Moyen Age aurait exorcisé cette pauvre ville!' (Cocteau 2003, p.887) and at the end of a relatively long speech Fred implores Didier to be on his guard: 'Ces méchantes petites villes méritent les pluies de sauterelles ou de lettres anonymes qui le dévastent, et le mystérieux criminel qui signe "La Machine à écrire" possède, jusqu'à nouvel ordre, toute ma sympathie' (Cocteau 2003, p.887). Solange comes to the house and there are further revelations; her young son, having formed a secret gang with his friends called 'la Main Noire', has inadvertently discovered Maxime who had been brought back to Solange's house where she could nurse him back to health. Pascal accuses Margot of having an affair with Maxime and before the curtain falls at the end of the first act, Margot has admitted to being the author of the poison pen letters.

When the curtain rises on the second act the action has transferred to Solange's château where, alone with Maxime, she states that when he had first moved into her home she had abandoned any principles she had: 'j'ai tout envoyé promener: prudence, sagesse, inquiétude, pudeur. Et je suis heureuse' (Cocteau 2003, p.908). Fred then

arrives to speak to Solange, and when she confirms that Pascal's suspicions are correct, that she is having an affair with Maxime, she gives the following description of herself, one that is decidedly removed from the ideal of womanhood of the far right:

[...] Je ne tenais pas à venir scandaliser Didier et à lui apprendre que la femme honnête, la veuve, la châtelaine qu'il voulait épouser et qu'il aurait épousée sans ses enfants, avait tourné si mal et profité d'être libre pour devenir la maîtresse d'un de ses fils. (Cocteau 2003, pp.911-2).

Criticism of the authorities can therefore be seen to accompany a representation of womanhood highly unlikely to meet the approval of the Vichy regime or the Occupiers.

The penultimate scene of the second act sees Maxime suffer an epileptic fit, something which had particularly offended the play's critics, and the censors ordered that the scene be removed (Krauss 2004, p.2). The third act was re-written for versions of the play subsequent to the first performances in 1941. This act sees a further character claim to be the author of the letters: Monique from the post office. When she exits the scene, Maxime pronounces that she is completely mad, to which Fred responds: 'Non. Le chagrin. La solitude. La méchanceté des gens. L'idée fixe. La méchanceté d'une ville peut rendre fou' (Cocteau 2003, p.957). It is Solange who confirms that Monique from the post office could not have been the author of the hateful letters because she herself is guilty of the crime. Maxime is horrified but Solange offers an explanation which also serves as a critique of small town living, the hypocrisy to which Cocteau had referred to in the preface:

Fred, j'ai été la femme d'un ivrogne qui me rouait de coups et qui est mort gâteux. Je suis restée veuve avec Claude. Seule à Malemort, au milieu d'une société ignoble qui m'enviait et qui m'évitait. Je voyais partout une chance absurde de favoriser les manœuvres de ces monstres. L'un faisait déshonorer le fiancé de sa fille parce qu'il était pauvre, l'autre – le colonel – séquestrait sa sœur dans une cave et jouait sa fortune. (Cocteau 2003, pp.959-60)

As can be seen from this extract of what is a much longer speech by Solange, the play continues in pronouncing on the failings of small town life, on the hypocrisies of so-called respectable people, whom she has sought to expose. The play ends with Solange making an excuse to exit the stage, a gun-shot is heard, she has committed suicide.

Almost a decade later a short review of a staging of the play was printed in *The Times* (November 10th, 1950, p.8). It was to be the first in a series of what was termed at the time ‘civic entertainment’ organised by the Borough of Hackney in London. The review adds that, as one would expect, this is not an ‘ordinary detective piece’ and continues more accurately than the reviews from Paris when the play was originally staged: ‘M. Cocteau is not looking for a criminal: he is expressing, as it seems, the quagmires and uncertainties of the spirit which life in France must have meant in 1941.’

One can see why the play was met with such controversy when it was first staged. It remains tied to the period in which it was written because it is difficult not to read lines from Cocteau’s characters calling for anarchy as taunting the Occupiers, while the dysfunctional family serves as the direct opposite of the family at the heart of Vichy’s *travail, famille, patrie*, and simultaneously *La Machine à écrire* stands apart from the period as a play so estranged from any notion of the norms expected from the theatre of the period. As with *L’Eternel Retour*, Cocteau appears to have written a work which fails to acknowledge the realities of censorship, and yet, while *La Machine à écrire* may have been taken off the stage after the initial performances, it was initially passed by the censors.

Renaud et Armide

In the preface to this play, Cocteau asks and answers his own question: ‘La tragédie est-elle morte? Alors, vive la tragédie!’ (Cocteau 2003, p.967). But not only was Cocteau resurrecting the tragedy but, he was also, by composing the play in alexandrines, reinstating a neglected form. The play is not only an experiment in form for Cocteau, but also is another example of a reworking of a Medieval tale. The play adapts the story and as we will see makes particular changes that within the context of the Occupation can be read as recognition and resistance to the Occupation. However, we will also see that the success of the play was such that it was translated into German, and although the translation was apparently never completed, the enthusiasm Cocteau had for such a project is indicative of his political naivety.

By the time Cocteau had started to keep his Journal during the Occupation *Renaud et Armide* was already written, however the Journal does contain a number of entries about the play. There are references to private read-throughs with friends, as one entry reads following one such reading: ‘Le côté révolutionnaire de la pièce, dans le sens qu’elle s’oppose à toutes mes recherches précédentes, les étonne’ (Cocteau 1989, p.39). Such readings serve as some indication of the experimental nature of the play, particularly in relation to Cocteau’s previous work for the stage, not least for its verse form.

The play saw Cocteau at the Comédie Française for the first time, something which he was excited as well as anxious about. ‘*Renaud et Armide... et au Français!* Voilà, en ce qui me concerne, le comble de l’acte révolutionnaire. Je ne peux plus me cacher que sur ce socle. Tâcher qu’on me prenne *pour une statue*’ (Cocteau 1989, p.67). And while he had the prestige of having a play on at the Comédie Française, there were also the young fans besieging him on his way to and from the theatre, marking an

increased public interest in Cocteau: ‘Hier après la matinée, j’ai failli être écrasé, étouffé, par la jeunesse qui voulait que je signe des programmes’ (Cocteau 1989, p.298).

There is also an increased engagement between Cocteau and the political reality of the day to the extent that when faced with delays, Cocteau sees his work in terms of its relation to the period, as a response to the political situation in France at the time:

‘*Renaud* et le film attendent. L’époque ne se prête pas aux grandes entreprises qui sauveraient cette ville et assureraient son prestige dans l’avenir’ (Cocteau 1989, p.134).

This is a departure from the widely held belief, in part expressed by Cocteau himself that he refused to engage with the reality of the Occupation and its political implications, and rather suggests the idea that for Cocteau continuing to produce work during the period was an act of resistance. His anxiety continues regarding the play, questioning whether the way he is feeling is because of the work or because of the time in which he is living, and while Cocteau would not consider his work as a response per se to a period, it seems that he is willing to acknowledge that during such a problematic time in the history of France the situation will have some influence on his approach to his work: ‘L’émotion, l’angoisse, l’espèce de bouleversement que me donne, sans répit, le travail de *Renaud et Armide*, ne ressemblent pas à ce que je ressentais avant mes autres pièces. Peut-être est-ce l’époque; peut-être y ai-je apporté bien d’avantage; toujours est-il qu’entre les séances de costumes, les essais du décor et les répétitions du texte, je rôde comme une âme en peine, incapable de penser à quoi ce soit de raisonnable où d’entreprendre le moindre travail – même de répondre à une lettre’ (Cocteau 1989, p.294).

Cocteau then continues by relating his work to success which could extend beyond his own play, with the magic wand being a reference to the magical element of *Renaud et Armide*: ‘Il ne faut pas faire un beau spectacle, malgré les circonstances. Il faut faire le plus beau spectacle de théâtre et même de temps de paix. Il faut toucher le théâtre avec une baguette magique’ (Cocteau 1989, p.294).

Before the play has been performed in public he prepares himself for criticism from the newspapers again: ‘Il paraît que “la presse collaboratrice” prépare le scandale de *Renaud et Armide* avec les troupes de Doriot’ (Cocteau 1989, p.259). Given Cocteau’s experience with the critics and *La Machine à écrire*, it is not surprising that in response to the articles which begin to appear regarding performances of *Renaud et Armide* he sees them all as negative and declares: ‘Presse immonde et idiote’ (Cocteau 1989, p.298). It is in response to this criticism that Cocteau writes the following exegesis of his work: ‘Il me semble qu’on a mal entendu qu’Armide, ne pouvant obtenir Renaud que par sortilège – même lorsqu’elle lui donne la bague et renonce à tout – ne veut pas de cet amour, tâche de l’éloigner, y parvient et se tue par l’entremise des charmes.’ He then continues with a point of particular interest when considering the play as a product of the Occupation period: ‘J’ai voulu peindre le sacrifice total de cette princesse. Ce n’est pas pour éviter son baiser mortel qu’Armide ordonne à Renaud de retourner en France et de suivre ses troupes. C’est parce que ce baiser ne viendrait pas de son propre cœur, mais encore du pouvoir occulte dont elle se débarrasse’ (Cocteau 1989, p.300). This is a departure from previous versions of the tale, in which this is seen as an active form of resistance, in which, despite a magic spell, this can still be overcome. In a manner which dismisses any criticism of the play he declares: ‘*Renaud et Armide* est une de ces oeuvres beaucoup plus faites pour juger les gens que pour être jugées par eux’ (Cocteau 1989, p.301). He reiterates this later, adding *L’Eternel Retour* to the same category of works (Cocteau 1989, p.394).

A comment in the Journal about the contemporary criticism of his work indicates that Cocteau is projecting both his work and the response to it into the future: ‘Un jour on ne pourra pas croire quelle a été la presse de *Renaud*. C’est à qui cherchera les pires sottises, les pires insolences’ (Cocteau 1989, p.303). And while the play was a

success with the audiences and some critics too at the time, Cocteau continues to define himself as the misunderstood poet of his country:

Qu'ai-je récolté dans cette France? Des insultes et une incompréhension inimaginable. Les Français, sauf quelques rencontres exceptionnelles, n'entendent ni la plaisanterie, ni la poésie, ni la grandeur. Ils ne comprennent que les "histoires drôles" qu'ils connaissent déjà, la poésie fausse (poésie poétique), la grandiloquence. Ils prennent la tenue, la vitesse, le contour, la pointe pour des cabrioles, de mauvaises farces qu'on leur joue. L'exemple de *Renaud et Armide* est décisif. J'ai fait ce cadeau à la France. Elle me remercie par de la haine et de la sottise (Cocteau 1989, p.305).

He continues that while he may have had a localised success with the full houses that came to the play and enjoyed it, there were those who did not come to the theatre because they were being warned against him at every turn by journalists. 'La masse croit ses journalistes' (Cocteau 1989, p.305). And asking himself why the French press has chosen him as their target, he muses that it may be for the following reason: 'Sans doute l'extrême liberté, l'extrême solitude que je représente sont-elles odieuses à une époque qui veut faire ce rêve affreux d'opposer les masses à l'individualisme, les politiques de clan à la politique hautaine' (Cocteau 1989, p.305). Cocteau is again placing himself outside the norm, and insisting on the apolitical stance of the 'haute patrie des poètes' in which poets exist outside the boundaries of politically defined nationhood. It forms part of the problematic and contradictory position which Cocteau adopts during the Occupation in which while declaring resistance through continuing to create in the public sphere he also fails to understand in this example the way in which he is seen by the Collaborationist press to represent the fallen Third Republic.

The play was nevertheless a success in terms of ticket sales, even if the critics were not always in agreement, and the success for Cocteau was two-fold; the play itself and the experiment of writing in alexandrines. There are requests for it to be staged elsewhere in France, with Cocteau having given permission for one amateur production

of the play to be put on in Bayonne in April 1944. This production is commented on in the Journal due to the news which comes through to Cocteau that one of the actors has been killed before the play was performed; a reminder of the reality of war: ‘Je reçois une lettre bien belle et bien triste de la jeune troupe qui montait *Renaud* à Bayonne. Notre petite Armide est morte, la veille du spectacle, tuée dans le bombardement de Biarritz par un éclat d’obus en plein cœur’ (Cocteau 1989, p.497). Furthermore, from reading Cocteau’s Journal, it becomes clear that the play was being translated into German. Cocteau mentions showing the translation of the first act to Ernst Jünger when he has dinner with him, to which Jünger comments that the translation is ‘insuffisante’ (Cocteau 1989, p.475). Ernst Jünger was a senior officer in the Wehrmacht and described by Cocteau as among the ‘Allemands de culture française profonde’ (Cocteau 1989, p.31). The date of the dinner was February 1944 and it is not clear who has translated the play, but the idea that Cocteau would consider such a translation during the Occupation displays a refusal on the poet’s part to understand the political implications of such an action. This also serves as a reminder that Cocteau found in the company of such Germans as Jünger a sympathetic response to his work. Cocteau describes the Collaborationist press as having declared him as ‘l’ennemi public numéro un’ (Cocteau 1989, p.28) and this condemnation of him as emblematic of the failure of the Third Republic in the view of the Collaborationists is in sharp contrast to the interest the small group of Germans, who frequented the literary salons which continued during the Occupation, took in Cocteau.

The play itself is another adaptation and is considered as his second ‘Medieval’ play, with the earlier *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde* being the first. That *Renaud et Armide* was being rehearsed for the stage at the same time as Cocteau was travelling to and from Paris to be on the set of *L’Eternel Retour* is a reminder that this is a brief period in Cocteau’s work when the ‘manie de la Grèce’, as he refers to it in the preface

to *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*, is replaced with an interest in medieval literature. As he writes in the preface to the play, the story is merely a starting point: 'Je ne voulais pas m'inspirer des Anciens ni suivre une trame connue. Je n'empruntai donc à la légende que les noms de mes personnages. J'inventai tout le reste' (Cocteau 2003, p.968). The tale of Renaud and Armide had come from various sources. There is the sixteenth century Italian poem by Tasso, known in English as *Jerusalem Delivered*, and the story appears in opera, including works by Gluck and Rossini, as well as in painting, with examples by Poussin and Boucher. The tale is set during the crusades, with varying elements of the fantastical added to it in different versions of the story. Cocteau reduces the characters in his version of the tale to four: Armide, an enchanteress; Oriane, a fairy, and friend of Armide; Renaud, who in Cocteau's version is King of France, conqueror in Armide's country; Olivier, Renaud's equerry. The action takes place in one setting, a pavillion in Armide's garden, over a twenty-four hour period. One of the most striking changes which Cocteau made was to turn Renaud from the knight he appears as in previous versions into the King of France as Cocteau writes in the synopsis of the play included in the programme notes: 'Le Renaud de l'armée de Godefroy s'y mélange au roi Renaud de la chanson' (Cocteau 1989, p.675). It is a significant change for audiences of the Occupation, in which the 'promotion' of Renaud to the King of France while bypassing the restoration of the Republic, nevertheless places a figurehead to the Occupied state on the stage of war-time Paris.

It is also, being a tale from the Crusades, about opposing religions and invading armies, and an added political meaning tied to the contemporary is included in such words as the following spoken by Renaud (although he is channelling a spirit's voice at the time): 'Monte sur mes vaisseaux, embarque mes soldats, / De son envahisseur délivre le royaume, / Retourne en France. Adieu!' (Cocteau 2003, p.988). The play ends with great sacrifices having been made, the two main characters having decided

that is better to escape from a life of enchantment even if reality will be more difficult for them, and Armide bids her final goodbye to Renaud: ‘Adieu, Renaud. Retourne à ton pays./ Tu dois obéir’ (Cocteau 2003, p.1054). The call of a return to France again takes on a significance during the Occupation, and can be read as a call to Resistance in a country which is subsumed within the New Europe of the Third Reich in which France is no longer an independent state within this.

Les Parents terribles

While *La Machine à écrire* and *Renaud et Armide* were both performed for the first time during the Occupation, *Les Parents terribles* was being restaged after first performances in 1938. This insistence to re-stage such a controversial play can be seen as Cocteau’s refusal to protect himself from criticism from the Collaborationists.

La Machine à écrire and *Les Parents terribles* tend to be grouped together when referring to Cocteau during the Occupation because of the controversy which surrounded both productions. Not only was it not the first time that *Les Parents terribles* was being staged, more importantly, it was not the first time that a production of the play would provoke a controversial response. Given the uproar which had surrounded the play when it was staged in 1938 it is surprising that a re-staging was permitted, and one might question some of the assumptions made regarding the state of censorship in France during the Occupation. The reasons for the play being controversial during the pre-war era would be the same during the Occupation. The main outcry had been against the theme of incest, perceived to be running through the play, and one of the harshest critics of the play in 1938 had been Alain Laubreaux. The decision therefore on the part of Cocteau to go ahead with a revival of *Les Parents terribles* to be staged in November 1941 when in April 1941 he had been subject to

such negative reviews of *La Machine à écrire*, is surprising. Laubreaux in his article published in *Je suis partout* on 19th May, 1941, referred to Cocteau's play (along with Bourdet's new play, *Hyménée*) in the following terms: 'Cela représente la pire friperie des deux avant-guerre. MM. Cocteau et Bourdet représentant ici l'école de l'antique boulevard' (Jean-Jacques Kihm 1968, pp.425-6).

The reference to 'avant-guerre' here of *course* is a thinly veiled condemnation of the two playwrights here as degenerates of the Third Republic. This is not the politics of *attentisme* and *accommodation*, which by definition imply that the period of the Occupation would have an end point, which in itself implies a return to what had existed beforehand, but rather a politics that adopts the rhetoric which sees the Occupation as a 'renewal' of a 'fallen France'. In another article dated a few weeks later, Laubreaux continues to condemn the play by association with the playwright and vice versa, and fails to separate the condemnation of the play from the moral condemnation of the playwright: 'M. Cocteau peut user, pour nous le faire accepter, des euphémismes les plus obscurs et des litotes les plus insidieuses, il n'empêchera point que l'acte même qu'accomplit son personnage dénote une extrême bassesse d'âme' (Jean-Jacques Kihm 1968, pp.427-9). Laubreaux brings the article to an end with a reference made by Gide to Cocteau, which includes a description of Cocteau as the author of *Le Livre blanc*, as if serving as a reminder to 'those in the know' that Cocteau had been responsible for this anonymously published book which took homosexuality as its main theme.

As for the response of Laubreaux to *Les Parents terribles* in 1938, it was an outright condemnation of the play, written in the fascist rhetoric which is usually more associated with the collaborationist press of the Occupation, but serves as a reminder of the pre-war homophobia already rife in certain areas. When Laubreaux published his review of *Les Parents terribles* in 1941 he claimed to have not even to have seen the

production, rather he reminded the readers of his original review and reprinted extracts.

The review, from 25 October 1941, begins:

Au moment où j'écris, le rideau ne s'est pas encore levé, au Théâtre du Gymnase, sur le premier acte des *Parents terribles*, mais à l'heure où ces lignes paraîtront, ce déplorable événement aura eu lieu. On aura revu sur une scène de Paris ce déprimant spectacle, ce tableau d'une famille française où le proxénétisme, l'ordure morale, la prostitution la plus basse nous sont présentes comme l'image même de nos mœurs. On espérait que cette honte serait épargnée à notre pays, dans l'état de misère où il est tombé... (Jean-Jacques Kihm 1968, pp.430-431)

Such had been the controversy of the play in 1938 that even British newspapers had reported on the event, with coverage included in *The Times* for example (December 27, 1938 and February 16, 1939). Given the circumstances, the re-staging of the play was clearly a contentious decision which was bound to bring up further controversy and that in a period when bad reviews could have much more complex repercussions.

But whatever conscious motivation Cocteau may have had for re-staging the most controversial of his plays during the Occupation, inadvertently he cleared the way for later assessments of his behaviour during the period to be more sympathetic than they might otherwise have been. The negative criticism which he attracted from the collaborationist press for his work and his personal life went some way to restoring his reputation in the post-war years. In his collection of essays, *La Difficulté d'être*, which can be seen as part of his public self-styling in the immediate aftermath of the Occupation and the *épuration*, Cocteau situates himself as the misunderstood poet who is so often vilified and misunderstood in France; ending the Occupation with such a catalogue of negative press from the collaborationists adds to his position as 'la tête de Turc' as he refers to himself in *Le Cordon ombilical*. Krauss claims that '*Renaud et Armide* managed to erase the scandal caused by *The Typewriter* and by the revival of *Les Parents terribles*' (Krauss p. 81). I would argue that this is an overstatement, as

reviews in the collaborationist press of *Renaud et Armide*, while being more positive nevertheless still make references to the scandal of Cocteau which is associated with any work associated with him in the reviews which appear in the Collaborationist press. More importantly, the erasure, even if it had occurred was not permanent.

In March 1943 Cocteau wrote the following entry in his Journal: 'Restera-t-il des théâtres dans un mois et des acteurs et des machinistes? Pourra-t-on encore tourner un film? Il me plaît de m'acharner et d'essayer de mettre sur pied un spectacle magnifique, au bord de la catastrophe' (Cocteau 1989, p.278). The 'spectacle magnifique' he refers to is his play, *Renaud et Armide* and in a short article published a month later in *Comoedia* on 3rd April, 1943 about the play, and reproduced in *Le Foyer des artistes*, the questions he has posed to himself in the Journal are re-phrased and adopt much of the idiom he had employed for 'L'Adresse aux jeunes écrivains' from *La Gerbe*, the 'catastrophe' of the Journal entry becomes the 'époques tragiques' of the *Comoedia* article. The article begins as follows: 'Je n'ai pas cette opinion qui consiste à croire que les époques tragiques demandent qu'on écrive des pièces légères. Aux époques tragiques, j'estime qu'il faut la tragédie et que les artistes forment des groupes individuels où le seul esprit commun soit un esprit de grandeur' (Cocteau 1951, p.420). Again, this reminds the reader of Cocteau's insistence that resistance lay in continuing to perform and write during the Occupation.

What Cocteau's involvement with the theatre during the Occupation demonstrates is the poet's continuing interest in experimenting with different styles and genres. This is not done despite the Occupation but rather, when considering Cocteau's writing which co-existed with the plays, in response to the circumstances of the Occupation. Continuing ideas introduced in the initial article he wrote for *La Gerbe* this is repeated in the article in *Comoedia* on *Renaud et Armide*.

The paratexts which accompany the plays are often more illuminating than the plays themselves as to any political stance which Cocteau may be taking, even if it displays an ambiguous stance of resistance through continuing to perform. What is clear from reading many of the reviews which accompanied performances of his plays during the period is that they are focussed on Cocteau the playwright rather than on the plays themselves. The Collaborationist press, made up of largely of critics of the Third Republic, viewed Cocteau as emblematic of the 'degeneracy' of the inter-war period and used their reviews to reiterate this point. The paradox is that it was these attacks in the press which would serve as a significant part of Cocteau's defence during the Liberation. The ambiguity of Cocteau's theatre work during the Occupation is such that his pretention to an apolitical stance is undermined by the way in which the texts and the determination to have his plays staged are necessarily permeated with political implications.

Conclusion

In this project I have considered three main areas of Cocteau's work during the Occupation. The starting point was the way in which much of the interest in Cocteau extends beyond the work itself. During the Occupation he remained a highly visible presence in the public sphere and this dual interest in the poet and his work takes on a further significance, including accusations of collaboration.

In considering Cocteau's work during the Occupation we have seen the extent to which the tendency to dismiss much of his work in a blanket condemnation closes a further discussion of the work. Rather than offering a counter-argument to the criticism and denunciations, I would argue that looking beyond such condemnation opens up a more complex discussion. I have explored aspects of Cocteau's work during the period which at once can be read as sharing the rhetoric of the Occupiers and the Collaborationists but can also at times be seen to engage with a certain idea of resistance. At some points this resistance can be seen as a refusal by Cocteau to understand the political implications of aspects of his actions and his work during the period. However there are instances, as we have seen, where he can also be considered to be refusing to censor his work to accommodate the Occupiers and the Vichy regime during the period.

The section on the 'Salut à Breker' takes an example of Cocteau appearing in the public sphere, supporting the Third Reich's official sculptor. The opening of the exhibition received coverage in the newsreels and newspapers of the period and placed Cocteau publicly within the circle of Collaborationists and officials of the Occupying forces. The article, the 'Salut à Breker', which was written following the official opening of the exhibition, can be seen as further support and approbation by Cocteau in the public domain. Such public support has, understandably, led to condemnation of

Cocteau as a Collaborationist, which was the starting point for considering if the event and the article could be open to further interpretation. In considering the ‘Breker affair’ we have looked at the way in which the significance of the article, written by Cocteau, can be further understood by reading it in the context of the exhibition as a whole. The article sees Cocteau endorse an artist who worked within the visual idiom of the Third Reich and this can certainly be read as the sanctioning of the artist and therefore the sanctioning of the German Occupiers by Cocteau. But to leave the focus solely on the fact that Breker was seen as ‘Hitler’s favourite sculptor’ is to ignore the significance of the sculptor and the exhibition, not only as part of the Third Reich’s propaganda in France, but also the importance of the exhibition as a propaganda tool for the Collaborationists. Rather than underplaying Cocteau’s role, this in turn, I would argue, highlights the ambiguous position of the poet during the Occupation. Breker, as an artist who had spent a significant amount of time in Paris during the inter-war era had a long-standing association with French sculpture and sculptors which allowed the Collaborationists to manipulate assessments of Breker and his work into an ongoing narrative of the collaboration between France and Germany which in turn could be manipulated and extended into the notion of Collaboration on a political level during the Occupation. In our reading of the ‘Salut’ we saw how Cocteau adopted a stance which he would insist was apolitical, that is to say, his calling up of the notion of the ‘patrie des artistes’ where borders do not exist. However, this idea, particularly during the Occupation of any country, which by definition engages with the insistence of geo-political borders, becomes highly problematic. We saw from reading the *Journal intime* Cocteau kept during the period that he was privately aware of the complexity of his public stance regarding the exhibition. This is demonstrated by the fact that he wrote the article as an apparent compromise, having initially been asked to give the opening address at the exhibition, suggesting that he was aware that his actions during the period

would be subject to public judgement. Breker can be seen as manipulating pre-existing friendships, including his friendship with Cocteau, through his insistence that he would exchange public support from them with private support from him. The manipulation on the part of Breker was met by naivety on the part of Cocteau who was ready to accept this offer of help and protection. Breker's insistence that he was at once operating outside the Nazi regime and yet simultaneously had influence within it is a contradictory and flawed stance. In turn Cocteau's engagement with Breker's stance is equally contradictory on his part. But as we have seen, as well as considering the implications of writing the 'Salut', the article itself needs to be read. Not only does reading the article dispel some of the mythology that surrounds it, notably the idea of it being a 'pamphlet', it also serves to further complicate rather than simplify Cocteau's position during the Occupation. In reading the article we were able to consider the way in which the language used by Cocteau merits careful analysis. From the title itself to the repetition of the phrase: 'Je vous salue, Breker' we see not necessarily engagement with the rhetoric of the Third Reich, as suggested by David Andrew Jones, but rather a repetition of the motif familiar, to readers of Cocteau's work, of the Roman Catholic liturgy. The repetition of 'patrie' in the 'Salut' which can again be read as echoing the idiom of the Third Reich in its translated form of 'fatherland', can also be read, as I have already suggested as echoing the idiom of Pétain's Révolution nationale. And the notion of the 'patrie des artistes' as well as recalling earlier references to this by Cocteau in his poetry and also is a recurrent motif in the language used by Heller and Jünger in their self-justifying accounts of their period in Paris during the Occupation as high-ranking officials within the German Occupying forces. This again complicates Cocteau's position and does not allow an easy categorisation of his stance during the Occupation. In the section of the 'Salut' in which Cocteau refers to sculpture in the city's public parks we saw how this could be interpreted as engaging with the idea of

statues being placed in the open air to inspire the public with its mythic proportions, an idea to be found in the Collaborationist press as well as a fundamental part of Nazi visual propaganda. Cocteau's view of Breker's sculptures in the place de la Concorde, has previously been read in the following terms: 'not a calming image given the circumstances' (Jones 2007, p.147) I have argued that it is also viable to read this in terms of Cocteau 'taunting' the enemy, in so far as the place de la Concorde was where the German army paraded every day during the Occupation.

The 'Salut' therefore can be read as a curious mix which can be seen to (inadvertently) engage with the idiom of the Occupiers, the Collaborationists, and the Vichy regime as well as with that of Cocteau's own work. In re-evaluating the 'Salut', both in terms of the article and the exhibition as well as the importance of Breker as an instrument of propaganda, what has been seen is not a continuation of the blanket condemnation of Cocteau in relation to this but rather the opening up of a discussion, which allowed a more nuanced reading and shows how fascinatingly complex and contradictory Cocteau's discourse was during this period.

As well as continuing to work in fields already familiar to him, Cocteau also began his first involvement with what can be categorized as commercial filmmaking during the Occupation. This involvement in cinema added to his presence in the public arena during the period and it too proved controversial. *L'Eternel retour*, like the 'Salut à Breker' was subject to certain blanket condemnations, at the time of its release in 1943 and afterwards, which in some instances go little further than interpreting the ultra-blonde leading actors as alignment with the unacceptable aesthetic of the Nazi rhetoric. While a clear argument has been made by a number of critics regarding this aspect of the film, this closes a discussion of other problematic aspects of the film. As we have seen there are multiple readings which are possible of the film which can allow for the interpretation of aspects of the screenplay engaging with discussions of eugenics,

which in 1943 were part of the ideology of both Nazism and the Révolution nationale. However, at the same time, there is the apparently contradictory element of the rejection of the ‘ideal family’ at the heart of Pétain’s ‘travail, famille, patrie’. The way in which the film can be read as simultaneously encompassing elements which share the aesthetic of fascism, elements of Vichyisme and elements which reject the latter, exemplifies the contradictory nature of his various and variable political stances during the period.

Other films, however, invite a more positive reading. The idea of resistance to the Occupation can be seen in the case of *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne*. We considered the way in which the film can be read as a re-occupation of the streets of Paris. I argued that it re-works the notion of the *contemporain vague*, common to films of the period, by not only ignoring any direct reference to the Occupiers but furthermore by inverting the ‘realities’ of the period. The working lift, the city without a curfew, the fire in the hearth, the criss-crossing of the city by car: all are open to being read as resistance merely than just a masking of the changes imposed on the city by the Occupiers. Cocteau insisted on his position outside politics, but during the period of the Occupation in particular, such a position is an impossibility. The film can therefore be read as a defiant screenplay written by Cocteau while Paris was still under German control. The re-working of the *contemporain vague* can be seen to mark a transition in his work as the Occupation drew to an end. The ambiguity of *L’Eternel retour* is replaced in *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* by a certainty of Paris re-imagined to a pre-Occupation era.

In the example of *La Belle et la bête*, we considered the way in which this was a project which had begun in the Occupation, but due to the constraints and complexities of the Liberation period did not begin production until 1945. The fact that the film was not released until after the end of war has led to a number of readings which have

highlighted certain problematic elements of the film. Fischlin's questioning of Cocteau's introduction of the character of the Jewish usurer rightly highlights a troubling element of the poet's reimagining of the fairy tale. I do not disagree with this reading but would add that there is also a paradoxical element to be found in this example, with the reintroduction and reminder of the marginalised Jewish figure. The redemptive figure of the leonine Beast, an innovation on Cocteau's part as I have argued, is also an aspect of the film which has particular resonance during the period of the Liberation, and its accompanying trials. I argue in the section on *La Belle et la bête* that the film requests the audience to revert to a certain point in childhood, to the innocence involved in following the narrative thread of a fairy tale, while the diary seems to be asking readers to believe in an unambiguous Occupation from which France can re-emerge unscathed: both film and diary have a central theme of transformation, and the re-telling of an *histoire*. This in turn sees Cocteau indirectly acknowledge his ambiguous stance during the Occupation by re-working and re-imagining the preceding years in the film and the public diary which accompanied it.

The public diary to accompany the film shows even more clearly how Cocteau's position changed during the Liberation period. The diary of the film makes reference in the public sphere to the Occupation and the ongoing trials of the *épuration* as well as occasional references to the Nuremberg trials, thus situating Cocteau explicitly in relation to the historical and political context in which it was made, in a way far removed from the 'patrie des poètes' evoked in the Breker article. In the diary he refers to his achievement in making *La Belle et la bête* in terms of a re-positioning of France in the post-Occupation period: 'J'ai fait de mon mieux pour prouver que la France peut encore se battre contre de forces géantes' (Cocteau 1999 [1946], p. 229). This statement recalling an aspect of the 'Adresse aux jeunes écrivains' in which producing work despite of the political situation is seen in terms of active resistance.

Finally, I argued that in his work for the theatre that Cocteau's position lent itself less to allegations of collaboration than was the case with the Breker article or his work in film. Yet Cocteau's continuation to innovate and experiment in his plays, which was not done despite the Occupation but rather, when considering Cocteau's texts, which co-existed with the plays, in response to the circumstances of the Occupation. This can be viewed, I would argue, as Cocteau's resistance as defined and introduced in the initial article he wrote for *La Gerbe*, 'L'Adresse aux jeunes écrivains', an idea which is repeated in the article in *Comoedia* on *Renaud et Armide*, for example. The paratexts which accompany the plays are often more illuminating than the plays themselves in relation to Cocteau's political stance, even if this also displays an ambiguous stance of resistance through continuing to perform and publish in Occupied Paris. Such an example can be found in his insistence of revisiting the controversial work, *Les Parents terribles*, which saw him position himself as a target for the Collaborationist press. What is clear from reading reviews in the Collaborationist press which accompanied performances of his plays during the period is that they are focussed on Cocteau the playwright rather than on the plays themselves. Paradoxically, it was the attacks in the press which would serve as a significant part of Cocteau's defence of any accusations of collaboration levelled against him in the post-Occupation period. A further paradox is to be found in the fact that his initial call to resistance through defying the Occupation and continuing to produce work was published in the Collaborationist newspaper, *La Gerbe*, with complete disregard on Cocteau's part that publishing in such a newspaper was politically problematic. The ambiguity of Cocteau's theatre work during the Occupation is such that his pretention to an apolitical stance is undermined by the way in which the texts and the determination to have his plays staged are necessarily permeated with political implications.

Neither Cocteau's work nor his behaviour in the public sphere during the Occupation allow for straightforward categorization as he moves between various political stances. As well as continuing to produce work which was available to a wide audience and placed him at the forefront of visible artistic production during the Occupation and therefore open to accusations of Collaboration, he also offered public support at the trial of Genet. In writing the screenplay to *L'Eternel retour*, in which he can be seen to share the visual aesthetic of the German Occupiers, he also presented a family which rejected notions at the centre of Pétainiste and Nazi rhetoric. The refusal to avoid controversy by insisting on the re-staging of his play *Les Parents terribles*, which having encountered criticism from the far-Right press in the pre-Occupation era would inevitably encounter the same criticism from the Collaborationist press, demonstrates a stance on Cocteau's part which sees him refuse to compromise his own work or to accommodate the expectations of the Occupiers and the Collaborationists.

When called before tribunals at the time of the Liberation he was not found guilty of Collaboration. Nevertheless, his various political positions during the Occupation led to his work and his behaviour during the period remaining open to discussion, reinterpretation and, at times, as we have seen, misinterpretation. Cocteau's position during the Occupation remains ambiguous and complex, but underlying this is a continuing defiance of the political reality, and an insistence to continue to create. This reinforces for some the idea of him as frivolous, seeing Germany as 'the latest fashion' (Brown 1969, p. 359) courting the Occupiers and, in the case of the Breker exhibition, the Collaborationists. His Journal from the period reveals, in certain instances, awareness on his part of the political implications of his behaviour; however this discussion is not extended to the public sphere in an explicit manner. In a particularly long entry in the Journal, dated 25th August 1944, he reflects on the end of the Occupation, and having been to visit Picasso, recounts what the painter had told

him: 'les choses ne changent jamais, me murmure-t-il, notre royaume n'est pas sur la terre' (Cocteau 1989, p. 536) echoing Cocteau's own position in the 'Salut à Breker'.

In his 'Adresse aux jeunes écrivains' Cocteau wrote the following instruction: 'Ne dites pas: "C'est trop difficile, je me cache" Dites: "A l'impossible je suis tenu. Je me montre"' and Cocteau's own behaviour during the Occupation can be seen in similar terms. His insistence on remaining in the public sphere is a political position in and of itself to which he remained steadfast.

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Le Testament d'Orphée ou ne me demandez pas pourquoi (Dir. Jean Cocteau. Prod. Les Editions Cinégraphiques. France 1960)

La Belle et la bête (Dir. Jean Cocteau. Prod. André Paulvé. France 1946)

Written by Jean Cocteau (screenplay / dialogue):

La Comédie du bonheur (Dir. Marcel L'Herbier. Prod. DisCina et Scalera Films. Italy 1940).

Le Lit à colonnes (Dir. Roland Tual. Prod. Synops. France 1942) Cocteau not listed in credits.

Le Baron fantôme (Dir. Serge de Poligny. Prod. Consortium du Film. France 1942)

Les Dames du bois de Boulogne (Dir. Robert Bresson. Prod. Raoul Ploquin. France 1943)

L'Eternel retour (Dir. Jean Delannoy. Prod. André Paulvé. France 1945)

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