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CINEMATIC SELF-PORTRAIT
OF AN ARTIST – JEAN
COCTEAU’S *LE TESTAMENT*
D’ORPHÉE (1960)

Je suis un mensonge qui dit toujours la vérité
(Jean Cocteau)¹

In *La chambre claire. Note sur la photographie* [*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*] Roland Barthes wrote: ‘Photography, moreover, began, historically, as an art of the Person: of identity, of civil status, of what we might call, in all senses of the term, the body’s formality’ (Barthes 1981: 79). Photography freezes moments of life on a time-line; it captures and evokes the existence that already belongs to the past. Although different in nature from autobiographical writings, it serves as an important source of knowledge of one’s life; as it does not only prove that ‘one was’, but also gives an insight into ‘how one was’. Portraits of Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), who for over four decades was one of the most frequently photographed members of Paris vanguard, demonstrate an essential aspect of the artist’s identity and authenticity. When posing for photographs, Cocteau always had the same strategy, one which became his authorial signature. This chameleon of Parisian artistic salons attempted various transformations treating his own body as a means of expression. He avoided sincerity; instead he turned the process of photo shooting into a glamorized spectacle. For example, a photograph titled *Jack-of-all-trades*, taken by Philippe Halsman in 1948, shows Jean Cocteau stylized as a character taken away from his poetic, imaginary world. It is a character who has left the world of symbols and obsessions in order to stand in front of a camera lens. His body is molded for the purpose, it is redesigned for the camera lens. Three pairs of hands grow from his torso: each hand holding a different object – a book, a pair of scissors, a pen, a cigarette etc. The static face of the artist is in striking contrast with his restless hands which appear to be wishing to leave the limitations of the frame of the photograph. The image reflects the wide spectrum of Cocteau’s artistic interests. He was associated with Parisian avant-garde movements; worked in the fields of cinema, theatre, literature and painting.²

¹ ‘I am a lie that always tells the truth’.

² Detailed biographies of Jean Cocteau were written, inter alia, by Francis Steegmuller (*Cocteau. A Biography*), James Williams (*Jean Cocteau*).

In another photograph, a surrealist portrait created by Man Ray, Cocteau is seen emerging from the dark. His face is located within an empty picture frame which he holds in his hands. Man Ray's photograph conceals a paradox: it is an image within an image, a reproduction of an already existing work of art (Cocteau's portrait), one that was created with the use of a simple trick, namely by integrating a second frame into the image. In this photograph, Cocteau is turned into a work of art and becomes an embodiment of the notorious Oscar Wilde's dictum: 'I put all my genius into my life; and only my talent into my works'.

Portraits of Jean Cocteau illuminate both the fascinating and the troublesome side of the artist's history: he treated life as a form of permanent masquerade and his identity was in a state of flux, immersed in the process of self-creation. In other words, his attitude towards life should be described in terms of posing, performing, veiling and unveiling. He achieved perfection in the art of camouflage and his hallmark was a mask. The title of Jean Touzot's book about Cocteau captures this accurately: *Jean Cocteau, Qui êtes-vous?* [*Who are You, Jean Cocteau?*]. Jean Cocteau asked himself analogous questions in his lifetime. Like other *poètes maudits* such as Arthur Rimbaud ('I is someone else') or Antonin Artaud, he was feeling an 'undefined loss'. Cocteau's melancholy could be seen as a result of his modernistic experience rooted in the disintegration of a subject; his recognition that the 'I' is indefinite, inhomogenous and non self-transparent. Traces of the artist's existential anxiety can be found in his films and literary works which often manifest an impossible desire for 'the Other'. The author of *Les Enfants terribles* [*The Holy Terrors* (1929)] noted:

Though fate gave me a human appearance
A strange stranger inhabits me
I barely know him, and he arrives in me
Suddenly, on waking from a dream
(Cocteau 2003: III)

Whilst Jean Cocteau never attempted to write a classic autobiography, one that would present events of his life in logical order, he published many volumes filled with personal reflections and fantasies on his past (for example *Le Journal d'un inconnu* [*Diary of an Unknown* (1952)] or *Le Cordon ombilical: souvenirs* (1962)). His essays can be generically classified as self-portraits. Cocteau described and juxtaposed various reminiscences not chronologically, but rather analogically (Beaujour 2009: 98–100). One of his most intimate literary works is *La Difficulté d'être* [*The Difficulty of Being*], a set of autobiographical essays, grouped by subject matter, and published for the first time in 1947. The title of the book refers to the words spoken by Bernard Fontenelle on his deathbed:

'Je sens une difficulté d'être'.³ Thus did Fontenelle, the centenarian, reply when he was dying and his doctor asked: 'M. Fontenelle, what do you feel?' Only his belonged to his last hour. Mine has been from the beginning (Cocteau 1967: 114).

³'I feel the difficulty of being'.

At the time, aged fifty eight, Cocteau still felt as much alienated as in the first years of his artistic career. Furthermore, when describing his personal experiences he never took off the mask. He intentionally distorted his memories, mixed fictional and real events to present himself in the manner in which he wanted to be perceived. This confabulatory pattern is characteristic of most of Cocteau's autobiographical writings. Describing his meeting with Charles Chaplin on board an ocean line, *The Pacific*, the artist wrote:

'Charlie Chaplin is on board. It is a staggering piece of news.' However, later on, Charlie was to say, 'The real function of a person's work is to make it possible for friends like ourselves to cut the preliminaries. We have always known each other' (Cocteau 2009: 91).

Witnesses of that encounter relate that Chaplin was not astounded by Cocteau's personality, on the contrary, he appeared tired of his importunity (Williams 2008: 161). Cocteau's tendency to 'retouch' and 'embellish' real events is symptomatic of his unceasing fear of being rejected and his longing for acceptance. What is more, it can be interpreted as an element of a calculated myth-making strategy. The French writer understood fiction not as an antinomy, but as a complement of truth; a mirror in which he was looking for his own reflection.

Jean Cocteau never tried to hide the autobiographical inspirations in his works, be it cinematic or literary. However, he did not always recount his life experiences directly. At times the autobiographical hints were subtly woven into his works; they formed a set of enigmatic symbols which were open to additional levels of interpretation, but were impossible to decode without knowledge of Cocteau's biography and artistic ideas. This was the case with *Le Sang d'un poète* [*The Blood of a Poet* (1930)], *Orphée* [*Orpheus* (1950)] and *Le Testament d'Orphée* [*The Testament of Orpheus* (1960)], three films which form the 'orphic trilogy'. Jean Cocteau tried to illustrate in them the process of developing an 'artistic' identity and to eliminate the dichotomies of real/imaginary, truth/fiction/, life/death. Using the mythological figure of Orpheus whom he saw as a poet belonging both to the world of the 'real' (day, life, consciousness) and the 'unreal' (night, death, unconsciousness), he presented a conflict between a talented individual and the social norms surrounding him. Moreover, protagonists of *Le Sang d'un poète* and *Orphée*, both of whom were narcissistic poets, traveling through the sphere of unreality, should be viewed as Cocteau's *alter-egos*. Both films are autobiographical films of a kind, films in which the author places a fictional character that shares his traits and experiences. Magdalena Podsiadło calls such films as 'based on the structure of the *I as porte-parole*' (Podsiadło 2011: 16).

Le Testament d'Orphée, the final installment of the orphic trilogy, made by Cocteau at the age of seventy one, does not fit into this category since the relation between the author and the main character of the film is, as I will try to prove, much more ambivalent. Whereas the first two films of the trilogy contain many allusions to the director's life, *Le Testament d'Orphée* which appears to be Cocteau's most intimate cinematic *oeuvre d'art*, is composed entirely of the director's dreams and phantasms. It depicts an old Poet who is taking up a metaphorical journey through the realm of imagination. It is a film which is impregnated with mythological themes. In it, the director blends

universal archetypes and symbols together with his own obsessions and desires. The reason behind operating with the mythical, peculiarly adjusted patterns is of great importance: Cocteau aimed to elevate the personal to the rank of the universal, and to establish himself as a legend (Crowson 1978: 124).

Analyzing *Le Testament d'Orphée* I am going to consider two aspects. Firstly, *Le Testament d'Orphée* may be seen as Cocteau's self-portrait; his final attempt to enclose the landscape of his psychological experiences within a cinematic image. I am using the term 'self-portrait' in accordance with the propositions made by Michel Beaujour, mentioned above. This French scholar, questioning Philippe Lejeune's analysis of Leiris autobiographical writings, argued for a distinction between a classical autobiography and a self-portrait. In so far as an autobiography aims to provide a story about 'what I have done', a self-portrait tries to illuminate 'who I am.' Self-portraits do not submit to rigors of narrative coherence and logical succession of events, instead they are metaphorical and poetic (Beaujour 2009: 107). Such is *Le Testament d'Orphée*: its value lies not in action, but in the evocation of mental states. Similarly to the avant-garde film *Le Sang d'un poète*, *Le Testament d'Orphée* lacks linear narrative, but is constructed instead from a series of 'flowing' images/visions, not linked by causal relation. Besides, as is typical in the so-called 'poetic cinema', temporal and spatial dimensions of the film are not continuous; instead, they are being manipulated so as to generate, in Cocteau's words, the effect of 'real unreality.' By choosing this kind of a formal organization of the film, Cocteau was able to portray his poetic visions and his artistic sensibility, rather than tell the story of his life. He wanted to give an external form to his imagination, an intimate sphere of being. He tried to overcome death by 'leaving behind' a visual representation of his self, an imprint of 'who he was', how he approached and understood the world surrounding him.

Another facet of *Le Testament d'Orphée* that I will take into consideration is as follows: to what extent does the film auto-thematize Cocteau's concept of art, its nature and role? What should be emphasized here is that two analyzed aspects of *Le Testament d'Orphée* are mutually related, for Cocteau's ideas were deeply rooted in his private experiences.

A brief look at the list of people who contributed to *Le Testament d'Orphée* brings out the fact that Cocteau treated his last cinematic project above all as a personal journey. The film was financed by François Truffaut, a New Wave director who considered Cocteau to be his artistic mentor and included him on the famous list of the most praised film *auteurs*. Truffaut's financial assistance enabled Cocteau to follow his artistic vision and not care about any commercial success. The team who worked on *Le Testament d'Orphée* included: Georges Auric (music), Pierre Bertrand (sound) and Claude Pinoteu (technical assistant) – all three of whom had not only worked with Cocteau previously, but had also maintained close relationships with the director. Ensuring an intimate atmosphere on the film set, Cocteau also asked his friends to act in the film. Édouard Dermit, the director's adopted son, starred as Cégeste, Maria Casarès as Princess, François Périer as Heurtebise and Jean Marais, the director's life companion, was given a minor role of Oedipe. Finally, several people connected with Cocteau either personally or artistically appeared as supporting characters. For example, Pablo Picasso, whom Cocteau admired and collaborated with during the production of

the modernistic spectacle *Parade* (1916–1917), appeared in one of the final scenes, alongside Luis-Miguel Dominguin, Charles Aznavour and Serge Lifar, all joining those lamenting the death of the Poet. Hiring friends and well known members of Parisian bohemia as actors is an 'autobiographical signal' (Podsiadło 2013: 82)⁴ that enhances the narrative ambiguity and diffuses the borders between fiction and truth. However, what is most striking, is that Cocteau, for the first time in his artistic career, decided to cast himself in the lead role of the Poet. In his previous films the main characters were played by Enrique Rivero (*Le Sang d'un poète*) and Jean Marais (*Orphée*) while the director manifested his 'presence' by providing the voice over narration (*Orphée*) or making a cameo appearance (*Le Sang d'un poète* – a masked man pointing at the camera). Cocteau's decision to play the Poet himself, 'exchanging the mask of Rivero for his own visage' (Gilson 1988: 85) is the most important signal indicating the autobiographical character of the film. Such perspective (interpreting Cocteau's final film as a form of a self-portrait) is confirmed by the director himself. At the beginning of *Le Testament d'Orphée*, he declares (voice-over narration):

My film is nothing other than a striptease show, consisting of removing my body bit by bit and revealing my soul quite naked (...). Here is the legacy of a poet to the successive groups of young people who have always supported him.

The autobiographical character of the film is also explicitly announced in one of the scenes. The scene takes place in a small orangery and the main character tries to draw a hibiscus blossom – a symbol of Poetry, which, what is essential, Cocteau did not understand as a literary device, but associated with other means of artistic expression: cinema, painting, dance, etc... While the Poet is rubbing the blackboard vigorously, white shapes start to cover its surface (reverse motion technique). Like the mythical Narcissus, the Poet is captured by his own reflection. After finishing his work, he realizes that instead of painting the hibiscus flower, he has drawn a self-portrait. If the hibiscus were to symbolize Poetry, then Poetry (and the *Testament d'Orphée* should be regarded as Poetry), in line with Cocteau's approach, is an encrypted image of its author.

However, relying on the arguments set out above, is it possible to equate the author (whose name matches that of the empirical person (Lejeune 1982: 193) outside the film) and the Poet? There is no clear cut answer to this question as the status of the protagonist remains inconclusive. Jean Cocteau constantly undermines certain rules of the 'autobiographical pact'. Even though Philippe Lejeune's influential concept of the 'autobiographical pact' is concerned mainly with literature, which is substantially different from the cinema, some of his ideas may be used to analyze *Le Testament d'Orphée*. Lejeune defines an 'autobiographical pact' as a form of agreement between the author and the potential reader, an agreement that establishes a communication

⁴ Magdalena Podsiadło, in her book on film and autobiography, describes thirteen different 'autobiographical signals' to be found in a film (Podsiadło 2013: 8–106). In my analysis I refer to five of them, namely: 'the author's presence within the film diegesis', 'members of the author's family, his close friends playing film roles', 'allusions to one's body of work, self-quotation', 'recurrent motives' and 'art as one of the themes of the film' (the last two, in case of *Le Testament d'Orphée*, are interlocked).

platform and the horizon of expectations. In short, this pact is based on the assumption that the author creates a narration about events in his life or development of his personality, while the reader presumes that he will learn about true, rather than fictional, experiences of the author and his authentic self.

Lejeune (1982) names some conditions which need to be fulfilled to stipulate that a literary text is an autobiography. The text should be:

- 1) written in prose,
- 2) treating life as a dominant subject,
- 3) operating mainly with a retrospective mode of narration and, above all,
- 4) the author, the narrator and the main character should be one and the same.

The French scholar notices that most of personal literature genres (such as a diary or an autobiographical poem) do not comply with all of these requirements and thus can not be acknowledged as autobiographies. Lejeune stated that while conditions 1, 2 and 3 may be suspended to some extent (partially fulfilled), requirement number 4 is 'a question of all or nothing' (Lejeune 1982: 192–193). What is most crucial regarding the scope of my analysis is that Lejeune extended the coverage of the 4th requirement to other genres of personal literature, including a self-portrait: 'In order for there to be an autobiography (or personal literature in general), the *author*, the *narrator* and the *protagonist* must be identical' (Lejeune 1982: 193). Adapting Lejeune's tools for film analysis, I will verify whether the autobiographical pact is respected in Cocteau's film. In case of *Le Testament d'Orphée*, a part of this condition is undoubtedly satisfied: the film narrator can be easily distinguished and identified with the main protagonist. He is the one who, in his voice over commentary, describes the actions taken by the Poet as his own. However, as to the first part of the requirement, an element of uncertainty in relation to the protagonist's identity is sustained throughout the film.

On the one hand, nowhere in the film diegesis is the Poet referred to as Jean Cocteau and in the film script the character is named simply as the Poet (Cocteau 1970: 83–144). On the other hand, there are several scenes that seem to question the identity of the main character. In one of them, while looking at a photograph showing a still frame from *Orphée*, the Poet utters the words: 'From far off, I recognized a photograph of Cégeste⁵ from the end of my film'. In another scene, the Poet throws a photograph of Cégeste into the sea waves and at once the young man emerges from the water. Surprised by this unexpected, miraculous entrance of Cégeste, the Poet says: 'I hardly recognize you. You used to be blond'. Cégeste's response is of significance: 'In the film. But this is no longer a film. This is life'. The director is playing a deceitful game with the viewers who see the main character not as the Poet, but rather as Jean Cocteau. To deal with similar films, in which a paradox is inherent to their autobiographical nature, Magdalena Podsiadło introduces a term borrowed from Ryszard Nycz: the 'sylleptic *I*'. The sylleptic *I* arises when 'the author is entering a clear autobiographical pact with the viewer' whilst simultaneously undermining it; even though the author is introducing himself into the film diegesis; he puts to doubt his affinity with the character that he is playing (Podsiadło 2011: 17–18). In *Le Testament d'Orphée*

⁵ Cégeste, played by the same actor in both films, is a young poet who after being killed at the beginning of *Orphée*, becomes one of the Princess' (personification of death) assistants.

Cocteau stars as the Poet. At the same time, due to the innuendos relating to the director's experiences and artistic achievements together with the main character's way of behaving and his appearance (he is wearing a suit similar to the one Cocteau did in his everyday life), the presupposition about the author and the protagonist being one and the same is upheld. It causes a situation of a 'schizophrenic split' (Podsiadło 2011: 17): Cocteau presents himself as the Other, instead of striving towards self-consistency; he distorts and rends himself.

Nonetheless, does the use of the 'sylleptic *I*' discredit placing *Le Testament d'Orphée* in the category of a self-portrait? I would argue that it does not; for combining truth and fiction is a calculated strategy and, as pointed out at the outset, the key to understand who Jean Cocteau was lies in his inclination to 'pose, perform, veil and unveil'. Thus, *Le Testament d'Orphée* becomes a poetic self-portrait revealing a man struggling with the question of his own identity.

The problematics of performing, changing faces and appearances may be analyzed on two levels: the connection between the author and the main protagonist, but also the Poet's 'transfigurations' during the course of the film. At the beginning of *Le Testament d'Orphée*, the protagonist, capable of traveling in time, is dressed as a 18th century aristocrat only to abandon his costume a brief moment later. In one of the final scenes, the dress up game returns – this time the Poet is wearing an academic gown, which should be interpreted as an allusion to the fact that in 1955 Cocteau joined the Académie Française and a year later he received, as *Johanness Cocteau*, the title of *Gallus Poeta* at the University of Oxford. However, for most of the film the Poet is clothed in Cocteau's favorite 'everyday' outfit, a stylish jacket decorated with a flower in the buttonhole, which is excessively polished and thus gives an impression of artificiality. The Poet takes on the pose of a dandy who, according to Charles Baudelaire, is driven by 'a burning need to create for oneself a personal originality, bounded only by the limits of proprieties' (Baudelaire 1964: 27). Indeed, the Poet follows the 'commandments' of a 'modern dandy codex': he's theatrical, affected and brilliantly elegant in changing his masks and outfits. Yet what lies at the core of dandyism, (as well as camp sensibility, which is often associated with Baudelairian philosophy and Cocteau's artistic achievements) is not posing for the sake of posing. A dandy's act is always self-reflexive, as it results from knowing (together with accepting) that the return to the 'I' is unattainable: performing relies on the loss of the self. The motif of a defragmented self, played out in *Le Testament d'Orphée*, is most evident in a scene during which the Poet, lost in Rue Obscure, is meeting face to face his dopellganger, the Other that resembles him but does not answer to his calling, a 'strange stranger' that inhabits him and cannot be absorbed by understanding. So if mending the 'I' is an impossible task and the Poet and his Other will not become a unity, is there a way to avoid plunging into nihilism? Cocteau's answer is: turn performing and creating into one's *façon d'être*.

Apart from the 'autobiographical signals' described above, two more, included in the Podsiadło's typology, may be found in the film *Le Testament d'Orphée*. Firstly, Cocteau uses self-quotations which opens the door to a metatextual level of interpretation and suggests continuity within one's body of work (Podsiadło 2013: 92). Cocteau's film starts with the recalling of the final scene of *Orphée*: Princess and Heurtebise, the

messengers of death, are punished for interfering in human affairs.⁶ They leave the powerless Cégeste, a young poet, in the ‘Zone’ – a sphere beyond the material reality. References to Cocteau’s previous film are not limited to the opening sequences of *Le Testament d’Orphée*, as Heurtebise, Cégeste and Princess will appear in subsequent scenes. A ‘Cinematic quote’ is followed by introduction of the characters originating from different Cocteau’s artistic projects⁷ into the structure of the film and the use of his chosen visual works as elements of scenography (the tapestry *Judith et Holo-pherne*). They belong to the auto-intertextual dimensions of *Cocteau’s* final film. Secondly, Cocteau employs symbols and thematic patterns (death and rebirth, poetry, unconscious) explored in his previous films. All of the protagonists of Cocteau’s orphic films are poets in search for an artistic inspiration. It is worth mentioning that during his lifetime Jean Cocteau presented and defined himself in the same manner – as a poet who enters the realm of the Night, the unconscious that he believed was structured as Jungian *pleroma*. He did not ‘create’, but ‘discovered’; his mission was to be a mediator between the material sphere and ‘unreality’ (the world which is beyond the reach of discursive reasoning). His art was always based on a motion directing the gaze inwards. Where the Poet in the film travels through some atemporal space filled with dreams and archetypal figures, he brings out the artistic themes from the reservoir of universal imagination. The Poet is, just as the other characters of his Cocteau’s cinematic works, a modern variation of Orpheus; he descends into the void of unconscious and, to quote the words from the film, ‘he brings his night out into the light’.

In a crucial scene of the trial, crucial from the point of view of Cocteau’s aesthetical concept, the Poet directly explains the nature of the artistic creation and brings forth the fundamental issues that were articulated in Cocteau’s quasi-theoretical essays and previous art works. The Poet, charged with many crimes, including innocence and repeatedly trespassing into another world, is being interrogated by Heurtebise and The Princess. Standing in front of the characters of his invention he points to the absurdity of the situation (‘I must be the victim of an extraordinary resemblance’) and calmly pleads guilty⁸. He pronounces his cocteauian ‘philosophy’ of art directly and includes film within the domain of poetry. He describes art as a ‘petrifying fountain of thought’ that ‘revives lifeless deeds’, a form of overcoming social conventions and regaining innocence. The Poet’s statement also explains the reasons for which Cocteau decided to use a cinematic medium to create his self-portrait: cinema gave him the possibility to enable his viewers enter the world of his imagination, dream the same dream as he did, the dream of death and rebirth.

The circle of death and rebirth is the last constituent of the ‘cocteauian’ definition of poetry⁹. The artist often repeated that the act of poetic creation is immersed in death, it

⁶ Cocteau modifies the myth to have the Princess fall in love with Orpheus, and Heurtebise – with Eurydice.

⁷ Besides *Orphée*, other characters (Anubis, Oedipe) are derived from Cocteau’s play *La Machine Infernale* [*The Infernal Machine*]; a variation on the Oedipus myth, which premiered in 1934.

⁸ In this sense, *Le Testament d’Orphée* also reenacts a common scenario in which an author is meeting and interacting with the fictional characters that he has created.

⁹ The cycle of birth and rebirth in Cocteau’s films is comprehensively characterized in Arthur Evans monograph: *Jean Cocteau and His Films of Orphic Identity*.

is a process of 'expiration' of vital forces. Therefore, just like the protagonist of *Le Sang d'un poète*, the Poet in *Le Testament d'Orphée* must die several times in order to be reborn (the technical means of expression and the predilection to employ the reverse motion are also used to highlight this theme). Thus in one of the initial scenes the Poet is shot only a moment after he gets up from the ground (reverse motion) and then he enters the world of imagination. At the end of the film, in an ancient temple, the mythological goddess Minerva, disgusted with the Poet's offering, throws a mortal spear towards the character. The death of the Poet is mourned by the Gypsies and the artists all gathered around his body. The Poet's eye lids are covered by an image of wide open eyes designating an 'internal' gaze, a visual motif previously employed by Cocteau in *Le Sang d'un poète* and *Orphée*. To the sound of fanfares, the Poet suddenly rises from the dead (reverse motion). He leaves the temple and continues his travel through the oneiric space. In addition, there are symbols used in the film which refer to death and rebirth. The first of them is fire (the scene in the Gypsy camp) which is undergoing various transformations, uniting opposing elements of death and creation; the fire represents expiration and resurrection, metamorphosis and renewal (Bachelard 1975: 27–59). The second one is water, due to which the 'death saves its status of a journey' (Bachelard 1975: 146). In *Le Testament d'Orphée* the Poet, accompanied by Cégeste, gets on board the yacht 'Orpheus II' to depart, using a metaphor, to the other side of the Styx in the guise of mythological heroes.

All in all, *Le Testament d'Orphée* may be interpreted as a film depicting metaphorical journey of the Poet towards his death, a journey marked by his meetings with mythological figures (Anubis, Sphinx, Oedipe), as well as characters originating from Cocteau's previous works. Foreseeing his own death (Jean Cocteau passed only three years after realization of *Le Testament d'Orphée*), the director ends his film in a significant way. The Poet, awakened from the dream of death, returns to the world of the real. He is walking on the street and is stopped by the police. The officers, busy attending to their duties, do not notice Cégeste's abrupt appearance. On hearing Cégeste's words: 'After all, the Earth is not your home' the Poet disappears with his companion. Thus, the circle of creation, death and rebirth is completed. The director often emphasized that the Poet must become 'invisible' to grant his work 'visibility' i.e. the acclaim resulting from the appreciation of his *oeuvre*, and not of his public persona (Evans 1977: 56–59). As Jean Cocteau wrote: 'One must be a living man and a posthumous artist' (Cocteau 1995: 37).

Le Testament d'Orphée functions as a summary of its director's artistic achievements as well as the manifesto of his beliefs on the nature of art and most of all, on the destiny of a poet. Directing *Le Testament d'Orphée* Jean Cocteau, confronted with the perspective of his own finiteness, wants, to paraphrase Georges Gusdorf, to 'confirm himself above death'. He engages the spectators of his last cinematic self-portrait so that they 'become witnesses of what is unique in his existence' (Gusdorf 2009: 20–21). A driving force, as Gusdorf points out, of an autobiographical gesture is double-pointed: an author may be searching for himself, for what constitutes him as an independent, exceptional human being, but equally he may be aiming to leave a legacy for the generations to come. Both of these goals should be linked to Cocteau's cinematic testimony. One may argue that his self-portrait is scattered and full of internal contradictions. Yet

so was Jean Cocteau himself for ‘even at home [he] would hide behind his constructed self-image as the Poet’ (Williams 2008: 92). The truth and the lies are merging and creating a puzzling amalgam, one which as the director himself would have wished, would remain open to an endless interpretations.

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Résumé

Autoportrait filmique d’un artiste – *Le Testament d’Orphée* (1960) de Jean Cocteau

Le but de l’article est d’analyser le film *Le Testament d’Orphée* (1960) de Jean Cocteau par rapport à sa dimension autobiographique. Magdalena Jałocha, en s’appuyant sur les conceptualisations de la pratique autobiographique, proposées par Philippe Lejeune, Michel Beaujour et Magdalena Podsiadło, repère des « signaux autobiographiques » que Cocteau a utilisés dans son film. L’auteure

montre des motifs et des pistes thématiques qui se répètent dans le travail et dans des dimensions auto-textuelles de l'œuvre cinématographique de ce metteur en scène. Magdalena Jałocha constate que ledit film où Cocteau-même joue le rôle du Poète (incarnation moderne d'Orphée), devrait être compris comme incarnation finale de ses concepts existentiels et esthétiques, comme autoportrait filmique de l'artiste et comme reflet de son imagination.

Key words: Jean Cocteau, autoportrait, autobiographie, philosophie de l'art, cinéma.

Streszczenie

Filmowy autoportret artysty – *Testament Orfeusza* (1960) Jeana Cocteau

Celem artykułu jest analiza filmu Jeana Cocteau pod tytułem *Testament Orfeusza* (1960), w kontekście pojawiających się w filmie wątków autobiograficznych. W swoim eseju, opierając się na ustaleniach Philippe'a Lejeune'a, Michela Beaujoura oraz Magdaleny Podsiadło, Autorka identyfikuje sygnały autobiograficzne wykorzystane przez Cocteau w trzeciej części tzw. trylogii orfickiej. Jałocha charakteryzuje motywy zaczerpnięte z wcześniejszych dzieł reżysera, podkreślając autointertekstualny wymiar jego ostatniego filmu. Wskazuje, że film Jeana Cocteau – w którym reżyser wciela się w rolę Poety, modernistycznego Orfeusza – stanowi swoistą formę manifestacji jego poglądów estetycznych; filmowy autoportret artysty oraz jego poetyckiej wyobraźni.

Słowa kluczowe: Jean Cocteau, autoportret, autobiografia, filozofia sztuki, kino.