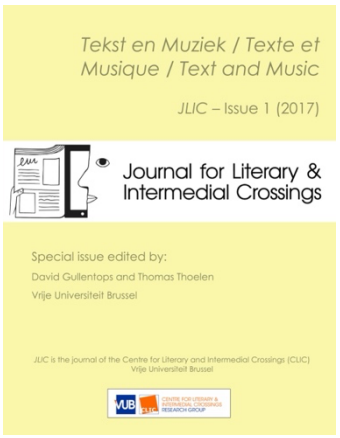

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Caroline Van Nerom – Vrije Universiteit Brussel

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Orphée Rises Again

A Comparative Analysis of *Orphée* (Cocteau 1950; Glass 1993) Based on Settings and Characters

Carolien VAN NEROM

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Philip Glass, along with La Monte Young, Terry Riley and Steve Reich, is known as one of the founders of American minimalist music. In the wake of the Second Viennese School and its efforts to de-hierarchize harmonic development in music, minimalist composers additionally destabilized rhythmic and melodic development by using short motifs and repetition in both harmony, melody and rhythm. As such, the inherent dialectic of classical Western music (e.g. harmonic tension and resolution) remains unresolved. As Belgian minimalist and musicologist Wim Mertens (1980) also notes, American minimalism consciously lacks a musical goal (e.g. a climax or a resolution), which gives listeners the impression of timelessness and a certain lack of content. Consequently, American minimalists wrote music that is necessarily non-narrative. As such, the music itself rather than, for example, its development, its form, or its narrative, becomes the centre of attention.

Minimalist opera, then, is a very specific genre that breaks with operatic tradition, which has been narrative from its beginnings. Even though theorists, such as Kerman (1988) and Lindenberger (1985), might disagree on whether opera as a genre is more or less dramatic than novelistic, it is agreed that opera until the 20th century is narrative in essence. Glass's portrait trilogy, consisting of his first operas *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), *Satyagraha* (1980) and *Akhnaten* (1984), break the narrative operatic tradition and are therefore considered minimalist operas by Ashby (2005). Strikingly, these works feature little text and little to no dialogues. *Einstein on the Beach*, for example, is largely built up out of

solfège syllables and numbers, originally meant to assist the singers to memorize their vocal parts. Even if the libretto features instances of language, it is usually not meant to be understood, such as in *Satyagraha*'s and *Akhnaten's* librettos, which include texts from original sources, e.g. in Sanskrit, Biblical Hebrew and Akkadian (Glass 2015). Glass's early operas are representations of the lives of world-changers, namely Einstein, Ghandi and pharaoh Akhenaten. Although the librettos to these operas are also connected to source texts, the later Cocteau trilogy, for example, stays truer, and is therefore more clearly linked, to its source texts. Moreover, Cocteau's works are more narrative than the texts that inspired the portrait trilogy. Ultimately, these differences in source material lead to a larger amount of narrative and textual signs that inform the adaptation into opera. Thus, though they are still influenced by his typically minimalist style, Glass's later operas follow a clearer narrative sequence.

The subject of this article, is Glass's opera *Orphée* (2009/1993), which is based on Jean Cocteau's eponymous film (2008/1950). The latter is part of an Orphic trilogy – three films[1] in which the antique myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is re-imagined. Cocteau's *Orphée* is set in the 1940s and introduces additional characters to the original *Orpheus* myth, such as La Princesse, the personification of Death, and Heurtebise, a guardian angel who also serves as Death's chauffeur and assistant. The most significant difference between the *Orpheus* myth and the Cocteau and Glass re-imaginings is that Orphée and Eurydice are both restored to life after their journey through hell. Rather than Orphée being the martyr, Death sacrifices her life and integrity for Orphée's genius as she faces the consequences of taking matters of life and death into her own hands. Another addition, then, is a trial where La Princesse and Heurtebise are questioned by their superiors. After they are accused of meddling by the jurors, the open ending suggests both might be executed, while Orphée and Eurydice

[1] In chronological order, these films are: *Le Sang d'un Poète* (1930), *Orphée* (1950), and *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960).

continue to live their lives, seemingly oblivious to the events that happened. The libretto for Glass's opera coincides with the film script, save for minor changes and few omissions. On average, Glass's *Orphée* still takes twenty minutes longer than Cocteau's film. Indeed, the singing voice needs more time than the speaking voice (Glass 2003; Kerman).

The question that arises, then, is whether a lack of text helps to serve the undialectic goal that is inherent to minimalist music. Specifically, how can one still speak of minimalist opera if the libretto has a narrative structure and is furthermore embedded in an intertextual relationship? As Ashby mentions, Glass's later works move more to the 19th-century operatic tradition, thus they are more narrative and mythical than his early portrait trilogy. This also holds true for *Orphée* since musical atmosphere is created as befits the narrative, and is not separated from it. For example, ominous music (in a minor key) can be heard in the moments leading up to Eurydice's death and a major key is used for the broad musical lines in the romantic scene between La Princesse and Orphée. Still, minimalist elements heavily mark Glass's musical style and these were also implemented in *Orphée* even though it was produced in 1993 (following the death of Glass's third wife Candy Jernigan) and is considered a later work. La Princesse's soprano vocal lines, for example, are more heavily influenced by Western harmonic regulations than in Glass's earlier works. However, when one tries to sing the lyrical lines of *Orphée*, it becomes clear that this is not as easy as it would be. Consider as a counter-example Bizet's famous 'singable' aria "Habanera" in *Carmen* (1875). Thus, even though Ashby is correct in assessing that Glass's later work leans more towards early operatic tradition than his later work, the minimalist movement continues to guide Glass's opera works. As Kirk (2005) says about American opera: "Whether William Henry Fry or Walter Damrosch in the nineteenth century, or Virgil Thomson, George Gershwin, Philip Glass or Carlisle Floyd in the twentieth, each composer – each opera – is distinctive. And each offers an element of surprise along the path to discovery that lies at the

heart of American opera" (197). By analyzing how minimalist and other musical features shape the narrative nature of the libretto and the adaptation of filmic features, I show that Philip Glass's *Orphée* is a fusion of both minimalist and operatic traditions at once. In other words, I explore how minimalist techniques, that were originally part of a non-narrative musical ideology, are still part of Glass's musical style, even though *Orphée* is a narrative opera. The narrative features under consideration in this comparative analysis are settings, characters and narrator strategies.

Musical Settings

Music in opera has been discussed in terms of its narratorial capacities, e.g. as a commentator on the action on stage (Halliwell 1999), but its function of shaping the setting is rarely the subject of analysis. Still, the overture, much like the opening scenes to a movie, has an introductory and orienting purpose to it.

Opening Scene

Spatial and temporal settings of operas are usually left vague, which has the effect of "[raising] actions to a mythical level" (Lindenberger 51). Going from the film medium to the opera medium, one of the adaptations that takes place is going from an almost over-specified, direct setting to a theatrical, less mobile setting. Moreover, the attention given to the music by either audience is different. Because the film medium is more detailed, music is equally meaningful in the cluster of signs that is film, whereas opera has less specific signs. Therefore, the music is more of an attention-grabber in opera than it is in film. Glass's music is also a marker of spatial setting, for example. Although Cocteau's imagery is taken as a starting point, Glass's music at times deviates from the film settings. For example, Cocteau's movie opens in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, one of Paris's *quartiers* known in the 1940s for its "Künstlermilieu" (Cestier 2013, 150), where Cégeste, a young poet flanked by La Princesse

and Heurtebise, meets Orphée, the established poet. Whereas the film features a man singing, accompanied by a guitar during what seems to be a French 'chanson,' Glass opts for a repetitive ragtime rhythm in strings and piano. Therefore, a less specific picture of where the story takes place, is set. Indeed, the libretto is in French, but paradoxically, the ragtime influence gives an American feeling to the opera. Consequently, the myth of Orphée as a general statement about the arts has a broader scope in the Glass opera than in the Cocteau film. However, scenes taking place in the underworld are less specific in Cocteau's re-imaging of the *Orpheus* myth. The universal quality of the original myth is thus brought to the fore in both film and opera. Significant example scenes in that regard are the journeys to hell and the trial that takes place in the underworld.

Journey to Hell

An important feature of both opera and film is Orphée's conscious journey to hell, which takes place two times. Glass follows Cocteau to some extent, but adds a scene, makes changes to the sequence of scenes as well as shifts focus in content matter. The return to the mortal world, for one, features only once in the film, whereas it can be heard twice in the opera. Schematically, these scenes can be presented as follows:

Hell Journey	***Orphée* (Cocteau film)**		***Orphée* (Glass opera)**
1. Orphée goes willingly	Contradiction timelessness vs. moving & passing of time:	=	Act II Scene I: Similar focus on time
2. Back to mortal world	/	*	Act II Scene IV: the music is similar to Scene I
3. Orphée dies in order to return to hell	Swift journey, suggesting Orphée purposefully dies in	≠	Act II Scene VII: short musical interlude that links

	order for him to return to La Princesse's company		to Scene VIII. Minor key, suggestive of the end (Orphée and La Princesse do not end up together)
4. Back to mortal world	Images of first hell journey are shown in rewind	*	Act II Scene IX: Focus on La Princesse's sacrifice rather than on reversing time.
* Fourth hell scene in film is similar to Act II Scene IV in opera in both subject matter and actions of characters.			

Table 1 *Hell Journeys in Cocteau versus Glass - Scenes discussed highlighted in orange and blue*

The movie setting of the initial hell journey (highlighted in orange in Table 1) is a road along ruins and rubble: "[la zone] est faite des souvenirs des hommes et des ruines de leurs habitudes" (Glass Act II, 4). To stress the setting, these last words are focal points in Heurtebise's musical line of Act II Scene I since a repetition of the same minor interval occurs. Significantly, filmic Heurtebise floats along in a stagnant pose with a headwind clearly shifting his hair, while Orphée has to walk himself and does not feel the wind. The opposition is clear: Heurtebise is a (newly-formed) angel who roams both the mortal world and the underworld (Cestier 2013; Gullentops and Van Sevenant 2012), whilst Orphée, a mortal, is journeying to hell voluntarily[2]. Heurtebise personifies a timelessness because of his floating, while Orphée is clearly still moving in space, but not in time. This is an example of Cocteau's film motif of time, which is also expressed in, for example, a constant focus on the clock striking 6 o'clock. A similar reference to the theme of time is audible in Glass's music

[2] These two types of underworld-dwellers are supplemented by another type in the guise of the *vitrier*, who crosses Heurtebise and Orphée. He represents people who are dead, but fail to acknowledge their death (see Cestier 2013). As such, Cocteau evokes the unresolvable opposition of life and death both thematically and spatially.

accompanying the first hell journey. The dry ticks in percussion give the feeling of the second hand of a clock, while the short notes of the repetitive motif in the bassoon, interspersed over continuous movement in strings, move the action forward. Still, the action proves to be ever circular rather than moving forwards, which is underscored by the form of this scene:

A – [BABABA] – [CACACA] – [BABABA] – A

This circular structure is reminiscent of the mortality theme present in both Cocteau and Glass's *Orphée*. However, Glass ends the scene with a variation on theme A, here called A':

A – [BABABA] – [CACACA] – [BABABA] – A – **[BA'BA'BA']**

On the one hand, theme A consists of one group of strings repeating the same notes, while the other group simultaneously plays a descending scale of four double notes. This movement underscores the lowering feeling of the implied action on stage: Heurtebise and Orphée's descent. On the other hand, theme A' is shorter, with only five notes rather than eight, and the musical line of the strings does not descend, but stays on the same note. Again, a sense of timelessness and stagnation is achieved through musical merit, whereas the movie uses other, filmic techniques, including two separate shots of the unmoving Heurtebise and the moving Orphée set together in one merged frame. Timelessness might just be what drew the minimalist Glass towards Cocteau's *Orphée*, which exemplifies the universal character of the *Orpheus* myth by revisiting it.

Two of the four hell journeys go in the opposite direction, namely towards the world of mortality. Cocteau only shows the last one (highlighted in blue in Table 1), where the

complete action seems to be reversed, positioning Orphée and Eurydice to their initial point in the movie span. However, Glass features both journeys back to the mortal world. In fact, the music for Scenes I and IV are very similar, giving the audience a reminder of what the road to hell was like the first time. Still, in Scene IV, the last return journey, the musical range is expanded and the melodies move more swiftly. Thus, Glass suggests that the road to hell is one towards timelessness and stasis, while the reverse brings Orphée back to the passing of time and mortality. Cocteau suggests the same with the first and fourth hell journey rather than with the first and second (see the scenes highlighted in blue in Table 1). In the film, going back to the mortal world is represented by playing the first hell journey reel in rewind. Contrarily, Glass focuses on La Princesse's sacrifice to send Orphée back to continue his poetic career in the second journey back. Musically speaking, the mood is completely different in the Scene I, compared to Scene IX. A languid melody and La Princesse's long-stretched singing lines are a staggering contrast to the first journey.

The Trial

Similarly, the operatic setting for the trial scene, where La Princesse and Heurtebise are questioned with regard to their meddling with Eurydice's death, takes its inspiration from Cocteau's film, but inevitably has different connotations. Partially, this is due to musical elements, even though the stage settings (see Figure 1 of the Portland Opera production, 2009) are a simulation of the original movie: the jurors sit at a table with stoic faces, while witnesses and the accused are separately interrogated. In order of appearance, the following characters pass by the juror's table: Cégeste, La Princesse, Heurtebise and Orphée, and Eurydice.

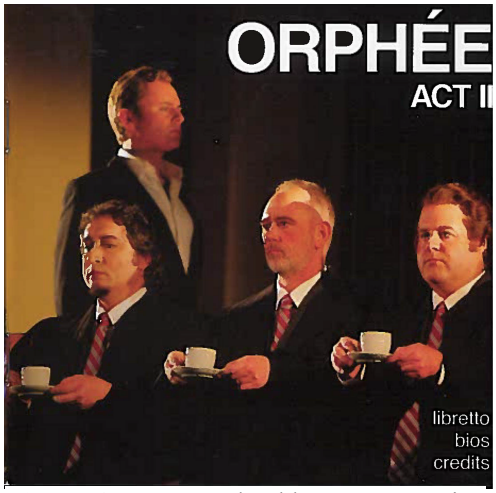

Figure 1 Image on booklet accompanying the 2009 recording of *Orphée* (Glass) performance by the Portland Opera under General Direction of Christopher Mattaliano. Photo: Cory Weaver/Portland

The official nature of this inquiry is reinforced musically in Act II Scene II by means of a motif that signals the arrival of each new person to be questioned. This particular musical theme consists of the double basses alternated by the flute together with melodic percussion. The overall movement lowers sequentially, but the individual sequence of the flute and melodic percussion rises. The motif is played twice, followed by the musical entrance of the juror. Although the entrance theme can be heard three time, it is not introduced a fourth time for Eurydice. It seems as though her testimony is not of such importance as to grant her an entrance theme. In general, Eurydice asks a lot of banal questions, has a domestic rather than an inquisitive nature, and she seems to have no clue of the underworld and Heurtebise's feelings for her. When the judge asks her whether "[Heurtebise a] prononcé des paroles coupables" in the absence of her husband, she answers: "Coupable?... mais, non… c'est Heurtebise" (Glass Act II, 9). As such, Eurydice is characterized by innocence and ignorance, resulting in a less expressive musical presence than e.g. La Princesse. As will become clear in the following section, La Princesse far outshines Eurydice in the plot of both opera and film.

Characters

La Princesse

La Princesse is the leading lady of this opera – something that is also true for Cocteau's film. Several reviewers (e.g. Alloin; French 2004; Rothstein 1993) ascribe La Princesse's dominant presence to the enchanting acting skills of María Casares, but framing, dialogue lines, light effects, and costumes[3] also make this character stand out. Given that she has the most lines in the movie, compared to other characters, La Princesse also sings the most in the opera. However, the opera underscores La Princesse's importance not only in quantity, but

[3] Because of lighting techniques, La Princesse's dress appears as if it is white, then black again in certain scenes. As a consequence, she physically embodies the coexistence of opposites that is so typical to Cocteau's art (see Gullentops and Van Sevenant 2012).

also in quality. Musically speaking, her musical lines are very expressive, whereas other characters sing in melodies that are rather limited in both range and rhythm. As Liang (2016) already noted, La Princesse sings most of the arioso segments. Additionally, her lines are sometimes set together with the orchestral movements, while other characters generally sing on top of the orchestra instead of with the orchestra. For example, when Eurydice dies, La Princesse takes the lead in the process of bringing her down to the underworld in both movie and opera. Both Cégeste and Heurtebise help her, but are filmed on a lower level, either sitting or standing on the staircase towards the lower floor. In the opera, the range of La Princesse's lines in Act I Scene IX far exceeds those of Cégeste and Heurtebise. This becomes especially clear when Heurtebise tries to defy La Princesse's orders and hints at her forbidden love for Orphée. Her reaction of "Quoi?" is a high, long note that expresses her anger at his subordinance. Additionally, she has a rather unusual musical accent at the end of the line "Je vous ordonne de vous taire!" (Glass Act I, 30, emphasis added). In short, both in musical range and rhythm, La Princesse's voicing is most expressive compared to the other characters.

In the film, Cocteau the narrator is the one who speaks the first words (see also section 3), while La Princesse sings the first line of Glass's opera. As in the movie, La Princesse utters the last words of the opera as well: "Adieu Cégeste" (Glass Act II, 28). The movie ends quite openly, with the proceedings of Heurtebise and La Princesse's punishment (after their digressions in the mortal world) are left to the imagination of the audience. Two officials, in police-like attire, take both of them away to face their prosecutors. The opera sees La Princesse ending on a dissonant chord, which makes for a similar open ending. However, the opera leaves more room for the audience because it contains less markers of narrative time. Although the spatial setting (ruins) and clothing (nondescript) in the movie are not markers of a specific temporal setting, the fact that it is in black and white still has a pre-

60s effect on the audience's perception of narrative time. In contrast, an opera can be viewed and listened to in many ways, e.g. live or recorded. Moreover, taking only the audio recording into consideration, the last dissonant chords of La Princesse and the orchestra leave the narrative time undecided and give the audience a sense of timelessness. As Glass already said about his *Einstein on the Beach*, "[o]ne of the main things about my music is that it doesn't exist in colloquial time. And one of the first things that people perceive in my music is extended time, or loss of time, or no sense of time whatever" (Glass in Roddy 1997, 172). Indeed, leaving the opera on a dissonant rather than on the resolution of a given tonality, extends or dilutes narrative time beyond the boundaries of the opera itself.

Lastly, La Princesse's narrative weight is heightened because she has her own musical motif that is often used to signal her approaching presence, though only in the first act of the opera. This motif is a shortened reference to Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Eurydice*, where the melody of the 1774 "Dance of the Blessed Spirit"[4] in Act II is played by the solo flute:

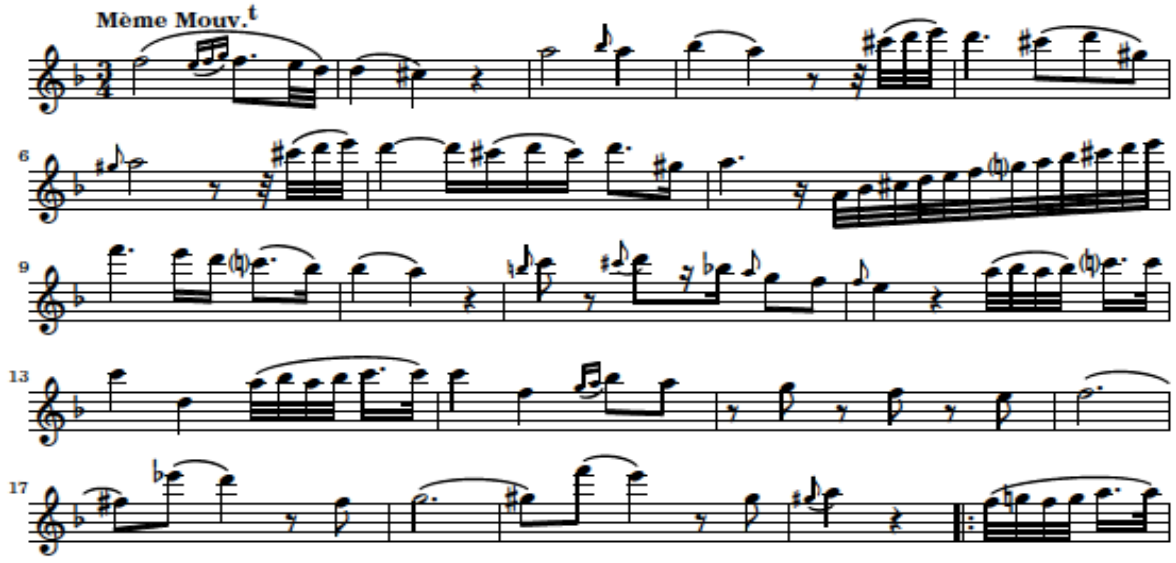

Figure 2 Flute 1 part of "Danse des Champs Elysées" (Act II of *Orfeo ed Eurydice*, Wq.30 - Christoph Willibald Gluck, ed. Rutger Hofman (2012))

[4] The "Dance of the Blessed Spirits" is the four-movement opening to Act II Scene II from 1774 onwards. In the 1762 version of *Orfeo ed Eurydice*, Gluck opened the scene with a ballet instead.

Paradoxically, Gluck's flute solo is a reference to Elysium, whereas Glass's use of the shortened and altered version (also in the flute) refers to La Princesse, the incarnation of Death. Indeed, Cocteau's *Orphée*, as well as Glass's opera is more negative in atmosphere and tone than Gluck's *Orfeo ed Eurydice* even though the survival of Eurydice constitutes an important difference with the Greek *Orpheus* myth in all three works (Gluck, Cocteau and Glass). Glass's "Princesse motif," as I would call it, is not only a reference to Gluck, but also to Cocteau's film. In fact, Cocteau likewise refers to Gluck during the first love dialogue between La Princesse and Orphée (Cestier 2013; Liang 2016). The radio is playing Gluck's flute solo, but the track is abruptly stopped by Orphée, who changes the station to a broadcast of Cégeste's words that will become his main source of poetic inspiration. The referential framework of Glass's opera can be schematized as follows:

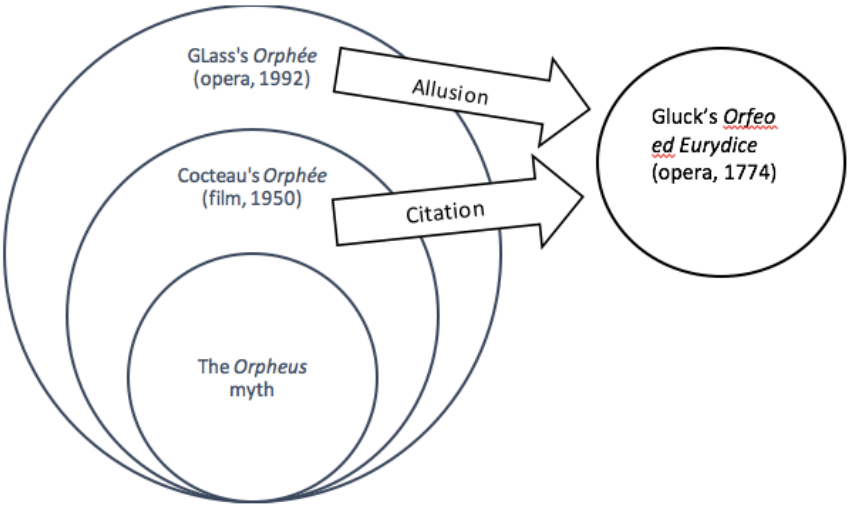

Figure 3 Referential framework of both Cocteau's and Glass's *Orphée* (based on Liang 2016)

As is clear from the scheme (Figure 3), Cocteau's reference to Gluck is formally different from Glass's. Cocteau literally refers to the original Gluck theme (citation) via a radio emission featured in the film, whereas Glass alters the theme (allusion) to fit La Princesse's softer side. However, with regard to content, Cocteau and Glass both oppose Gluck's positive

version of the Greek myth. Instead of a final *dénouement*, they posit an unresolvable coexistence of opposites (e.g. life and death, inspiration and stagnation). Cocteau does this by juxtaposing Orpheus and La Princesse's forbidden love with the audio of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Eurydice* flute motif. As such, Cocteau foreshadows the bitter film ending, namely "dass das glückliche Ende nur ein Schein ist und im Grunde in eine "umgekehrte Umkehrung" der Gluck'schen Oper mündet" (Cestier 2013, 165). Similarly, Glass's "Princesse motif" is soft and slow, highlighting La Princesse's love for Orphée rather than her serious role as the guide to the underworld and the personification of Death. It is not so surprising, then, that Glass chose the seemingly paradoxical theme of Gluck's Elysium for his Princesse. That the "Princesse motif" is only present in the first act should also warn the audience that a happy ending à la Gluck is not what lies in store for Glass's characters.

Orphée & Heurtebise

Orphée is not the inspired artist the audience must know from the Greek myth, where Orpheus's artistry convinces Hades and Persephone to allow him into the underworld. In Cocteau's film, he is in search of inspiration, but his quest for it seems clouded by his obsession with the success of Cégeste, a younger poet. The opening scene shows an older poet giving Orphée a new collection of poetry, but it seems to be completely empty: "Je ne vois que des pages blanches" (Glass Act I, 7). The older poet is here referring to Dadaism and Nihilism – art movements also at large during Cocteau's own active years. Orphée's unwillingness to accept new influences is clearer in the movie, as the actual "[revue qui] s'appelle: 'nudisme'" is clearly spotlighted by the camera movements (Ibid.). Orphée's reaction ("Mais c'est ridicule") is also present in the opera, but it can easily go by without the audience's attention (Ibid.). Still, there is a hint at Orphée's stagnant artistic position in the following lines: "ORPHEE: Le public m'aime. POET: Il est bien le seul" (Ibid.). Both lines are delivered on the same note, which underscores Orphée's reluctance to move forwards,

towards new poetic influences, especially since the orchestra's movements also change from a slow to a quicker metric pace immediately after this exchange.

Given his waning popularity, Orphée retreats from social contact as well as from Eurydice's company. Instead, he seeks refuge in La Princesse's influential radio. Unlike in Glass's opera, the radio in Cocteau's film is in fact a car radio. Although the lack of a car radio in the opera was probably a technical decision (a car is a rather large object to manoeuvre on an opera stage), it is a significant change as it results in the omission of a motif that captures Heurtebise's character. The car radio is part of Heurtebise's car, a Rolls Royce that has the angel-like bonnet ornament in the front. The Spirit of Ecstasy, as she is called, is a recognisable, winged motif that makes it clear that Heurtebise is a guardian angel of sorts. Indeed, Orphée is clearly dependent upon Heurtebise, a fact made obvious by Orphée's constant need of a chauffeur in the film. Still, the opera conveys the same relationship of dependency between Orphée and Heurtebise by making the latter the more expressive, and more varied singer of the two. As the range of a tenor goes, Heurtebise exhibits more high notes than Orphée does.

The lack of a car in the opera has another consequence for the scene in which Eurydice and Aglaonice, her best friend, are looking for Orphée, who has gone out secretly to find La Princesse in town. Le Commissaire, who is helping both women with their quest, says the following: "C'est inimaginable! Ni à l'Hôtel Fabius, ni à l'Hôtel des Deux Mondes" (Glass Act I, 13). In the film, this scene takes up more time as Le Commissaire is shown to ring yet another hotel, namely l'Hôtel des Thermes. He asks the hotel clerk (an uncredited cameo appearance of film director Jean-Pierre Melville) about the Rolls Royce as well. Because the car is missing from the opera, this particular hotel did not find its way into the opera either. However, 'Thermes' and 'Fabius' are semiotic snippets that link Cocteau's film to the *Orpheus* myth because both are reminiscent of antiquity. 'Thermes' reminds viewers of

the thermae, Roman facilities for bathing, and Fabius is clearly a Latin name, given its declination. Additionally, 'les Deux Mondes' is a reference to Cocteau's parallel setting both on earth and in hell. The non-inclusion of 'Thermes' is just one example of a difference that is actually inherent to the medium specificity of film on the one hand and opera on the other hand. As Hutcheon (2006) has it, going from one medium to another, is a "transcoding into a different set of conventions" (33). As mentioned before in the introduction, opera is less specific than film because of e.g. length confinements, space (stage vs. filmic location), or manoeuvrability of tools (for example camera vs. audience's own eyes). Although this particular referential snippet might go unnoticed by the film audience, they are even less inclined to find it in the opera, which is semiotically less specific, and so less guiding to the audience. In fact, Cocteau goes very far as to guiding his audience by using his own voice as the narrator voice-over to certain scenes, while Glass does not incorporate those intrusions.

Narrator

Cocteau acts as narrator in the beginning of the film as well as during other scenes in the film, mostly to explain what is being shown. For example, the link with the Greek *Orpheus* myth is solidly established in Cocteau's introductory words. As has become clear, the opera's reference to the original myth is less explicit than the film's (see also Figure 3). By not using a narrator or speaker to introduce the work of art, the opera audience is left more at liberty to interpret the overall theme of art and the artist. After introducing the plot of the Orpheus myth, Cocteau says: "Où se passe notre histoire? Et à quelle époque? C'est le privilège des légendes, d'être sans âge, comme il vous plaira." He makes a clear statement that legends, and narratives in general, can be transposed to any temporal or spatial setting. Given that the film is almost overly defined and leaves little to the imagination, this statement is not unnecessary. Contrariwise, opera as a medium is less defined on a semiotic level. Indeed,

taking only music and text into consideration, audiences have a tendency to pay more attention to the music, which leads textual impulses to be less influential on the overall interpretation of the opera (Conrad 1977). Therefore, Glass's operatic adaptation of Cocteau's film already leads to a generalisation of the narrative because of the medium change. In short, the omission of the narrator's introductory words to the film was, in my opinion, a deliberate decision of Glass's, also taking into consideration that for other operas, Glass did make use of a narrator (e.g. *Les Enfants Terribles* (1996), or *In the Penal Colony* (2000)).

One of the other instances where Cocteau serves as a narrator is during the scene where La Princesse visits Orphée during the night: "Et cette première nuit, la mort d'Orphée vint dans sa chambre le voir dormir" (Cocteau). This voice-over helps to focus on La Princesse's budding feelings for Orphée. In the opera, no narrator is used, but the "Princesse motif" can be heard. The music, then, is used as a narrative strategy in this instance, namely to herald the coming on stage of a particular character. However, as stated before in section 2.1, La Princesse is the only character with such a motif. For example, during another scene, Cocteau says the following: "Eurydice ne retrouvait pas Orphée. Elle ne pouvait pas supporter ce retour. Elle voulait le délivrer d'elle et il n'y avait qu'un seul moyen." In this particular instance, Eurydice's thoughts on Orphée not being able to look at her are made clear. The narrator's words are followed by her waking up Orphée in an attempt at what must be considered suicide. The narrator continues to tell the audience that her attempt is bridled because "une courte interruption du courant" wakes up Orphée before he can look at her (Cocteau). Rather than have this instance narrativized through music, the complete interaction is left out of the opera. Thus, the role of Eurydice is even more diminished in the opera, in favour of La Princesse (see also section 2.1).

Conclusion

Even though Glass's opera *Orphée* is clearly indebted to Cocteau's script and eponymous film, the medium change from film to opera has significant consequences for the way that the narrative is semiotically transmitted. For one, film is a more defined and specific medium than opera, which leads to a renewed mythification of Cocteau's *Orphée*. For example, the setting of the opening scene is less specific in the opera than in the film. Still, Glass makes an effort to simulate Cocteau settings by using a medium specific to opera, namely music. Minimalist, repetitive motifs are used to highlight the setting on stage, for example with descending sequences in woods or brass during the descent into hell. The motif of time that is so significant in the film is also something that Glass managed to capture musically, in e.g. percussion movements.

Compared to the Orpheus myth, both Glass and Cocteau focus on the personification of Tanathos, La Princesse, rather than on Eurydice, arguably the personification of Eros. In fact, La Princesse is a rather complex character that takes on features of both drives. With regard to characters, then, it is clear that the layered character of La Princesse takes a lead role in both art works. In quantity, she has the most prominent part in both productions. For example, she sings or delivers the most text. In quality too, the operatic Princesse outshines the other characters since her vocal lines are most expressive in voicing. She is the only character with a proper motif, which in itself is a reference to Gluck's *Orfeo ed Eurydice* – a reference that is also present in Cocteau, though not as elaborately. With regard to Heurtebise, the guardian angel, the opera is considered here as less specific on a semiotic level. The omission of his Rolls Royce in the opera makes him less defined as an angel and guide and more open to interpretation by the audience. Still, Heurtebise is musically more expressive in range than Orphée, which can be considered as a musical rendering of Heurtebise and Orphée's relationship as one of dependence rather than equality. Orphée

himself is portrayed as a poet struggling with his own new and unvalued poetic trends. His steadfast position in a changing world is often portrayed musically by alternating or contrasting stagnant and pulsating rhythms and melodic lines.

In general, then, Glass's *Orphée* must be considered as an adaptation of a narrative that is still minimalist in its musical essence. Although this might seem like a paradox, given the anti-narrative goal of the minimalist ideal, it is this dichotomy that characterises Glass's later operas. Exemplary of minimalist features within the narrative, is the adaptation of Cocteau's narrator. Glass often uses repetitive, minimalist motifs to transmit a similar message to what, in the film, is mediated via the Cocteau-narrator. In short, Glass's distinct style in his adaptation of *Orphée* is a mixture of minimalist techniques in an essentially narrative operatic tradition.

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