

Star dialogue: Henri Jeanson, Louis Jouvet and the *mise en scène* and *mise en corps* of film dialogue

Henri Jeanson, one of the foremost writers for the classic French cinema who wrote for over 80 films between 1933 and 1970, is usually cited alongside Jacques Prévert and Michel Audiard as an example of what Michel Chion has referred to as the “starification” of certain exceptional dialogue writers.¹ This fame is largely attributed to Jeanson’s talent for the *mot d’auteur*, the scene-stealing line which leaps off the screen, threatening to undermine the narrative illusion. Indeed, Jeanson is responsible for hundreds of the best-known lines in French film history, including Arletty’s ‘Atmosphère, atmosphère? Est-ce-que j’ai une gueule d’atmosphère?’ [Atmosphere? Atmosphere? Do I look like an atmosphere?], which turns *Hôtel du nord* (Carné, 1938) into an ironic comment on – as well as an example of – poetic realism. Indeed, in Chion’s examination of French film dialogue, he describes this line as ‘le mot le plus célèbre du cinéma français’ [the most famous line in French cinema].²

From the very early days of his cinematic career, Jeanson became known as a dialogue specialist. As Christophe Moussé has pointed out, his dialogue is marked by the same staccato style that characterizes his newspaper columns: one-line paragraphs, using a range of rhetorical figures to exploit the possibilities of repetition, variation, extended metaphors and word play to create dialogue which at its best, is rhythmic, poetic and memorable, but which, at its worst, can be stilted, cloying or gratuitously vulgar.³ In the best of Jeanson’s films, the charisma of the word is matched by the actor’s delivery in such a way that the performance of the dialogue in certain key scenes becomes the main focus of the *mise en scène*. Jeanson vigorously defended – in his newspaper columns as well as in his role as head of the French screenwriters’ union – the idea that dialogue should not pass unnoticed, mocking critics who complained of dialogue that was ‘trop brillant, trop spirituel, trop écrit’ [too brilliant, too witty, too written], and showed contempt for the idea that lines that should ‘discrètement, travers[er] l’écran sur la pointe des pieds afin de ne pas troubler l’ennui des spectateurs’ [discreetly tiptoe across the screen so as not to rouse the spectators from their boredom].⁴ Jeanson was also fully aware of the actor’s role in delivering these brilliant, witty lines; for him dialogue was a key connection between writer, performer and audience, and he was very clear about the necessity for a writer to be able to ‘hear’ the actor’s voice during the writing process:

il est des auteurs qui écrivent plus facilement un dialogue pour tel acteur que pour tel autre. Si, lorsqu’il écrit, l’auteur entend son interprète lui dicter ses répliques, au fur et à mesure qu’elles lui viennent à l’esprit et au bout de sa plume, il y a beaucoup de chances pour que le dialogue soit réussi.

¹ Michel, Chion, *Le Complexe de Cyrano. La langue parlée dans les films français*, (Paris : Cahiers du cinéma, 2008), 69. See also Claire Vassé, *Le Dialogue. Du texte écrit à la voix mise en scène* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma/SCEREN-CNDP, 2003), 25.

² Chion, *Le Complexe de Cyrano*, 26. All translations are the author’s own unless otherwise indicated.

³ Christophe Moussé, *Henri Jeanson: Films/Textes/Références*, (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1997), 19.

⁴ René Chateau, ed., *Jeanson par Jeanson* (Paris: Editions René Chateau/La Mémoire du cinéma français, 2000), 9.

[There are writers who write dialogue more easily for some actors than for others. If, when writing, the author hears the actor dictating the lines to him, as they come into his mind and out of his pen, there is a good chance that the dialogue will be good.]⁵

Jeanson highlights a number of actors whom he can “hear” well, including Arletty, Michèle Morgan, Madeleine Renaud, Gérard Philipe, Fernand Gravey and Marcel Dalio. (He does not specify what it is about their voices that enables him to connect with these performers rather than, say, Raimu, offered as a counter example; though he appears to suggest that the connection is at least in part one of personal affinity.)

However his *acteur fétiche* was his friend Louis Juvet, *monstre sacré* of French stage and screen with whom he collaborated on ten films, including *Hôtel du nord* and *Lady Paname* (1951), Jeanson’s only directorial venture. The feeling was apparently mutual; Juvet claimed that, working with Jeanson in the cinema, ‘j’ai découvert des rapports nouveaux entre le créateur et son interprète. J’ai éprouvé la révélation d’un monde dramatique différent de ceux que je connaissais’ [I discovered a new kind of relationship between creator and interpreter. I experienced the revelation of a dramatic world that was different from those that I already knew].⁶

During his lifetime, Louis Juvet was best known for his theatrical career as an innovator concerned with establishing the theatre as a particular art form and with making elite theatre accessible to the wider public, firstly, from 1913, at the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier with Jacques Copeau, and then, from 1927-1940, alongside Gaston Baty, Charles Dullin, and Georges Pitoëff as a member of the Cartel des Quatre, whose ambition was to revive the Paris theatre scene through a commitment to contemporary drama.⁷ Juvet turned down the directorship of the Comédie française in order to plough his own furrow as artistic director at the Théâtre de l’Athénée from 1934, but did accept a teaching role at the Conservatoire des arts dramatiques – an institution which had turned him down as a student on several occasions. Jeanson was to immortalize him in this role in *Entrée des artistes* [*The Curtain rises*] (Allégret, 1938).

Although Juvet always expressed a certain ambivalence for cinema, he did nonetheless have a memorable parallel career as a star of the French screen from the 1930s up to his death in 1951, and he is now arguably equally remembered for his film roles – from the louche chaplain in *La Kermesse héroïque* [*Carnival in Flanders*] (Feyder, 1933) to Assistant Inspector Antoine in Clouzot’s *Quai des Orfèvres* (Clouzot, 1947), via Archibald Soper in *Drôle de drame* [*Bizarre, Bizarre*] (Carné, 1937), Doctor Knock, twice, in *Knock, ou le triomphe de la médecine* [*Doctor Knock*] (Goupillières and Juvet, 1933) and *Knock* (Lefranc, 1951),

⁵ Chateau, *Jeanson par Jeanson*, 93.

⁶ Louis Juvet, ‘Préface’, in Henri Jeanson, *Entrée des artistes* (Paris: La Nouvelle Édition, 1946), 12.

⁷ Vincent Amiel, ‘Louis Juvet à l’épreuve des genres’, in Delphine Chedaleux and Gwénaëlle Le Gras, eds, *Genres et acteurs du cinéma 1930-1960* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012), 22-3 ; Vincent Amiel, ‘Guitry et Juvet: des acteurs au cinéma’, in Laurent Le Forestier and Gilles Mouëllic, eds, *Filmer l’artiste au travail* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013), 243.

Professor Lambertin of the Conservatoire in *Entrée des artistes* and Monsieur Edmond, the elegant souteneur in *Hôtel du nord* – as for his theatrical career.

Jouvet firmly believed in the artificiality of the theatre, rejecting the naturalism of Antoine's Théâtre Libre and emphasising the role of the actor in creating a role.⁸ He brought his idiosyncratic performance style to his cinematic roles too. As Vincent Amiel argues, Jouvet's cinematic roles are types, 'des compositions, des gueules, des figures' [compositions, mugs, characters], marked by their 'silhouettes étranges, au débit saccadé, aux gestes improbables' [strange silhouettes, jerky delivery and improbable gestures].⁹ The anti-naturalism of the performance style with which Jouvet inhabited these extraordinary characters and, most of all, his idiosyncratic diction – this 'débit saccadé' – made him the perfect interpreter of Jeanson's lines. Indeed, Jean-Paul Lacroix, journalist and Jeanson's protégé at the *Canard enchaîné*, remarked that Jouvet 'parlait comme Jeanson écrivait, en allant à la ligne tous les quatre mots' [spoke as Jeanson wrote, starting a new paragraph every four words].¹⁰ Similarly, critics Olivier Barrot and Raymond Chirat remarked on the perfect coincidence between Jouvet's diction and Jeanson's pen: 'la cadence célèbre, poudrée d'ironie, semée de points de suspension' [the famous cadence, peppered with irony, seeded with suspension points].¹¹ This coincidence was clearly recognized by their contemporaries, as we can see from an article which appeared in *Esprit* in May 1949 regarding Gaston Bergery's trial, in which the politician – a friend of both the screenwriter and the actor – is attributed with 'une tournure d'esprit qui ne doit pas être très lointaine du Jouvet de Jeanson, à moins que ce ne soit du Jeanson de Jouvet' [a witticism in the style of Jouvet by Jeanson, or perhaps of Jeanson by Jouvet].¹² Jouvet picks up on this perceived symbiosis in a communication to Jeanson regarding this article 'où tu es concerné; où nous sommes concernés. Moi en tant que Jouvet ou Jeanson et toi en tant que Jeanson ou Jouvet...' [which concerns you, which concerns us. Me as Jouvet or Jeanson, and you as Jeanson or Jouvet]. He signs off, 'Ton Jeanvet ou Jouson' [Your Jeanvet or Jouson].¹³

I would like to argue that, thanks to this 'perfect coincidence', Jouvet's voice pronouncing Jeanson's words offers a particular example of what Roland Barthes refers to as the 'grain' of the voice:

Le grain de la voix n'en est pas - ou n'est pas seulement - son timbre; la signifiante qu'il ouvre ne peut précisément mieux se définir que par la friction même de la musique et d'autre chose qui est la langue (et pas du tout le message). [...] Le « grain », c'est le corps dans la voix qui chante, dans la main qui écrit, dans le membre qui exécute.

⁸ Louis Jouvet, *Le Comédien désincarné*, (Paris: Champs Arts/Flammarion, 1954), 17.

⁹ Amiel, 'Louis Jouvet à l'épreuve des genres', 23.

¹⁰ Chateau, *Jeanson par Jeanson*, 7.

¹¹ Olivier Barrot and Raymond Chirat, 'Ciné-boulevard', in S.A.C.D., *Jeux d'auteurs, mots d'acteurs. Scénaristes et dialoguistes du cinéma français 1930-1945* (Arles: Institut Lumière/Actes Sud, 1994), 88.

¹² Jean Foresta, 'Procès Bergery, ou la gauche mythique', *Esprit* (May 1949), 706.

¹³ Undated postcard from Jouvet to Jeanson (c. May 1949), SACD archive, Paris. Jeanson correspondance 43 [Jouvet].

[The grain of the voice is not – or is not only – its timbre; the meaning it opens up can't precisely be better defined than by the very friction of music, and something else which is language [*la langue*] (and not at all the message). [...] The 'grain' is the body of the voice that sings, of the hand that writes, of the limb that executes.]¹⁴

Further, exploring this notion in this context opens up as an area for consideration the relationship between author ('la main qui écrit') and actor ('le corps dans la voix qui chante' and 'le membre qui exécute'), but also the relationship of both of these with the audience, in this case mediated by Jovet's star persona.

In his study of Jovet's crime roles, Amiel remarks upon the consistent foregrounding of performance by the narrative, if not through an explicitly theatrical setting, then through plot devices such as the double, as in *Copie conforme* [*Confessions of a Rogue*] (Dréville, 1947) or *Entre onze heures et minuit* [*Between Eleven and Midnight*] (Decoin, 1949), or the alias as in *Mister Flow* (Siodmak, 1936), *Un carnet de bal* [*Christine*] (Duvivier, 1937) or *Hôtel du nord*.¹⁵ This is equally true of Jovet's roles scripted by Jeanson, at least half of which are crime films, and all of which feature some kind of theatrical setting, alias, double, or other way of foregrounding performance. Indeed, in Jeanson's scripts, performance is doubly emphasized through what we will term the *mise en scène* of dialogue, and, even more specifically, the *mise en valeur* of the voice of the star. Through a close consideration of Jovet's performance of Jeanson's words, this chapter will consider how an analysis of the performance of dialogue can bridge the artificial divide between word and image. It will draw on theories of stardom, considering voice as a key element of star persona, as well as on Michel Chion's consideration of the voice in cinema, in order to explore these as elements of national cinema, or, more precisely, as expressions of the once mainstream and now classic films that Thomas Elsaesser has identified as '*lieux de mémoire* of the nation and of national identity'.¹⁶

Although some film scholars have addressed language and/or dialogue in the French cinematic tradition, for most, language remains subordinate to the image.¹⁷ However, as Thomas Elsaesser points out in a consideration of contemporary European cinema and the concept of national cinema, sound and language

¹⁴ Roland Barthes, 'Le Grain de la voix', *Textes* (1972), 1436-42.

<<http://www.revoice.fr/Pages/RolandBarthesetlavoix.aspx>> accessed 24 March 2017.

¹⁵ Vincent Amiel, 'Louis Jovet à l'épreuve des genres', 26.

¹⁶ Thomas Elsaesser, 'ImpersoNations: National Cinema, Historical Imaginaries and New Cinema Europe', *Mise au point* [En ligne] 5 (2013), <<https://map.revues.org/1480>> accessed 22 March 2016. It should be pointed out that these memories are not good ones for everyone; René Prédal, for example, wrote of *Hôtel du nord*, 'Louis Jovet déclame avec une théâtralité outrancière, un dialogue grossier d'Henri Jeanson, spécialiste du jeu de mots sinistre') [Louis Jovet declaims with an outrageous theatricality a vulgar dialogue by Jeanson, specialist of the dreary pun] (cited in Chateau, *Jeanson par Jeanson*, 587, while for Edward Baron Turk, the 'atmosphere' scene in the same film 'attests to the capacity of two great performers - Arletty and Louis Jovet - to rise above trivial dialogue' (Edward Baron Turk, *Child of Paradise: Marcel Carné and the Golden Age of French Cinema*, [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989], 135).

¹⁷ See, for example, Jean Samouillan, *Les Dialogues du cinéma*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004); Michael Abecassis, *The representation of Parisian speech in the cinema of the 1930s* (Oxford and New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Chion, *Le Complexe de Cyrano*; Ginette Vincendeau, 'The Frenchness of French cinema', in Will Higbee and Sarah Leahy, eds, *Studies in French Cinema: UK Perspectives, 1985-2010*, Bristol: Intellect, 2010) 337-52.

are an inextricable part of the cinematic experience. He specifically highlights the voice of the actor as integral to this:

precisely because of the way that good acting in the cinema represents a special symbiosis of body, gesture, voice and intonation, those who love the cinema cannot do without films in their original language: as sound has become more and more crucial in our experience of cinema, so has language, accent, grain and timbre of the voice: the indispensable ‘supplement’ to the image that actually tells us what the ‘image’ is.¹⁸

This understanding of film performance is rooted in the idea that the voice is a signifier of authenticity, an idea which is amplified when we are considering actors with whom audiences are familiar, and most particularly, stars. In a consideration of Judy Garland’s performance in *A Star is born* (Cukor, 1954), Richard Dyer argues that ‘authenticity is both a quality necessary to the star phenomenon to make it work, and also the quality that guarantees the authenticity of the other particular values a star embodies (such as girl-next-door-ness, etc.)’.¹⁹ In Jouvett’s case, of course, we are not talking ‘girl-next-door-ness’, but ‘professor-at-the-Conservatoire/theatre-actor-ness’, not a value we might immediately associate with authenticity. However, as Dyer shows, the star’s body – and, we will argue, voice – is a gauge of authenticity, which ‘depends on the degree to which stars are accepted as being what they appear to be’.²⁰ Dyer analyses Garland’s performance of ‘The Man that Got Away’, considering aspects of mise en scène such as point of view, framing, lighting, and performance, most notably gesture and facial expression. He explores the ways in which these elements contribute to possible intertextual readings of the song, inviting the audience to connect with both the character Esther/Vicki and the star Judy through the performance of the number. For Dyer, the authenticity at stake here is that of Garland’s ‘capacity to sing’ independent of any mechanical reproduction, ‘grounded in her own immediate, spontaneous, and essential self’.²¹ And yet, the one element that Dyer does not consider is Garland’s voice. This is somewhat symptomatic of star studies which has tended to privilege image over sound, certainly in considerations of how audiences engage with stars which focus on visual pleasure and forms of identification or desire. However, Martin Shingler draws our attention to more recent studies which have paid greater attention ‘to the voice of actors and stars’, and in doing so, have revealed numerous pistes for further research, including defining ‘the specific and identifiable traits of film voices’, especially those of stars ‘whose persona is largely determined by their idiosyncratic sound and whose popularity rests on the appeal of their voice’.²²

¹⁸ Elsaesser, ‘ImpersoNations’.

¹⁹ Richard Dyer, ‘A Star is Born and the Construction of Authenticity’, in Christine Gledhill, ed., *Stardom: Industry of Desire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 137.

²⁰ Dyer, ‘A Star is Born and the Construction of Authenticity’, 136.

²¹ Ibid., 143.

²² Martin Shingler, ‘Fasten Your Seatbelts and Prick Up your Ears: The Dramatic Human Voice in Film’, *Scope: An Online Journal of Film and Television Studies* (June 2006) <<http://nottingham.ac.uk/scope/documents/2006/june-2006/shingler.pdf>> accessed 16 July 2017, 2; 9. Shingler cites, for example, Victoria Lowe, “‘The Best Speaking Voices in the World’”: Robert Donat, Stardom and the Voice in British Cinema’, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 1/2 (2005), 181-96. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/JBCTV.2004.1.2.181>> accessed 16 April 2017; we should also mention Chris

Both Michel Chion and Ginette Vincendeau have remarked upon the importance of language for actors, either as an aspect of star persona, an evocation of a particular embodiment of femininity, or as a performative element, of nationality, class, region, or gender, for example.²³ Dialogue and its performance – including the lack of it – plays a key part in the establishment and evolution of star persona, not just because it is marked in terms of class, register or style (Chion points to the absence in French cinema of a neutral form of expression) but also because it allows us to ‘hear’ the actor’s voice (or rather, a recording of it).²⁴ Charles Affron has underlined the centrality of voice to star persona, a point picked up by Edward Baron Turk in his consideration of Arletty in *Hôtel du nord* in which he evokes the physical impact of her voice: ‘If the personality of a film star depends as much on the “phonogenic” “grain of the voice” as on the “photogenic configuration of body and face”, Arletty had extraordinary “phonogeneity”. Her shrill, angular sound ... crackles, granulates, grates, and cuts’.²⁵

Drawing on Chion’s theorization of the voice in film, Claire Vassé discusses the complexity of the *mise en scène* of dialogue again with regards to its physicality.²⁶ (2003, 27-47; Chion 1993). Considering the relationship between voice and cinematic space, she makes the point that “Filmer un dialogue, c’est aussi filmer des corps, des corps qui occupent l’espace, des corps qui défendent leur espace” [Filming dialogue is also filming bodies, bodies which take up space, bodies which defend their space].²⁷ The challenge for the *dialoguiste* is, as Vassé puts it, not only to ‘faire entendre des dialogues mais d’en faire une matière incarnée. Porté à l’écran, le verbe se fait chair, le dialogue se fait voix et prend place dans un univers sonore...’ [let the dialogue be heard, but to make it into embodied matter. Brought to the screen, the word becomes flesh, dialogue becomes voice and takes its place in a sound universe].²⁸ Listening more closely to Louis Jouvet’s performance of Jeanson’s words, allows an exploration of how the pleasures of dialogue are located not only in the words themselves and their meaning, but in the sonic texture they acquire through embodied performance, and embodied reception; the “grain”. Chion has argued that in order to analyse the voice in cinema, it needs to be separated from the language it pronounces.²⁹ Here the intention is rather to reinscribe the voice – its “grain”, its affective qualities – into the spoken language, to consider how the linguistic sign as spoken word signifies through aspects such as voice, delivery and gesture as well as the words contained in the utterance; the *énonciation* rather than the *énoncé*, to use Emile Benveniste’s terms:

Perriam, ‘Two Transnational Spanish Stars: Antonio Banderas and Penelope Cruz’, *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas* 2/1 (2005), 29-45 and Tom Whittaker and Sarah Wright, eds, *Locating the Voice in Film: Critical Approaches and Global Practices* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2015).

²³ Chion, *Le Complexe de Cyrano*, 34-5; Vincendeau, ‘The Frenchness of French Cinema’.

²⁴ Chion, *Le Complexe de Cyrano*, 7.

²⁵ Baron Turk, *Child of Paradise*, 142-3; see also Charles Affron, *Cinema and Sentiment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

²⁶ Claire Vassé, *Le Dialogue*, 27-47; Michel Chion, *La Voix au cinéma* (Paris: Éditions de l’Étoile/Cahiers du cinéma, 1993).

²⁷ Vassé, *Le Dialogue*, 34.

²⁸ Vassé, *Le Dialogue*, 37.

²⁹ Chion, *La Voix au cinéma*, 16.

cette mise en fonctionnement de la langue par un acte individuel d'utilisation [...] l'acte même de produire, un énoncé et non le texte de l'énoncé qui est notre objet. Cet acte est le fait du locuteur qui mobilise la langue pour son compte.

[This implementation of language by an individual act of use [...] the very act of producing, an utterance [*énoncé*] and not the text of the utterance [*énoncé*] ... is our object. This act is that of a speaker who mobilizes language [*la langue*] to his [*sic*] own ends].³⁰

Thus we will demonstrate how Jeanson – who has been derided by many critics as nothing but a master of gratuitous *bons mots* shoe-horned into his films regardless of character, plot or situation – in fact offered many actors their most memorable on-screen moments in the performance – a *mise en corps* as well as a *mise en scène* – of his dialogue, moments that have in some cases become central to their star image. If, as Chion reports, French airwaves resonated with the famous lines from *Hôtel du nord* when Arletty died in 1992, it is surely because her pronunciation of ‘Atmosphère’ offers a perfect condensation of her star persona, phonetically capturing her Parisian-accented *gouaille* while at the same time semantically encapsulating her contribution to Poetic Realist films of the 1930s.³¹ Let us now turn to Jouvét’s performance in *Entrée des artistes* to explore this further.

Jouson or Jeanvet: *Entrée des artistes*

Released on 6 October 1938, *Entrée des artistes* quickly became one of the most successful films of the year.³² It tells the story of a group of students at the Conservatoire des arts dramatiques. Cœcilia (Odette Joyeux), rejected by François (Claude Dauphin) in favour of Isabelle (Janine Darcey), sets out to win him back, ostensibly as a bet. However, her feelings run deeper than anyone suspected and when her attempts fail, she dresses up her suicide as murder, taking care to incriminate François. However, this drama takes a back seat compared with the theatrical setting of the film, which ends on a famous speech delivered by Lambertin (Jouvét) to his students about the blurring of life and theatre. Perhaps unsurprisingly given its setting and star, Jeanson was particularly fond of this film, which he claims to have written drawing on his own memories:

Jamais je n’ai écrit de scénario avec plus de plaisir. Aucune contrainte. Liberté absolue. Jouvét dans son propre personnage de professeur au Conservatoire. Sa classe reconstituée en studio, avec les vrais élèves de Jouvét...

³⁰ Émile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale II*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 80.

³¹ Chion, *Le Complexe de Cyrano*, 26.

³² Lagny, Michèle, Ropars, Marie-Claire, Sorlin, Pierre, *Générique des années 30* (Vincennes: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1986), 19.

[Never have I written a script with more pleasure. No constraints. Total freedom. Jovet playing himself as professor at the Conservatoire. His classroom reconstructed in the studio, with his own students].³³

We first encounter Jovet discussing with another member of the jury a young woman who is presenting a scene from *The Taming of the Shrew* for her audition. His observations are typical both of Jeanson's style and of the anecdotes told of Jovet the professor:

Lambertin: Regardez-la. L'œil est stupide mais vif. [...] Il y a dans son regard une grande lueur d'inintelligence. La bouche assez spirituelle, le corps plutôt agréable... Jeune première!

Membre du jury: Tt... Ingénue dramatique

Lambertin: Jeune première comique.

[...]

Lambertin: La voix est mal placée, mais... cette petite a quelque chose.

Membre du jury: Quelque chose, mais précisez.

Lambertin: Un... je ne sais quoi.

Membre du jury: Oui, elle a du toupet.

Lambertin: Mais non, elle a le trac.

Membre du jury: C'est du pancrace.

Lambertin: Elle est excellente.

Membre du jury: Comme boxeuse.

Lambertin: Elle dit juste.

Membre du jury: Sans style.

Lambertin: Avec esprit.

[...]

Lambertin: Shakespeare est battu par Knock Out.

[Lambertin: Look at her. Her gaze is stupid, but lively. [...] Her eyes shine with the light of unintelligence. Her expression is witty, her figure is pleasant... Romantic lead!

Member of the jury: Dramatic *ingénue*.

Lambertin: Comic romantic lead. [...]

³³ Chateau, *Jeanson par Jeanson*, 91. As ever with Jeanson, we should not take his assertion at face value. In his preface to the published screenplay of *Entrée des artistes*, Jovet himself comments on the many revisions that Jeanson himself performed, to move from written text to spoken word. See Jovet, 'Préface'. Neither Jeanson nor Jovet mention Marc Allégret as a collaborator on the script; still less André Cayatte, who is credited as co-screenwriter (but not dialogue-writer) with Jeanson. However as Maxim Cornette has suggested, Marc Allégret as director was no doubt involved in adapting the script for the screen. Maxim Cornette, *Les Dialogues d'Henri Jeanson: tension entre monologisme et dialogisme*, unpublished doctoral thesis, UFR LACS, Département de Cinéma et l'Audiovisuel, Université de Provence, (January 2004) 150-1.

The voice is misplaced, but ... this youngster has something.

Member of the jury: Something, yes, but what?

Lambertin: A... *je ne sais quoi*.

Member of the jury: Yes, she has cheek.

Lambertin: No, she has stage fright.

Member of the jury: It's a wrestling match.

Lambertin: She's excellent.

Member of the jury: As a boxer.

Lambertin: She speaks well.

Member of the jury: Without style.

Lambertin: With wit. [...] Shakespeare knocked out.]³⁴

If Jovet's first line here delivers a *bon mot* at the expense of the candidate in question (Isabelle) – a nod to his reputation (rivalled by Jeanson) as master of the devastating (and frequently misogynist) put-down – the rest of the exchange reveals, on the contrary, a certain generosity of spirit towards young talent, a taste for contradiction (of both self and others), and a penchant for deploying clichés in order to turn them on their heads. The initial comments relate to Isabelle's appearance (she is waiting silently on stage for a partner who will help her out by taking on the role of Petrucchio), but the rest of the conversation – which takes place as she and François perform the very physical scene – puts the focus as much on *her* voice, 'mal placée' [misplaced] but which 'dit juste' [speaks well] and 'avec esprit' [with wit] as on her physical performance ('du pancrace' [wrestling match], 'boxeuse' [boxer]). Jovet's own characteristic delivery is just as much in evidence here; the rhythm of the exchange structured around contradiction could easily be that of a song, and this musicality is created in large part by Jovet's intonation and pauses as well as the rich texture of his voice. The narrative focus in this scene – indeed in the film – is not Jovet as teacher, but rather the triangle formed by Isabelle, François, and the manipulative and ultimately tragic Cécilia that is set up in this scene, yet the commentary creates a distancing effect from the emotional drama. This brief exchange, then, also functions to establish the tension in the film between the depiction of the idealized theatrical world of the Conservatoire and the sentimental intrigues of those who attend its classes.

In a letter to Jeanson sent sometime in October 1938, Marcel Pagnol wrote of *Entrée des artistes* - which he found original and modern but somewhat unbalanced in terms of structure - that it is really two films, a vivid study of the Conservatoire, 'ses mœurs, son esprit' [its morals, its ethos]³⁵ – the setting – which is then neglected in favour of the 'admirable' yet poorly set up drama.³⁶ Pagnol's sense of two films in one is perhaps also due to a tendency in Jeanson's style that has been analysed by Maxime Cornette in his doctoral

³⁴ NB: All dialogue citations are transcribed from the versions of the films listed in the filmography. All translations are the author's own and are intended to convey the literal meaning of the original.

³⁵ "its morals, its ethos"

³⁶ Published in Jeanson, *L'Entrée des artistes*, 236-8.

thesis, the tension between what he terms monologism and dialogism. Drawing in particular on Mikhael Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and the carnivalesque, Cornette elaborates on these different modes of address:

Dans le cadre monologique, l'auteur définit ses héros, les 'achève' par des traits linguistiques et caractérologiques. Ces traits sont stables et objectifs, définis à partir de critères socioprofessionnels ou régionaux. Les personnages ne sont en fait que des objets, en corrélation avec la seule conscience de l'auteur. Dans le cadre dialogique, les personnages sont d'abord définis par leur manière de se concevoir eux-mêmes [...] Du statut d'objet, ils passent à celui de sujet, *véritables voix incarnant un discours*. D'une seule voix monologique dans l'œuvre, donc, on passe à plusieurs voix discutant entre elles, l'œuvre est polyphonique (my emphasis).

[In the monologic mode, the author defines his heroes, 'finishes' them with linguistic and personality traits. These traits are stable and objective, defined according to socioprofessional or regional criteria. The characters are, in fact, merely objects, correlating only with their author's consciousness. In the dialogic mode, the characters are first and foremost defined by their conception of themselves [...] They move from the status of objects to subjects, *real voices embodying a discourse*. From one monologic voice, then, the film moves to several voices chatting amongst themselves; the work is polyphonic] (my emphasis).³⁷

It is notable in the context of this study that this polyphony can be heard on two levels: the discursive, as an expression of the subject; and the embodied, marked by corporeal, aural utterances. Cornette's analysis aims to highlight this polyphony and the tension between monologic and dialogic modes in Jeanson's œuvre, which he associates with a carnivalesque world view in which contradictions and metaphorical dethronings abound, in order to counter the critical consensus on Jeanson, which at best celebrates him as master of the aphorism and *bon mot*, and, at worst, castigates him as the embodiment of a stogy and moribund cinema. Cornette's goal is to reveal the quality of Jeanson's dialogue as a form of literature, and the fertility of this 'tension entre un monologisme qui exhibe l'originalité stylistique de l'auteur, et un dialogisme qui éclaire la "vérité" du personnage' [tension between a monologism that displays the author's stylistic originality and a dialogism which reveals the 'truth' of the character].³⁸

[IMAGE 1 : Professor Lambertin and his class. Louis Jouvet 'playing himself', Odette Joyeux and Claude Dauphin in *Entrée des artistes* (Allégret, 1938). DVD René Château Vidéo, 2008]

³⁷ Cornette, *Les Dialogues d'Henri Jeanson*, 15-16.

³⁸ Cornette, *Les Dialogues d'Henri Jeanson*, 334.

L'Entrée des artistes is, for Cornette, one of the most monologic of Jeanson's films 'dans la mesure où [il] met en scène des personnages d'artistes, parfois à peine transposés du réel comme peut l'être Lambertin' [in the way that it portrays characters who are performers, at times barely disguised from their real-life incarnation, as in the case of Lambertin].³⁹ The perfect coincidence between the author's vision and that of Jouvet/Lambertin allows the actor to function both as *porte-parole* for the author, and to perform himself. Whilst I would agree with Cornette that Jeanson's contribution to French cinema is in need of reevaluating in wider terms, I would like to focus here on how this meeting of discursive and embodied voice in Jouvet's performance of the writer's dialogue is of particular interest for the study of both star and writer. We can see this in the next example, where Lambertin presents a conception of the theatre that can be found in Jouvet's own writing on this subject.⁴⁰ According to this conception of theatre, the actor-audience relation is founded not in realism but in illusion, an illusion which requires the simultaneous acknowledgement and disavowal of the elements of performance. Even if Lambertin/Jouvet does not single out the voice here as one of those elements, intonation, pronunciation and accuracy of delivery are the constant focus of his criticisms during classes (one student is mercilessly pulled up for his inability to pronounce "Vous, c'est vous" in the appropriate fashion). In this example, Lambertin's lecture on the role of the actor begins as a reproach to Cécilia who is unable to continue rehearsing with François a scene that mirrors too closely her own feelings towards him:

Lambertin: Ne faites pas de comédie ici, jouez-la.

Cécilia: Mais je ne suis pas dans mon assiette.

Lambertin: Tu n'as pas à être dans ton assiette, tu dois être dans la peau de ton personnage'. [...] dans le théâtre, il faut transposer. Le naturel doit être un naturel de théâtre. N'oublie pas qu'il y a une rampe, un souffleur, des herses, et du public. Hein? Il faut que les personnages que tu incarnes sentent le théâtre, la toile peinte et le fard. Le spectateur paie pour avoir l'illusion qu'il est au théâtre ; si tu lui enlèves cette illusion, tu commets une erreur. Tu fausses le jeu.

[Lambertin: Don't play games here, play your part.

Cécilia: But I'm not on form.

Lambertin: You don't need to be on form, you need to be in your character's skin. [...] In the theatre, you need to transpose. The natural should be a theatrical natural. Don't forget that there is a stage, a prompt, spotlights, and an audience. Eh? The characters you embody must smell of the theatre, painted backdrops and greasepaint. The spectators pay for the illusion of being at the theatre. If you take this illusion away, you make a mistake. You cheat...]

³⁹ Cornette, *Les Dialogues d'Henri Jeanson*, 332.

⁴⁰ For example, in Jouvet, *Le Comédien désincarné*.

We can note several stylistic features here that complement the peculiarities of Jovet's diction. The first is the sentence structure. The recurrence of two-part sentences (e.g. 'Ne faites pas de comédie ici, jouez-la' [Don't play games here, play your part]; 'Tu n'as pas à être dans ton assiette, tu dois être dans la peau de ton personnage' [You don't need to be on form, you need to be in your character's skin]) allows for the dramatic pause characteristic of his delivery, a pause that is frequently preceded by the elongation of a syllable or word (the 'ie' of comédie; the 'ê' of 'être dans ton assiette'; the 'ers' of 'herses'). Jovet's pauses sometimes allow for a breath, but there are also examples here of extended consonants (/l/, /s/) which bring with them a kind of suspense by withholding the next part of the sentence but also by dramatizing – making spectacular – the delivery itself, as with musical phrasing.

The second point is the use of lists, allowing for a change in rhythm, akin to a change in time signature in musical terms (for example, 'rampe' [stage], 'souffleur' [prompt], 'herses' [spotlights], are all emphasized through elongation and rising intonation, as are 'théâtre', 'peinte' [painted], with the effect of delaying – and therefore further emphasizing – the 'chute', the apodosis ('public', 'fard' [greasepaint]). In a consideration of the actor's relationship to the text, Jovet evokes 'un travail général de 'montage' à faire entre toutes les répliques, un accord, un agencement' [a general task of 'montage' to be done between all the lines, an agreement, an agencing].⁴¹ In this example, then, to return to Benveniste, the actor's 'mise en fonctionnement' ('agencement') of the dialogue-énoncé as énonciation is accomplished through a process similar to cinematic montage, allowing the establishment of a rhythm. This in turn contributes meaning: here, for example, comic effect, suspense, or the exaggerated authority of the speaker.

The third point to note is the use of repetition, to emphasize key ideas ('naturel' [natural], 'théâtre') but also peculiarities of pronunciation ('il-lusion', with both /l/s clearly enunciated, is another example of elongation). Recalling the writing of *Hôtel du nord*, Jeanson evokes Jovet's personality first through his voice, highlighting the elements we have identified above: 'Louis Jovet avec sa diction saccadée et sa façon de mettre des traits d'union entre les syllabes pour mieux les séparer...' [Louis Jovet, with his staccato diction and way of hyphenating syllables in order to separate them...].⁴² Cornette also cites this passage in his detailed analysis of the rhythm and musicality of Jeanson's dialogue, pointing out that the usual expectations of cadence - a protasis rising to the acme marked by a pause before the falling apodosis - do not necessarily apply when the lines are spoken by Jovet 'en raison de la diction si particulière du comédien. Jeanson s'est d'ailleurs inspiré de cette façon de parler qui consistait à hacher le texte d'une manière très personnelle' [Because of the peculiar diction of the actor. Indeed, Jeanson was inspired by this way of speaking, which consisted of chopping up the text in a very individual way].⁴³ Building on this discussion, I would argue that this example demonstrates how the *mise en scène* of dialogue through performance is inherent not just to character but also to star persona. In Jovet's case this is bound up with his status as a theatrical pioneer and

⁴¹ Jovet, *Le Comédien désincarné*, 200.

⁴² Chateau, *Jeanson par Jeanson*, 84.

⁴³ Cornette, *Les Dialogues d'Henri Jeanson*, 315. As Moussé has shown, though, this style is already evidence in Jeanson's journalistic prose from his early writings. Moussé, *Henri Jeanson*, 18-19.

maître, but also in the paradoxical attitude – simultaneously authoritarian and anarchic – which is embedded in the very cadences of his speech, expressed through the unexpected rhythms and accents, and the almost excessive finality of the ‘chute’. The evocation of stardom brings us to another element: the use of a portable ‘tu’ which allows slippage between different interlocutors. This is of interest beyond its indication of the unequal power relationship between teacher and students (Lambertin addresses his students as ‘tu’ while they refer to the *maître* as ‘vous’). The ‘tu’ of ‘tu n’as pas à être dans ton assiette’ [you don’t need to be on form] (Cécilia) is not the same as that of the ‘personnages que tu incarnes’ [characters you embody] (François), and yet this speech is destined not for one student, but for the whole class who are addressed through gestures and *mise en scene*. This portable ‘tu’ also invokes another singular interlocutor – the spectator – addressed by Jouvét, not Lambertin, over the heads of the other characters. Thus, we have two simultaneous levels of address; between characters at the dialogic, diegetic level, and, between actor (writer for Cornette) and spectator at the monologic level. Cornette describes this phenomenon, a fairly common one in Jeanson’s films, as ‘double énonciation’.⁴⁴ However, a key element missing from his analysis is the actor who communicates these words; the particular voice that is ‘heard’ by the *dialoguiste* at the point of writing, and (in recording) by the audience at the point of exhibition. In her study of film dialogue, Sarah Kozloff borrows from work on dialogue in the theatre, citing Jean Chothia’s work on Eugene O’Neill which – in an echo of Lambertin’s theory of the theatrical illusion – highlights the duplicity and complicity which underpin stage language:

Stage language ... operates by duplicity; it is not spontaneous but must appear to be so [...] the audience in the theatre has a share in the duplicity. We simultaneously accept the illusion of spontaneity and know that it is a pretense... For it is not the hearing of words by the interlocutor that completes the exchange, as it is in everyday speech, but the witnessing and interpreting of both the utterance and the response by the audience.⁴⁵

Of course, in the cinematic context this relationship is further mediated by the apparatus, the reproduction of recorded images and sound, and the ‘presence’ of the actors is a further illusion. However, as Kaja Silverman argues, one of the key elements in establishing that illusion of presence is – through a process of fetishization – the (recorded) voice of the actor, and I would add that is even more the case if that voice is familiar to the audience.⁴⁶ The star’s voice, and the corporeal nature of aural reception, compound the complicity between actor and spectator; in this case, a complicity based in paternalistic condescension and contempt for *petit bourgeois* convention, at the expense of other characters. This ‘double énonciation’, made possible by the

⁴⁴ Cornette, *Les Dialogues d’Henri Jeanson*, 119-22.

⁴⁵ Jean Chothia cited in Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue*, (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2000), 16.

⁴⁶ Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic mirror: the female voice in psychoanalysis and cinema*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 43. Silverman argues that, in classical cinema, the voice functions to reinforce patriarchal ideology and one of the ways in which it does so is by ‘disavowing cinema’s lack’ (Ibid.).

intermediary of the actor who lends his voice to both character and author, can again be seen in our final – and longest – example from *L'Entrée des artistes*. Having received a communication from Isabelle's uncle protesting about her theatrical ambitions, Lambertin pays a visit to the laundry business where Isabelle is expected to work, a visit which, we understand from the previous sequence, is as much to settle a score with his own parents as to support his student.

Lambertin: Ai-je l'air d'un excentrique, d'un dément, ou d'un hors-la-loi ?

Monsieur Grenaison: Certainement pas !

Lambertin: Je suis officier de la Légion d'honneur:

Monsieur Grenaison: Je l'ai vu tout de suite, mon commandant...

Lambertin: Je ne suis pas commandant. Je professe au Conservatoire, et c'est à ce titre qu'on m'a décoré, je n'en tire pas de vanité. Je vous dis ces choses – deux sucres – parce qu'aux yeux de certaines personnes – merci – cet accessoire vestimentaire confère à qui le porte un certain prestige.

Monsieur Grenaison: Certainement.

Lambertin: Cet attribut me donne le privilège d'être écouté respectueusement par les imbéciles [looks quickly up at each in turn], les autres ne me prêtant quelque attention qu'à cause de mon talent, de ma carrière, ou de mon passé. [Drinks coffee] Ah, il est chaud. Bref, voilà. Votre nièce est mon élève [looks at each in turn slowly].

Madame Grenaison: C'est trop d'honneur.

Monsieur Grenaison: Laisse parler le commandant.

Lambertin: Je ne suis pas commandant.

Monsieur Grenaison: [Ça] revient au même.

Lambertin: Les parents [looks at Mme G and then back at G] sont bien coupables qui ne respectent pas les cheveux blonds ou bruns de la jeunesse. Cette enfant est un sujet de premier ordre, et vous n'avez pas le droit de lui gâcher la vie sous le prétexte assez vain que vous lui tenez lieu de mère en qualité de tante. C'est une amoureuse... [drinks coffee]

Monsieur Grenaison: Comment?

Lambertin: Je parle de son emploi.

Monsieur Grenaison: Amoureuse, c'est pas un métier, ça?

[...]

Lambertin: Laver en famille le linge sale des autres vous appelez ça un métier, hé hé. Ignobles. [addressing the young women in the laundry] Mes pauvres enfants, je vous plains.

Monsieur Grenaison : Mais enfin, dit.

Lambertin: Tandis que comédien, ce n'est pas une profession, n'est-ce pas? Pas une profession. Crétiens. Pas une profession... Excusez-moi de vous parler ainsi, mais vous me rappelez mon imbécile de père. Quelle atmosphère. C'est à vous dégoûter de vous faire blanchir. [...] Vous, le sergent-major, taisez-vous. Je serai comédien, quoique vous en disiez. Je ne finirai pas mes jours entre une

pile de mouchoirs et une douzaine de chemises de plastron. Voilà, voilà ce que j'aurais dû dire à mon père quand j'avais dix-sept ans, il y a un peu plus de trente ans. Adieu.

[Lambertin: Do I look like an eccentric, a madman or an outlaw? Grenaison: Certainly not!

Lambertin: I am an officer of the Légion d'honneur.

Grenaison: I could see that straightaway, commander.

Lambertin: I'm not a commander. I'm a professor at the Conservatoire, and that is why I was decorated. I derive no pride from this. I am only telling you – two sugars – because in the eyes of certain people – thank you – this vestimentary accessory confers a certain prestige on its wearer.

Grenaison: Certainly.

Lambertin: This attribute gives me the privilege of being listened to respectfully by idiots [looks up at each in turn, quickly], while others only pay attention to me because of my talent, my career or my past [Drinks coffee] Ah, it's hot. Anyway, here we are. Your niece is my pupil [looks at each in turn slowly].

Mme Grenaison: It's too great an honour...

Grenaison: Let the commander speak.

Lambertin: I'm not a commander.

Grenaison: It's the same thing.

Lambertin: Guilty are the parents who don't respect the brown or blond hair of youth! This child is a first class subject, and you have no right to ruin her life under the rather vain pretext of acting as her mother, as her aunt... She is a romantic [Drinks coffee]...

Grenaison: What?

Lambertin: I'm talking about her work.

Grenaison: Romantic? That's not a job?

[...]

Lambertin: Washing other's dirty linen, you call that a job, ha ha. Disgusting. My poor children, I'm sorry for you.

Grenaison: Wait a minute...

Lambertin: While acting, that's not a job, is it? Not a job. Cretins. Not a job. Excuse me for speaking to you like this, but you remind me of my idiot of a father. What an atmosphere. It's enough to put you off laundry... [...]

You, Sergeant-Major, be quiet. I will be an actor, whatever you say. I won't finish my days between a pile of hankies and a dozen dress-shirts. There, that's what I should have said to my father when I was 17, a bit more than 30 years ago. Goodbye...]

The scene consists of a carefully planned verbal ambush in the first part, followed by an increasingly personal attack, addressed simultaneously to the Grenaison couple and Lambertin *père* 'il y a trente ans' [thirty years

ago]. The Grenaisons (André Brunot and Madeleine Geoffroy) are drawn into a complicity ('Certainement pas!', 'Certainement!'), which is then turned against them as they are tricked by Lambertin into admitting their imbecility. Jeanson has created a perfect target in the militaristic, penny-pinching, sycophantic, ignorant couple, against whom he sets an idealized image of the theatre as culture, embodied by Jouvet. The audience's complicity in this exchange is arguably gained through the spectacular qualities of the dialogue; its *mise en corps* through Jouvet's delivery - the peculiar cadences which render the language strange - and its *mise en scène*, through the actor's deliberate gestures. Immediately prior to launching his verbal attack on the couple, Lambertin sits down at the table and makes himself comfortable, removing a used napkin with a gesture of distaste, before placing his hands on his knees, his back straight. This is a posture adopted for addressing an audience; the film's spectators just as much as his on-screen interlocutor. Again we recognize Jeanson's rhetorical style: the use of lists; repetition; inversions (e.g. 'confère à qui le porte un certain prestige' [confers a certain prestige on its wearer]; 'sont bien coupables les parents qui ne respectent pas' [guilty are the parents who don't respect]; 'comédien, ce n'est pas une profession' [actor? That's not a profession...]); a portable pronoun - 'vous' this time - referring to the Grenaison couple and Lambertin père; and an unorthodox syntax which the musicality and rhythm of Jouvet's voice makes spectacular, at times with dramatic and unexpected pauses (e.g. after 'hors-la-loi' [outlaw], 'légion d'honneur', 'vanité'), at others with his habit of running on across sentences without pausing for breath, but marking the end of each semantic group with falling intonation (underlined syllables): 'Je ne suis pas commandantant je professe au conservatoire et c'est à ce titre qu'on ma décoré je n'en tire pas de vanité...' [I'm not a commander I'm a professor at the Conservatoire and that's is why I was decorated].

[IMAGE 2: Spectacular dialogue: the *mise en scène* and *mise en corps* of words. Madeleine Geoffroy, Louis Jouvet, and André Brunot in *Entrée des artistes* (Allégret, 1938). DVD René Chateau Vidéo, 2008.]

The *mise en scène* and *mise en corps* of the dialogue in this scene, then, compounds this sense of the 'double énonciation'. The diegetic world - image and sound - is organized to enable the spectators to follow the intrigue. Yet the voice of the star exceeds the diegetic, addressing the audience on several semantic levels and in several modes - semantic, auidial, and affective - at the same time. In the next section, we will explore further this star excess, exploring the role the voice and vocal performance can play in establishing the affective relationship between star and audience.

Doubles and aliases: *Mister Flow*, *Copie Conforme*, *Hôtel du nord*

We will now turn to another aspect of Jouvet's cinematic persona which draws attention to the 'work' of the actor; the proliferation of roles in which he plays either doubles or aliases. The French term 'camper' ('représenter [un personnage] avec vigueur' [to vigorously play a character], according to the Petit Robert) seems to express the phenomenon in question much better than the English translation 'play', perhaps because of its connotations of 'inhabiting' and 'camping out' (leaving aside any Anglophone resonances of 'camp').

This brings us back to the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque evoked by Cornette in relation to Jeanson's film writing. The carnivalesque too depends on a provisional suspension of 'normality', that is, of hierarchical social structures, in order to establish a temporary logic characterized by polyphony and the abasement of figures of authority.⁴⁷ In Jeanson's films, Jovet frequently embodies the figure of the artist – from acclaimed classical choreographer to con-artist – who exacts some kind of revenge on petty-minded bourgeois morality, as we have already seen in the third example from *Entrée des artistes*, and which is also the case in *Mister Flow*, *Un carnet de bal*, *Un Revenant [A Lover's Return]* (Christian-Jaque, 1946), *Copie conforme* and *Lady Paname*. Further, in the multiplication of roles – be they doubles, aliases or figures from the past – he can also be said to embody the polyphony that this carnivalesque world allows to be heard. There are six films scripted by Jeanson in which Jovet plays multiple roles: *Mister Flow*, *Un Carnet de bal*, *Hôtel du Nord*, *Un revenant*, *Copie conforme* and *Entre onze heures et minuit*. We will focus here on the three of these which make particular use of the voice or language to perform the multiple identities: *Mister Flow*, *Copie conforme* and *Hôtel du Nord*.

Discussing the relationship between writer and actor in terms of 'sensation', Jovet highlights the corporeal aspect of the actor's role, and the embodied nature of dialogue: 'Il faut retrouver l'état physique pour dire une réplique'.⁴⁸ In *Mister Flow* and *Copie conforme*, the actor plays dual roles which throw this into relief. In both films, he plays a suave and authoritative master criminal (Mister Flow and Manuel Isamora, respectively) and a rather sad case (Achille Durin and Gabriel Dupon). In *Copie conforme*, Dupon is a look-a-like whose astonishing resemblance is seized upon by Isamora, who plans to use this to his own ends, while in *Mister Flow*, Durin, who is but an alias of the international jewel thief, is by far the more memorable 'character'.

[IMAGE 3: Jovet as Flow as Durin, with Fernand Gravey as Antonin Rose in *Mister Flow* (Siodmak, 1936). URL: <http://www.cinetom.fr/archives/2015/03/22/31749605.html>, accessed 19 September 2017.]

In both films, Jovet's emphasis on physical embodiment is in evidence; as in *Entrée des artistes*, we can speak of a *mise en scene* and a *mise en corps* of dialogue. In *Mister Flow*, the master criminal has had himself arrested in the persona of Achille Durin for the theft of his employer's tie-pin, with a view to setting up the lawyer Antonin Rose (Fernand Gravey) to take the fall. The obsequious and lachrymose Achille – Rose remarks upon his client's 'réactions nettement pluviales' [decidedly wet responses] – is endowed with a number of verbal tics – 'et tout', 'n'est-ce pas', and 'dame!' ['and all', 'don't you think?', and 'Gosh!'] – which pepper his dialogue, frequently in place of any informative language. His 'confession' in court, for example, which takes place near the end of the film, is a triumph of hedging and periphrases which plays on these tics that have become familiar to the audience:

⁴⁷ Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures : Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*, (Baltimore and London : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 10-11.

⁴⁸ Jovet, *Le Comédien désincarné*, 199.

Président: Expliquez-vous, Durin. Pourquoi avez-vous pris cette épingle?

Flow/Durin: Euh, euh, je...

Président: Répondez! [...] Alors qu'il s'explique!

Durin: Mon président je peux m'expliquer, ce que je ne m'explique pas, mon geste inexplicable, et tout. Je regrette moi, surtout que, Lord Scarlett est mort dans des circonstances si tristes, et tout. Il s'est fusillé lui-même, avec une carabine de chasse, comme un lapin.

Président: Revenez à votre affaire.

Durin: Quelle affaire? [...] Ah, oui. Est-ce que cela existe à côté de la mort de Lord Scarlett? Pauvre Lord. Je l'aimais bien et et et...

Président: Et tout.

Durin: Voilà. C'est le mot juste.

[Presiding judge: Explain yourself, Durin. Why did you take this tie-pin?

Durin: Um, well, I...

Presiding judge: Answer! [...] Will he please explain himself!

Durin: Your honour, I can explain myself, that which I cannot explain, my inexplicable act, and all. I regret, more than anything, that Lord Scarlett died in such sad circumstances, and all. He shot himself with a shot gun, like a rabbit.

Presiding judge: Let's return to the matter in hand.

Durin: What matter? Oh, yes. What is that, alongside the death of Lord Scarlett? Poor Lord, I liked him very much, and, and, and...

Presiding judge: And all.

Durin: Exactly. That's the word]

As Durin, Jovet's voice takes on a different tone – slow, high, wheedling and frequently tearful – to express timidity and remorse but also an obsequious sort of cunning. The voice is matched by a crooked posture – he constantly holds his head to one side, forcing him to look sideways at his interlocutor (or the camera) – and highly performative gestures; tears, nose blowing, wringing of hands and excessive blinking). This contrasts markedly with his self-possessed carriage as Mister Flow, which coincides with a rapid delivery and Jovet's peculiar cadences that we have noted above:

Mister Flow (to his accomplice, reporting to him in prison): Et alors? ... [...] Joli travail. Et Héléna? [...] Arrangez cet argent, vous m'agacez. Qu'est que vous croyez? [...] N'avez-vous pas l'impression qu'Héléna pour Antonin Rose a un penchant que nous n'avions pas prévu? [...] Il faut qu'Héléna comprenne bien que je ne la lâcherai pas avant d'avoir eu complètement la fortune de Lord Scarlett.

Croit-elle donc que j'ai fait son mariage uniquement pour lui assurer une existence luxueuse? Elle reviendra, et dans les 48 heures, vous m'entendez? Vous m'agacez à la fin.

[Mister Flow (to his accomplice, reporting to him in prison): Well? ... [...] Nice work. And Héléna? [...] Put that money away, you're getting on my nerves. What do you think? Do you not have the impression that Héléna has developed a penchant for Antonin Rose that we did not foresee? [...] Helena needs to understand that I won't let her go until Lord Scarlett's entire fortune is in my hands. Does she think I arranged her marriage so she could live a life of luxury? She will come back, and within 48 hours, do you hear me? You're really getting on my nerves...]

The complicity between audience and actor – and writer – is here taken a step further. The *mise en scène* of performance here comes not just from Jovet embodying different 'characters', but through the visible putting on and taking off of the alias, Durin.⁴⁹ This is first seen at the end of the sequence when Rose first visits him in prison, as Flow/Durin sets the young lawyer up to retrieve the suitcase and thus implicate himself. Durin repeats the address after Rose as he leaves the prison cell, having refused the commission, this time in a voice that has completely lost its whining quality in favour of an authoritative descending intonation. As the voice is transformed, so is the body; a straight-backed posture, hand on hip, and an ironic, assured look replace the sideways glances, hunched shoulders and wringing of hands. Once again we are confronted with the complicity involved in the cinematic illusion, and just as we saw above with the Grenaison couple, this is built at the expense of characters who are 'dupes'; in this case, Antonin Rose who takes on Durin's defence only to find himself mixed up in the affairs of Mister Flow, in more than once sense, since he falls for the crook's mistress and accomplice, Lady Héléna Scarlett (Edwige Feuillère). The pleasure in the star performance here is audiovisual; the foregrounding of Jovet's performance in certain sequences brings us out of the diegetic world placing the emphasis on the star body as producer of both gestures and words, establishing an affective link between spectator and performer. This foregrounding of performance is even more evident in our next example.

Copie conforme – a sort of precursor to *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Hamer, 1949) – highlights the vocal elements of performance, first through the rapid succession of aliases of the conman, Isamora, and later on, with the introduction of Dupon. We are introduced at the beginning of the film to a series of daring robberies all perpetrated by the same man in a different disguise. The first, the elderly but autocratic 'Duc de Niolles', monarchist and snob, reveals the scam to us first by addressing the trussed up guardian of the chateau in authoritative and rapid tones, quite different to the wavering voice he has been using with his victims, and then by adjusting his wig. Since the audience already knows that this is Jovet in a wig, we could say that the entire narrative premise of the film – the con-trick and then the double – is built on the same

⁴⁹ This *mise en scène* of performance has become a cliché of the crime film, as, for example, in recent years by Kevin Spacey at the end of *The Usual Suspects* (Singer, 1995).

complicity as the theatrical illusion as we have seen it defined by Lambertin. The ‘Duc’ is followed by Alfred, a sweet-talking removal man, and then by a Norwegian of few words. As with Achille Durin, each of these aliases of Manuel Isamora is distinguished vocally as well as in appearance; the duke’s more military than aristocratic, rather gruff tones mark his age as well as class; Alfred’s deeper, full-bodied, Parisian working-class chat is accentuated by the resonant echo of the entrance hall and flirtatious banter with the concierge (Jane Marken); finally the few words spoken by Olaf Christiansen indicate his putative Scandinavian origins by their deliberate pronunciation and a kind of tight-throated delivery. We next encounter Jouvét as a voice-over accompanying a fade-in followed by a long tracking shot of mourners gathered in a cemetery in the pouring rain. His monotonous, rather pompous delivery of a tedious, over-long eulogy, punctuated by bronchial coughing, is little appreciated by the other mourners, who, eager to escape the speech as much as the weather, begin to disperse before he has finished, leaving only one young woman at the graveside. We have ample opportunity to appreciate this new incarnation through the extended discourse, though the audience may assume at this point that this is yet another alias of Isamora rather than a double, Gabriel Dupon, an innocent button salesman. However, when he finally finishes his peroration and turns to the only remaining mourner, Charlotte, a fresh-faced, sympathetic young woman (Annette Poivre), his voice is tremulous and weak. This is one aspect that will serve to distinguish Dupon and Isamora for the audience throughout a film that places a great emphasis on voice as a marker of identity as well as expression of character. And yet, Dupon is repeatedly wrongly identified as the conman on the basis of his voice more than his physical resemblance (‘Sa voix! C’est lui!’ [His voice! That’s him!]) and ‘C’est sa voix, il a la même voix!’ [That’s his voice, he has the same voice!]), and when Isamora sends Dupon to entertain his mistress, Coraline (Suzy Delair) in order to establish his alibi, she fails to notice the deception until almost the end of the film, when Isamora himself unwittingly reveals it by phoning her when she is with Dupon (‘Tu reconnais pas ma voix, quoi?’ [Don’t you recognize my voice?]). We do not hear Isamora *qua* Isamora until we have followed Dupon’s struggles with the law for quite some time, when he intervenes to prevent the button salesman’s suicide; keen to make use of the opportunities presented by a double, he offers him a job. Again, we hear his voice before we see the character, as the crook outlines the deal on offer: ‘Trente mille francs par mois, logé, nourri, blanchi pour travail de remplacement facile et agréable’ [Thirty thousand francs a month, bed, board and washing all in, for an easy and pleasant job as a stand-in]. Here, it is the rapid delivery that connotes quickness of wit compared with Dupon’s slow, deliberate speech.

[IMAGE 4: Jouvét ‘campe’ Isamora and Dupon: ‘Trente mille francs par mois, logé, nourri, blanchi pour travail de remplacement facile et agréable.’ *Copie conforme* (Dréville, 1947). DVD L.C.J. Editions & Productions, 2013.]

The virtuosity of Jouvét’s performance in this film, then, is expressed primarily through his voice and the variations he endows it with. In this way, he can be seen to embody a sort of carnivalesque polyphony, the trying on of different identities, as we see Jouvét ‘camper’ all these different characters. Of course, as well as

being crime films *Mister Flow* and *Copie conforme* are comedies, a carnivalesque genre in which it is permitted that the very virtuosity of performance should paradoxically undercut the diegetic illusion.⁵⁰ However, the affective connection between the audience and the star remains, firmly established through the voice of the latter.

While these comedies are written with Jovet's vocal virtuosity in mind (and ear), *Hôtel du nord* offers a slightly different type of polyphonic expression. Carné's film seems to present us with two linguistic worlds: that of the serious, over-wrought dialogue of Pierre (Jean-Pierre Aumont) and Renée (Annabella), and the one of the fruity, picturesque exchanges between the prostitute Raymonde (Arletty) and her pimp, Monsieur Edmond (Jovet). If, as Baron Turk has pointed out, Jovet's character frequently acts as a foil for Raymonde in this film (1989, 144), Edmond does nevertheless evolve emotionally in the film as he finds some kind of redemption by sacrificing himself for Renée and Pierre, and this evolution is linguistically, as well as vocally, marked.

In the exchanges between Edmond and Raymonde, his taciturnity punctuated by occasional ironic interjections allow her Parisian *gouaille* to shine; the traditional pimp/prostitute power relations evident in the narrative are to some extent undermined by Arletty's dialogue delivery. Edmond/Jovet's economy of phrase is particularly evident in these scenes, where he consistently picks up Raymonde's lines and sends them back to her:

Edmond : Tu prétends encore que j'ai le béguin pour Renée?

Raymonde (examining the black eye Edmond has given her) : Non !

Edmond : Non oui, ou non non ?

Raymonde : Non, non ! [...]

Edmond : Tu es prête, oui ?

Raymonde : Oui.

Edmond : Oui oui, ou oui non?

Raymonde : Oui crotte, et encore, c'est parce que c'est dimanche, sans ça... ' [...] T'aimes pas not'vie ?

Edmond : Tu l'aimes, toi, not'vie ?

[Edmond: Do you still think I'm sweet on Renée?

Raymonde: No.

Edmond: No no, or no yes?

Raymonde: No no! ...

Edmond: Are you ready?

Raymonde: Yes.

Edmond: Yes yes, or yes no?

⁵⁰ Amiel, 'Guitry et Jovet: des acteurs au cinéma', 245.

Raymonde: Yes crap, and that's only cos it's Sunday, otherwise... Don't you like our life?

Edmond: And you, do you like our life?]

His tone with Raymonde is jaded and cynical; this is verbal sparring rather than banter. With Renée, however, although their exchanges are frequently structured with the same symmetry, the tone is altered, as M. Edmond sheds his pimp persona, reverting to his 'real' personality (Renée is the only person to whom he confides his real name, Robert). We see this in a striking sequence where, once again, Jovet's remarkable voice is foregrounded by the absence of light; *acousmètre déjà-vu*, to borrow Chion's term,⁵¹ he is barely illuminated by his cigarette.

Edmond : On vous a parlé de moi cet après-midi.

Renée : Non.

Edmond : Si. Deux hommes sont venus à l'Hôtel du nord.

Renée : En effet. Raymonde vous a raconté ? Ils vous prenaient pour un autre.

Edmond : Non.

Renée : Si. Ils ont demandé un Monsieur Paulo qui jouait de la guitare.

Edmond : C'était moi.

Renée : C'était vous ?

Edmond : Oui, j'ai été cet homme-là, avant.

[Edmond: Some men spoke to you about me this afternoon.

Renée: No.

Edmond: Yes. Two men came to the Hôtel du nord.

Renée: Ah yes. They mistook you for someone else.

Edmond: No.

Renée: Yes. They wanted a Mr Paulo, who played the guitar.

Edmond: That was me.

Renée: That was you?

Edmond: Yes. I was that man, before.]

As in the example above, the symmetry is expressed through negation and affirmation, or rather contradiction ('Si', rather than 'oui'). However Jovet's voice no longer bears the authoritative, mocking, superior tones of the earlier sequence; he speaks quietly, without flamboyant cadences, and as a result, the falling intonation expresses resignation, finality and sincerity, rather than authoritarian panache. Edmond comes clean to Renée about his true identity and the reasons for his dissimulation, but this is more than a confession of guilt; it is also a declaration of 'love': 'Et puis on vous a amené, et puis vous êtes revenue, un jour où je devais partir,

⁵¹ Chion, *La Voix au cinéma*, 32.

aller ailleurs, et je suis resté' [And then they took you away, and then you came back, one day when I was going to leave, to go away, and I stayed].

[IMAGE 5: *Acousmètre déjà-vu. Hôtel du Nord* (Carné, 1938). DVD Soda Pictures, 2006.]

It is striking how much more talkative Edmond becomes in his scenes with Renée (as she remarks, 'C'est drôle, tu n'es plus le même homme' [It's funny, you're a different man]), using, as Chion remarks, elegant language but in short or even terse phrases which suit Jouvét's peculiar diction.⁵² Edmond/Robert's dialogue with Renée allows his 'fleur bleue' [sentimental] side (and that of Jeanson) to emerge, but at the same time, remains heavily gendered; he speaks of 'coucher' [go to bed] while she prefers 'dormir' [sleep], and when pressed by her he resists using the words 'Je t'aime' [I love you], preferring 'Tu me plais' [literally, You're attractive to me] instead, though eventually is persuaded to say it, albeit in a convoluted expression riddled with subjunctives, typical of Jeanson's style: 'Faut-il que je t'aime pour que tu me le fasses dire' [I must really love you, for you to be able to make me say it]. She, on the other hand, withholds her declaration: 'Je vous aimerai à Port-Saïd' [I'll love you in Port Said]. This exchange thus also serves to show their awareness that this life is not real, that the trip to Port Said will never happen, and that Renée will never love him. In Marseille, on the point of departure, the chimeric nature of their plans are evoked through the dialogue; the use of the conditional or future tenses, their imagining of their journey, and of Port Said. Edmond responds to Renée's question, 'Tu es heureux?' [Are you happy?], with 'Probablement. Je n'ai pas l'impression d'exister. C'est très agréable' [Probably. I feel like I don't exist. It's very pleasant], and in the next breath conjures up Paris in the Marseille street:

Renée: Notre dernière balade en France.

Edmond: Avec toi, on sera toujours à Paris.

Renée: En ce moment, on est à Paris?

Edmond: En ce moment la rue de la Gaité, on la descend. Un peu plus bas, c'est Bobino, à droite c'est le théâtre Montparnasse, plus loin c'est le métro, station Edgar Quinet.

[Renée: Our last stroll in France.

Edmond: With you, I'll always be in Paris.

Renée: And now, are we in Paris?

Edmond: Right now, we're walking down the rue de la Gaité. Just over there is the Bobino; on the right, the Théâtre Montparnasse, and a bit further on, the metro stop, Edgar Quinet.]

⁵² Chion, *Le Complexe de Cyrano*, 30.

These lines also recall the famous scene in *Pépé le Moko* (Duvivier, 1937) when Pépé (Jean Gabin) and Gaby (Mireille Balin) revisit the city they know and which for him is an unattainable dream, through their dialogue, also written by Jeanson. As Ginette Vincendeau has pointed out, the place names they cite construct not just their characters (she, associated with the wealthy, western districts associated with luxury and consumption; he, with the working-class, populist Paris of the East and North, to meet up at ‘la place Blanche...’, a site of entertainment where the two Parises can mingle and where they can acknowledge their shared origins in the working-class Gobelins district), but also their star personas; Balin was known for playing ‘femmes de luxe’ [high-class women] while Gabin embodied the working-class hero.⁵³ In *Hôtel du nord*, it is not Montmartre but Montparnasse that is recalled – another neighbourhood associated with theatre and music hall – and, once again, we see this tension between the monologism of the stars’ address and the dialogism of the diegetic world. Surely it is Jouvét just as much as Edmond who evokes the music halls of Montparnasse as well as his Breton roots with these words (the place Edgar Quinet is associated with its Breton community). Equally, the link between Annabella and popular Paris is perhaps not as far-fetched as her exotic, Hollywood glamour might suggest. Among her best known roles for French audiences remained her parts in René Clair’s films set in working-class neighbourhoods, *Le Million* (1931) and perhaps especially *Quatorze juillet* [*Bastille Day*] (1933), a film evoked at the end of *Hôtel du nord* by the street party, which in Carné’s film provides an ironic counterpoint to the activities of the main characters which go on around (or even in opposition to) the party, the noise of which masks the shooting of Edmond.

In ‘Le Grain de la voix’, Barthes writes of his relationship as a listener to the performer:

...je suis décidé à écouter mon rapport au corps de celui ou de celle qui chante ou qui joue et que ce rapport est érotique, mais nullement « subjectif » (ce n’est pas en moi le sujet psychologique qui écoute; la jouissance qu’il espère ne va pas le renforcer - l’exprimer -, mais au contraire le perdre.

[I am determined to listen to my relation to the body of the man or woman singing or playing, and that relation is erotic, but in no way “subjective” (it is not the psychological subject in me that is listening; the jouissance I hope for is not to reinforce – to express – the subject, but rather to lose it.)⁵⁴

Barthes is writing about classical music, but I have borrowed his notion of ‘grain’ to consider the relation between star and writer and star and audience. The idiosyncratic vocal performance style of Louis Jouvét speaking the lines of Henri Jeanson offers a way of exploring the corporeality of dialogue, embodied by the actor who speaks it and received by the audience who hears it. I have argued above that the voice is a primary vector for the affective – erotic in Barthes’s terms – relation between star and spectator precisely because of

⁵³ Ginette Vincendeau, *Pépé le moko* (London: BFI, 1998), 22; 50.

⁵⁴ Barthes, ‘Le Grain de la voix’.

the corporeal connection it establishes. Film studies have extensively explored how identification with a star as a part of the cinematic apparatus can bring about the kind of *jouissance* that Barthes writes of – a temporary dissolution of the self – but in visual rather than aural terms.⁵⁵ Michel Chion’s concept of the *acousmètre* (the voice we hear without seeing who speaks) reminds us that hearing is our primary sense, developed in the womb long before we can see.⁵⁶ Is it possible, then, that by a process of fetishization, the star’s voice, imbued with a certain “grain”, comes to stand in for our intrauterine experience of our parents’ voices, provoking precisely a (temporary) feeling of *jouissance*, loss of self, experienced as oneness with the (lost) other? I would like to argue that in the case of Jouvét and Jeanson (Jeanvè or Jouson), the language is inseparable from the voice which speaks it. It is in the performance by the actor of the writer’s words – the *mise en scène* and the *mise en corps* of dialogue – and in the audience’s ‘pleasure of hearing’ the star’s voice that the boundaries of the self would appear to dissolve.⁵⁷

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⁵⁵ See theories of spectatorship, for example, Jean-Louis Baudry, ‘The Apparatus’, trans. by Bertrand Augst et al, *Camera Obscura*, 1 (1976), 104-26; Daniel Dayan, ‘The Tutor-Code of Classical Narrative Cinema’, *Film Quarterly*, 28/1 (Autumn 1974), 22-31, as well as feminist analyses of the patriarchal structure of the gaze in classical narrative cinema, for example, Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema’, *Screen*, 16/2 (1975), 6-18; Mary Ann Doane, ‘Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator’, *Screen*, 23/3-4 (1982), 74-87; E. Ann Kaplan, ‘Is the gaze male?’, in *Feminism and Film* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2000), 119-38, and Jackie Stacey, *Star-Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

⁵⁶ Mary Ann Doane, too, in her consideration of the voice in cinema refers to the ‘pleasure of hearing’ that goes beyond realism or meaning, and asks ‘what is the specificity of the pleasure of hearing a voice with its elements escaping a strictly verbal codification – volume, rhythm, timbre, pitch?’ (1980, 43). In answer, Doane draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis to evoke both the mother’s voice, a major element of ‘the “sonorous envelope” which surrounds the child’, and that of the father, the voice of interdiction, and argues that the voice ‘traces the forms of unity and separation between bodies.’ Mary Ann Doane, ‘The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space’, *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980), 33-50. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2930003>> accessed 20 July 2017, 43; 44-5.

⁵⁷ Doane, ‘The Voice in the Cinema’, 43.

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