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| *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (1946)* |
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| *Beauty and the Beast* [*La Belle et la Bête*] (1946) is a black-and-white French film directed by Jean Cocteau. Based on the fairy-tale by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, *Beauty and the Beast* was Cocteau’s first feature-length film. Influenced by the modernist experiments of the Parisian avant-garde, the film is celebrated for its surrealistic combination of fantasy and realism. The narrative describes the story of Belle (Josette Day), the beautiful captive of the Beast (Jean Marais), a loving but monstrous figure. Initially disgusted by the Beast, Belle ultimately falls in love with him, at which point he is transformed into a prince. Emphasizing identity, desire, gender, appearance, and social status, the film betrays a modernist fascination with psychological themes. Cocteau employed a realistic, documentary style for the film, produced through the use of unsophisticated camera movements, numerous fixed camera shots, as well as framing and mise-en-scène recalling the realist paintings of Vermeer. In counterpoint to the film’s realism, a fantastical fairy-tale story-world is presented, in which a monstrous beast is actually a dashing prince in disguise, characters transform into other humans and animals, and physical objects magically come alive. Cocteau’s stylistic innovations and authorial vision in Beauty and the Beast helped establish him as an Auteur director and positioned him as a predecessor of the French New Wave. |
| Further reading:  (Cocteau)  (Sheaffer-Jones)  (Williams) |