

THE SEARCH FOR NEW EXPRESSION IN THE THEATRE:

THE EXAMPLE OF JEAN COCTEAU

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by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The purpose of this paper is to examine the theatre of Jean Cocteau in its search for new expression. The first chapter presents Jean Cocteau's precursors and their parallels with his theatre, and his early formation in the theatre. The second chapter deals with his contemporaries in the areas of dance, music and art. Chapter three treats the plays of Jean Cocteau in the light of their sources and innovations.

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INTRODUCTION

Although the fascinating life of Jean Cocteau has been recounted in numerous biographies and his theatre dissected play by play, no full attempt has ever been made to study his works of theatre in the light of sources, parallels and innovations.

Since biographical accounts have been unsatisfactory in dealing with Cocteau's theatre as an example of new expression, there arose the need to scrutinize this perspective of his works. Cocteau's predecessors and contemporaries have furnished the invaluable inspiration to his search for new theatre. It then became necessary to delve more deeply into these sources which were instrumental to his theatre.

This paper will look closely at the theatre of Jean Cocteau in the search for new expression. New expression found its roots in the sources, Cocteau's influences, in parallels, which were the demonstration of similar thinking between Cocteau and his precursors and contemporaries, and finally in innovation, the new ideas established within the area of theatre. Also, an attempt will be made to assess Cocteau's place in the theatre and to gain an understanding of the theory and its applications in his theatre.

Jean Cocteau, poet and dramatist, was a man highly sensitive to all the arts. Here was a man who preferred to associate with the wealthy and the titled, an advantage which

gained him access to the great innovators of his time, including Diaghilev and Stravinsky. Cocteau's theatre grew out of the modern artistic activity surrounding the worldly Paris society, of which he was a part. Cocteau, more than any other dramatist, possessed an instinctive expertise in recording and incorporating these modern trends into his new theatre. Therefore, his contribution to the theatre was a unique one.

In examining Jean Cocteau's theatre as a distillation of sources, parallels and innovations, it is inevitable that in works of this nature, a considerable amount of historical data must be used. Such facts of theatre history which may appear confusing at first glance, will provide the indispensable groundwork for the investigation of the theatre of Cocteau.

The problem of heavily documented research can be overcome by means of a well organised plan for presentation. The first of three chapters will outline Cocteau's precursors, their innovations and parallels with his theatre. His precursors included Antoine and Le Théâtre Libre, Paul Fort and Le Théâtre d'Art, Lugné-Poe and Le Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, Jacques Rouché and Le Théâtre des Arts, and Jacques Copeau and Le Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier. Cocteau's early interests in varied forms of theatre will be discussed as the background to his formative years in the theatre.

The second chapter will be devoted to Jean Cocteau and his contemporaries, placing him at the centre and pointing out further parallels to music, dance and painting. Special attention will be paid to Cocteau's collaboration with Serge de Diaghilev, Léonide Massine, Igor Stravinsky, Erik Satie, Les Six, Pablo Picasso and Léon Bakst. These were the innovators who contributed to Cocteau's aim in achieving a synthesis of arts through diverse sources.

The third and final chapter will study Jean Cocteau's plays which brought together the sources, pointed out the parallels and showed the importance of collaboration. The examination of Cocteau's theatre: Parade, Le Boeuf sur le Toit, Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, Antigone, Oedipe-Roi, Roméo et Juliette, Orphée, La Machine Infernale, Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde, Les Parents Terribles and La Machine à Ecrire, will show his innovations and unique contribution to theatre. The plays are grouped into categories which clearly indicate Cocteau's diverse forms: the early plays, the adaptations of Greek myth, the adaptation of French medieval mythology, and the modern plays.

Useful references will appear in the form of appendices and photographs.

CHAPTER 1

COCTEAU'S PRECURSORS AND HIS EARLY FORMATION IN THE THEATRE

The theatre of Jean Cocteau is one which blends his own style of dramatic theory with diverse influences adapted from his precursors in the theatre.

Antoine and Cocteau

Towards the beginning of the twentieth century as Jean Cocteau was developing an interest in the theatre, the state of the Theatre in France was undergoing a metamorphosis. This change was largely due to Antoine's theatre. His Théâtre Libre, founded in 1887, and which three years later, in 1890 restored prosperity to the theatre, was often called a "théâtre d'opposition".¹

Through the realisation of a scenic revolution which emphasized stage setting, Antoine's theatre lived up to its name. One aim of the Théâtre Libre was to present an exact imitation of life on the stage by giving as much material reality as possible to the stage setting. Real objects were placed in a real construction, resulting in an intensification of the active, dynamic side of life. Antoine, who used real accessories in his theatre, gave the spectator a look at life itself. The plays which were seen became more than mere acts upon the stage or play-acting. They were fragments of life or "tranches de vie". The real settings of Antoine contrasted with the traditional "trompe-l'oeil" décors.

¹La Revue Bleue, (1e 21 juillet, 1894).

In 1888 the Théâtre Libre, then only one year in operation, presented Les Bouchers a play written by the poet Fernand Icres: "La mise en scène que l'on avait voulue la plus vraie possible, conformément à l'esprit de l'oeuvre, fit couler des flots d'encre parce que la boutique du boucher, lieu de l'action, était meublée de vrais quartiers de boeuf."² This particular stage setting revealed one of the main formats of the naturalist theatre, that of introducing some "tranches de vie" on stage. This was the kind of realism which author Raymond Cogniat would describe as "la joie de vivre".

Such innovations of Antoine reflected the spirit of renovation and rehabilitation of theatre. The Théâtre Libre was opposed to the conventions of traditional theatre in France which tended to separate itself from the reality of life by using stiffly painted scenery and "trompe-l'oeil" décor. Instead, the Théâtre Libre introduced a décor and accessories which Antoine hoped would reproduce an authentic setting, rivalling that in a photograph. The Théâtre Libre reacted against the traditional French theatre with an avant-garde flavour:

....il a fait une découverte de première importance pour l'avenir du théâtre; c'est de se servir du décor pour renforcer l'atmosphère de la pièce, de faire même jouer un rôle aux accessoires, d'exiger de l'acteur que son art ne soit pas uniquement dans la parole et le geste, mais s'étende jusqu'au silence et à l'immobilité mêmes. ³

Le Théâtre Libre took the French theatre beyond the narrow limits imposed by the Comédie-Française by bringing to the public ...

²André Antoine, Le Théâtre, V.I., (Paris: Les Editions de France, 1932), pp 223-4.

³Dorothy Knowles, Le Réaction Idéaliste au Théâtre depuis 1890, (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1972), pp 236-7. Hereafter referred to as La Réaction Idéaliste.

plays of lesser-known French dramatists; Curel, Porto-Riche, J. Jullien, Brioux, in an effort to establish a "French" theatre. Jean Cocteau's effort to establish "French" music early in the twentieth century, in his collaboration with the members of Les Six can be paralleled with Antoine's desire to give theatre a French character. The music composed by the members of Les Six reflected the popular, everyday banality of life in France, as in their compositions for Cocteau's Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel. Georges Auric has based some of his songs on experiences, "la foire de Montmartre", Milhaud's songs, based on Cocteau's poems, also represented daily life, "Fête de Bordeaux", "Fête de Montmartre". Antoine wished to renovate French theatre by including the more obscure French writers' works in his theatre, thus expanding on the dramatic sources on which the French theatre of his day could draw.

Just as Antoine had reacted in a spirit of innovation against the traditional theatre in France, Cocteau later used innovations in décor, text and accessories to react against the naturalist theory in Antoine's theatre. Other innovations of the Théâtre Libre included the tendency towards a simplification of the text, at the same time subordinating the text to "La vérité psychologique" of the play's characters.

Through the introduction of young, new, unknown French dramatists to the theatre, Antoine also presented fresh elements in his Théâtre Libre. One-act plays such as Les Bouchers were unconventional in the late nineteenth century. Antoine's stage settings, exact replicas of reality, conformed to the surroundings of contemporary, modern living. Real accessories and

furniture were emphasized: Verga's Chevalerie rustique used a real fountain in the middle of the stage. Antoine employed the talents of André Rivoire of the Chat Noir, inventor of the shadow picture, to his advantage in La Mort du Duc d'Enghien, by Léon Hennique. In this play, new effects in lighting were realized when the footlights were turned off, leaving the candles and lanterns to provide the only source of light on the stage. In Antoine's day, such an innovation was considered outrageous, yet today's theatre had adopted this idea to a point where audiences would be shocked if the lights in the auditorium remained on during the performance.

Since the stage settings had to conform as closely as possible to reality, dramatic action had to change. It too became more realistic: characters moved and spoke as if they were living in the contemporary world, adopting a modern speaking style. Antoine's characters possessed inner souls and were presented with a psychological "vérité". Real décor obliged the actors to live rather than play their roles on the stage.

Antoine brought about another novelty when Marcel Luguët's Le Missionnaire was presented. Antoine took the role of reader, positioning himself at the front of the stage with book in hand, and commented on the action of the play. This technique can be paralleled with Jean Cocteau's two Phonos in Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel who also comment on the play's events.

In October, 1887, Soeur Philomène, written by Jules Vidal and Arthur Byl, experimented with Antoine's concept of the

"scène d'intérieur". The fourth wall of the stage was transparent. The actors carried on their actions without any regard for the spectators, some even turning their back to the audience. According to the traditional French theatre, no actor was supposed to have his back to the spectators. Antoine, in his determination to represent "la réalité" on stage, went against this practice.

An example of Antoine's portrayal of "tranches de vie" was Les Quarts d'heure by Guiches and Lavedan. The play consisted of one-act sections which each took fifteen minutes to perform. Action was rapid and Antoine renewed the technique of delivering dialogue through his "dialogue ultrarapide".

The Théâtre Libre made a significant mark on the theatre in France by fighting against traditional methods, and by implementing innovations, many of which have been adapted and thoroughly assimilated by later playwrights and directors, such as Lugné-Poe, Jacques Copeau and Cocteau.

Paul Fort and Jean Cocteau

Another dramatic movement which revolutionised theatre in France, came about prior to the nineties of the last century. Founded in 1890, the Théâtre d'Art of the young poet Paul Fort was the result of a collaboration between the painters Bonnard,

Vuillard and various other artists ⁴ and actor Edouard de Max and Suzanne Desprès. Edouard de Max was a well-known actor from the Comédie-Française who was later responsible for launching the young Jean Cocteau's artistic career, as a poet, the beginnings of which eventually led him to become "man of the theatre." Jean Cocteau did not start his career as a writer of theatre, but as a poet who both composed and recited poetry. His contact with the public and experience in establishing a stage presence aided him in the theatre by giving him an understanding into actors and their roles.

The Théâtre d'Art was basically a symbolist theatre which had in mind to develop a "littérature dramatique", as Paul Fort described, creating a rival for Antoine's Théâtre Libre. This was the first attempt to conceive of a theatre of, as well as for poets.⁵ The Théâtre d'Art was aimed not only towards the dramatists but also towards the poets, as Paul Fort was himself a poet.

⁴ This group of symbolist artists, whose style followed no set rule, called themselves Les Nabis, a word which derives from the Hebrew for "inspired prophet". The group formed around 1890, taking Gauguin as their leader. Together they worked with Paul Fort in his Théâtre d'Art to help achieve a synthesis of arts in the theatre. In the spring of 1891, the Théâtre d'Art gave a gala benefit event for Gauguin and poet Paul Verlaine.

Pierre Bonnard designed the set for La Geste du Roy (Fierabras) in 1891 for the Théâtre d'Art and in 1920 for Jeux, a ballet of "poème dansé" by Nijinsky, set to music by Debussy for the Ballets Suédois.

Edouard Vuillard collaborated with artist Ibels to create Berte aux grands pieds for La Geste du Roy; he designed décors for the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre: in 1893 La Gardienne by de Regnier, Solness le Constructeur and Romersholm, both by Ibsen. Maurice Denis was also an artist of Les Nabis who designed décors for Rémy de Gourmont's Théodat (1891), for the Théâtre d'Art and later in 1894 for Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre.

⁵ Paul Fort had already established a theatre called Le Théâtre Mixte which had its first presentation in June, 1890 at the Salle Duprez; the theatre aimed to show plays of varied genres. Its third "spectacle" was actually the Théâtre d'Art's debut.

The Théâtre d'Art was also revolutionary in the sense that it presented for the first time within the same program, in 1891, both symbolist (Maurice Maeterlinck, Paul Claudel) and idealist works. This, the Art's fourth program showed Edgar A. Poe's Le Corbeau, with Premier Chant from l'Illiade, and Shelley's Les Cenci, Tragédie en cinq actes, which was originally never meant to be performed on stage, having been declared "injouable"; it became the Théâtre d'Art's debut. Camille Mauclair wrote:

(Cependant) le programme de Paul Fort était splendide. Il comprenait toutes les pièces injouées et injouables, et toutes les grandes épopées depuis le Ramayana jusqu'à la Bible, des dialogues de Platon à ceux de Renan, de La Tempête, à Axel; de Marlowe au drame chinois, d'Eschyle au Père Eternel. Il y en avait pour deux cents ans à tout le moins. 6

In Paul Fort's theatre, décor became more stylised and symbolic, thus creating a direct contrast to Antoine's naturalistic mise en scène. These results in décor were due to the symbolist artists from Les Nabis. These painters were responsible for transforming the décor of theatre at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century. Their formula was intended to counteract "le réalisme" of Antoine's naturalist décor, and to reintroduce a poetic notion as well as collaborate on all the elements of an artistic creation. This collaboration would eventually lead to a synthesis of arts, which Jean Cocteau also aimed for in his theatre. The artistic accomplishments of Les Nabis in collaboration with Le Théâtre d'Art were instrumental in bringing about a transition from a "trompe-l'oeil" décor to a "décor d'atmosphère",

⁶Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction Idéaliste, pp 140-1.

which was more in keeping with the symbolist plays presented.

Le Théâtre d'Art followed in the spirit of a wave of young writers who had forsaken "la réalité" of Antoine's Théâtre Libre for "le rêve" of idealist and symbolist works. If Antoine's theatre emphasized the "active" aspect of life, Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art leaned towards "une autre vérité, intruse, psychologique, suggérée".⁷ In his theatre, décor evoked atmosphere. Paul Fort was interested in simplifying stage setting; "une 'simplification complète des moyens dramatiques (. . .) la prépondérance (. . .) accordée à la parole lyrique' un triomphe de la poésie".⁸ Simplification of plot was also emphasized. Les Nabis transformed décor with their experiments in the style of the "esprit nouveau".

One example of an interior drama which the Théâtre d'Art put on was La Fille aux Mains Coupées by Pierre Quillard. Gauguin was responsible for the décor of this "mystère en deux tableaux":

Pour cette pièce, il y avait une toile de fond d'or aux figures d'icônes et aux naïfs anges en prière comme chez les Primitifs. Devant un rideau de gaze une récitante, quand se taisaient les acteurs, reprenait la parole, prononçant d'une voix douce et monotone les passages en prose qui expliquent les changements de lieu. Derrière le rideau, comme dans une vision, s'agitaient lentement et avec dignité les silhouettes atténuées des acteurs, dont Mlle Camée à la voix d'or. Conforme à la conception du dramaturge, l'ordonnance scénique était arrangée de façon à laisser toute sa valeur à la parole lyrique, empruntant seule le précieux instrument de la voix humaine qui vibre à la fois dans l'âme de plusieurs auditeurs assemblés, et négligeant l'imparfait leurre des décors et autres procédés matériels. Utiles quand on veut traduire par

⁷Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction Idéaliste, p. 167.

⁸Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme au Théâtre, (Paris: L'Arche Editeur, 1957), p. 116. Hereafter referred to as Le Symbolisme.

une imitation fidèle la vie contemporaine, ils seraient impuissants dans les oeuvres de rêve, c'est-à-dire de réelle vérité. On s'est fié à la parole pour évoquer le décor, et le faire surgir en l'esprit du spectateur, comptant obtenir, par le charme verbal, une illusion entière, et dont nulle contingence inexacte ne viendra troubler l'abstraction. 9

As the Théâtre d'Art was a theatre for and created by poets, this play was suitable, allowing the words to evoke and create the characters' feelings, setting and décor. It was Pierre Quillard who said that "La parole crée le décor comme tout le reste", a phrase which can be used to summarise the theory of décor in symbolist theatre.

Jean Cocteau also used painters to create décor and costumes for his plays as did Paul Fort. Cocteau's first effort Le Dieu Bleu, written in 1912, featured the décors and costumes of Russian painter Léon Bakst. Complete with choreography by Michel Fokine, the ballet exemplified a combination of varied art-forms. Cocteau's explosive "ballet-réaliste" Parade, which was written in 1917, introduced Pablo Picasso's artistic talents to the theatre audience. Cocteau's theatre and Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art were both concerned with creating a synthesis of all arts.

Perhaps Paul Fort's most significant innovation in theatre was the establishment of a poetic germ on the stage. Through the incorporation of a poetic germ, Paul Fort hoped to give a poetic value to the theatre, particularly to the text of the play and to the décors.

⁹Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction Idéaliste, p. 242.

He held recitals of poetry by Rimbaud (Le Bateau Ivre),¹⁰ La Forge (Le Concile Féerique, whose décor, "une nuit étoilée", was kept to the bare essential), Paul Verlaine (Les Uns et les Autres), and Mallarmé (Le Guignon); all these poets were members of the "nouvelle école". Fort's poets' theatre served as precursor to Cocteau's theatre, since Cocteau was first and foremost a poet, and one whose career in theatre had begun with a reading of his very early poetry at the Théâtre Fémina and in the salons of Paris. Jean Cocteau's career as a writer of theatre gradually grew out of his debut as a poet of eighteen who read his verses in the salons of Paris, and more importantly at the Théâtre Fémina.

As a poet, Jean Cocteau extended the idea of poetry one step further to incorporate his invention of "poésie de théâtre", evident in all of his plays since Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel. Here poetic value has been designated to each and every element of Cocteau's theatre.

The Théâtre d'Art also helped to educate the French audiences in foreign plays, as Antoine had begun before him. Paul Fort's theatre was the first to present Maurice Maeterlinck's L'Intruse and Les Aveugles, both symbolist plays. Both Paul Fort and Antoine broke with traditional theatre by presenting foreign plays, which added to the repertoire of theatre in France.

¹⁰Le Bateau Ivre by Rimbaud presented a décor which consisted of a folding screen on which had been painted a Japanese scene by Ranson, representative of an underwater garden scene. The minimal décor (just the screen) harmonised well with the main theme of the poem. Paul Fort had always insisted on a décor which evoked rather than described, an idea which the Russians later adopted in their theatre: "suggérer un objet, voilà le rêve".

Essentially, Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art contributed to theatre in France by presenting a wider variety of plays, by bringing about a co-operation between theatre and painting and by giving more poetic value to the text of the plays. Jean Cocteau focussed his theatre on extending the last two elements of Fort, in his collaborations with painters, composers and artists in the ballet, and in the invention of "poésie de théâtre".

Lugné-Poe and Cocteau

Three years after the birth of Jean Cocteau, Lugné-Poe, aided by Maurice Maeterlinck and painter Edouard Vuillard, founded what was the true successor to the Théâtre d'Art, the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. On May 17, 1893, the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre opened with Maurice Maeterlinck's "drame de songe", Pelléas et Mélisande at the Bouffes-Parisiens. The play marks an important date in theatre as it was the first modern "féerie" presented.

A forest and a room in a castle indicated the very minimal décor designed by Paul Vogler, who used little lighting. Henry de Régnier wrote in L'Art Moderne, May 21, 1893:

,,,ils ont je ne sais quoi de grave et d'enfantin et sont continuellement en face de leur destinée -- (. . .) --. Il s'y est montré d'une simplicité et d'une autorité singulières, d'une mimique excellente. ¹¹

and the monotony of the unreal, dreamlike atmosphere:

¹¹Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme, p. 170.

Dans la production française de l'oeuvre, l'effet d'éloignement et de simplicité archaïque était obtenu en faisant se dérouler toute l'action derrière un rideau de gaze, en imposant aux acteurs le geste anguleux et gauche qui rappelait les figures de tapisserie. 12

This sense of mystery coupled with a fairy-tale setting and mood characterise the play, bringing to mind the "château enchanté" in Jean Cocteau's "Féerie" Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde, written in 1937. In Pelléas et Mélisande:

Tout y est indécis, les caractères, les situations, les paroles. Il n'y a pas une seule personne comme nous. Toutes sont des marionnettes tenant des propos illogiques, mais qui s'harmonisent bien avec des situations à peine ébauchées, et leur prêtant un vaste sens de l'infini et du mystérieux.

Comme chez Wagner, tout est symbolique: les événements, les personnages, les choses. Les paroles même renferment des symboles. Mais M. Maeterlinck pousse l'emploi du symbole jusqu' à donner un air d'irréalité à tout son théâtre. -- (. . .) -- Il y a aussi des symboles cachés dans les incidents et ils sont plus ou moins clairs. 13

Whether or not symbolism pervades Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde of Cocteau, there still lies an atmosphere of "rêve," of "enchantement", of "illusions" and of "faux" which eventually give way to truth, although tragic, at the end of the féerie.

Lugné-Poe had the intention of renovating the stage setting almost to the point of eliminating the notion of theatricality.

Décors and accessories were kept simple, but useful to the main interest of the play. Rather than use "trompe-l'oeil" structures and artificial accessories, Lugné-Poe used settings which suggested hidden ideas of the plot with subtleness.

¹²Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction Idéaliste, p. 245

¹³Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction Idéaliste, pp. 175-6.

Camille Mauclair, critic, wrote in an article from the March 1892 edition of La Revue Indépendante:

Le temps et le lieu étant nuisibles puisqu'ils tendent à restreindre l'universel, le décor sera inutile. Toute virtualité sera donnée à la parole d'un poète ce qui est aller vers l'Art. D'elle surgira toute la magie si soignée qu'elle fût, serait vile et imparfait. 15

Lugné-Poe accomplished this simplification of décor through a "simple toile de fond" which served all purposes no matter what the scenery. This piece of cloth also served to evoke the main idea or theme of the play. Artists created the costumes, usually a simple draping of fabric. There was no place for elaborate detail here.

In Pelléas et Mélisande Vogler's décor eliminated accessories, furnishing and left the stage in semi-darkness. Costumes were neutral. Jean Cocteau's "féerie" Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde, presented minimal décors and costumes. The absence of colour was noticeable since black and white predominated throughout the setting. Lugné-Poe's innovations, once experiments in theatre, and which helped to establish theatres of later years (Le Théâtre des Arts, Le Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier), are also present in today's theatre: the elimination of footlights, a sloped stage, a transparent curtain behind which actors performed (Pelléas et Mélisande), and actors playing the part of décor, i.e. doors. Lugné-Poe continued on by exploiting the human voice, through the use of chanted diction.

¹⁵Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction Idéaliste, p. 238

Cocteau in his own way explored the possibilities of the human voice, from Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, whose cubist constructions, the Phonos, commented on the play's actions, to his one-act play La Voix Humaine which exploited the human voice in a telephone conversation.

Besides presenting plays written by foreign authors, especially during the first four years (1893-7), and mainly Scandinavian writers such as Henrik Ibsen, Bjornson, Strindberg, Lugné-Poe launched a new breed of French dramatists, as Paul Fort had done: "jouer de jeunes auteurs qui nous apportent avec leur jeunesse un nouveau mode d'art dramatique."¹⁶ Among some of these writers were Mme Rachilde, whose play L'Araignée de Cristal examines an obsession with mirrors, terror and tragedy; Maurice Beaubourg (L'Image); Henri de Régnier who wrote the "poème dialogué" La Gardienne; and Pierre Quillard (L'Errante). Oscar Wilde's Salomé, the Hindu legend by Kalidasa Sakountala, Romersholm by Ibsen, Au-delà des forces humaines by Bjornson and Père by Strindberg, were a few of the many foreign plays presented at the Oeuvre.

The Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, an untraditional theatre, often staged avant-garde works, many of which followed a spirit of revolt or even anarchy, provoking scandals. In December of 1896, a play written by an innovative dramatist name Alfred Jarry, Ubu Roi, was presented; it caused a memorable uproar:

Les gens quittaient leur fauteuil. -- (. . .) --
 Rachilde essayait d'imposer silence aux siffleurs: --
 (. . .) -- et Viélé-Griffin rêveur: 'on se croirait
 dans une forêt pleine d'oiseaux gazouillants!' 17

¹⁶Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction Idéaliste, p. 199

¹⁷Jacques Robichez, Lugné-Poe, (Paris: L'Arche Editeur, 1955), pp 80-1.

Ubu Roi was presented in the style of the "guignol" with "pantins articulés" for the characters, as well as Footit the clown, and completed by a forty-piece orchestra to accompany the play, as Lugné-Poe had wished for.

Jarry's Ubu Roi marked a definitive break with traditional theatre: "Au contraire c'est à ce qu'il y a de plus trivial, de plus grossier en nous que le Père Ubu, la main sur sa 'gidouille', fait appel."¹⁸ Both Jarry and Lugné-Poe had conceived of a "guignol" type of production which used:

masques, tête de cheval en carton pendue au cou du cavalier, fond de scène noir avec une pancarte indicatrice du lieu, suppression des foules, 'adoption d'un accent ou mieux d'une voix spéciale pour le personnage principal', 'costumes aussi peu couleur locale ou chronologiques que possible'. 19

The décor, unique and innovative, incorporated actor and setting into one element:

'Pour remplacer la porte de la prison' raconte Gémier, 'un acteur se tenait en scène avec le bras gauche tendu. Je mettais la clef dans sa main comme dans une serrure. Je faisais le bruit de pène, cric, crac, et je tournais le bras comme si j'ouvrais la porte.' 20

Such "jeux de scènes" were evocative, novel and certainly interesting from the theatrical point of view.

If the play Ubu Roi and its characters were considered avant-garde in mise en scène, dialogue, costumes and text, so was the play's author: "A l'avant-scène, un clown, aux cheveux noirs plaqués, grande cravate blanche et habit flottant, Alfred Jarry." 21

¹⁸Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme, p. 360

¹⁹Ibid., p. 365.

²⁰Jacques Robichez, Lugné-Poe, p. 79.

²¹Jacques Robichez, Lugné-Poe, p. 78.

For Alfred Jarry, décor played an integral role in his theatre. Jean Cocteau also believed in a décor "utile", and appears to have been directly or indirectly influenced by Jarry and Lugné-Poe. The central character of Ubu Roi, Ubu, played by actor Gémier, was inspired by the clown Footit, sporting a huge belly. In 1917, with Parade, Cocteau combined characters and décor to create his Managers.

Jarry and Lugné-Poe were not the only men of theatre to find and implement sources in the circus. Cocteau used the clown Footit and Chocolat from the Nouveau Cirque, in his 1920 play Le Boeuf sur le Toit. This love of the circus went back to Cocteau's childhood days. It is possible to draw several parallels between Jarry's Ubu Roi and the works of Cocteau, for example: Ubu Roi was meant to, and did produce a furor, as did some of Cocteau's plays, including Parade, most notably for their elements of reform or revolt; Ubu was borrowed from the circus, as were the Managers from Parade: Picasso's harlequin and acrobat, which were part of the backdrop, also come from the circus world; Jarry tended to use cardboard masks, while Cocteau's Managers were encased in huge carton construction; Ubu spoke with a special accent and voice: "une sorte de langage théâtral nouveau";²² the character of Jocaste in La Machine Infernale was to have a special international accent spoken by royalty.

Both dramatists emphasized the idea of attack or revolt, although with Jarry the attack was more brutal and very verbal: "Ubu devient le bouc émissaire chargé de toutes les bassesses de

²²Jacques Robichez, Lugné-Poe, p. 78

l'Humanité, de tout ce qui grouille en tout homme de trouble, d'inavouable et d'ignoble."²³ "C'était une insulte indéterminée, le triomphe de cet esprit anarchique que les représentations de l'Oeuvre avaient d'autre part satisfait avec plus de précision."²⁴ On the other hand, Cocteau chose to attack the decadence of the bourgeoisie in his play Les Parents Terribles, mainly through the use of "poésie de théâtre".

One of Lugné-Poe's significant changes was to combine harmoniously all elements of the play. His aim was: "de faire au théâtre, de quelque façon que ce soit, oeuvre d'art, ou, tout au moins, de remuer des idées."²⁵ Lugné-Poe's idea of artists in collaboration with dramatists was a concept which influenced Stanislavsky and Diaghilev. Just as Lugné-Poe had asked artists such as Bonnard, Vuillard, Serusier, Maurice Denis and even Toulouse-Lautrec to illustrate his programs, Diaghilev later appealed to Léon Bakst and Alexandre Benois among other painters to brighten the Ballets Russes' décor with exoticism and fantasy. Here too, all the elements fit together. Diaghilev managed to include dancers and musicians as well. Cocteau shared this method, particularly when he worked with Diaghilev. Gradually a true synthesis of arts was being developed in theatre.

Lugné-Poe brought simplicity to the stage, and with his presentation of Pelléas et Mélisande, established a symbolist décor. He too introduced foreign authors to the French stage and set a precedent by staging the avant-garde Ubu Roi of Jarry. As Cocteau aimed towards a unity of elements, Lugné-Poe attempted

²³Jacques Robichez, Lugné-Poe, p. 96

²⁴Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme, p. 359.

²⁵Ibid., p. 193.

to combine all parts of a play into a unified whole. The ultimate synthesis of arts which Cocteau achieved in his theatre found a forerunner in Lugné-Poe's co-operation with a group of artists.

Jacques Rouché and Cocteau

During Cocteau's period of formation in the theatre, the Théâtre des Arts founds its director in Rouché. Rouché was responsible for carrying out innovations in décor and accessories with the aid of painters Maxime Dethomas (Frères Karamazov), and Dresca (La Locandiera, by Goldoni).

Rouché's ideas included the use of an amphitheatre, a revolving stage and diffuse lighting. Following in the footsteps of Antoine and Lugné-Poe, he took up the reform of creating more unity between the drama and the audience. The Théâtre des Arts opened with Belgian writer Saint-Georges de Bouhélier's Le Carnaval des Enfants, November 1910. This was a play: 'de suggestion poétique, qui réclamait l'accord synthétique entre les attitudes, les physionomies, les paroles et le décor, il fournissait donc une poésie de drame qui voulait une poésie de mise en scène et allait au-devant d'elle.'²⁶

One innovation of this play was "la nouveauté des silences"²⁷ which simultaneously presented two different levels of drama. One level was very superficial, and evident to the

²⁶Henri Clouard, Histoire de la Littérature Française, Du Symbolisme à Nos Jours, 1885-1914, Volume 1, (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1947), p. 638. Hereafter known as Histoire de la Littérature Française, 1.

²⁷Ibid., 1, 638.

audience; the other represented the "sous-entendu", the profound, interior vision. This method of placing two levels one over the other tended to steer the play towards the "dream, invisible, mysterious". Le Carnaval des Enfants achieved a union of theatre and poetry, perhaps a fore-runner of Jean Cocteau's "poésie de théâtre". Maxime Dethomas designed the décor and costumes.

In April 1911, Jacques Copeau, in collaboration with Jean Croue, gave Rouché Frères Karamazov, by Dostoevsky, which was successfully presented. This play also featured décor by Dethomas. For Jacques Rouché, décor and characters constituted inseparable elements.²⁸ While décor, itself a decorative work of art, translated the play into concrete terms, it was still the drama which played the major role.

Décor and characters form an inseparable element in two of Jean Cocteau's plays: Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde and Roméo et Juliette: "--(. . .) -- des personnages invisibles, des 'valets de scène' enlèveraient et remplaceraient les éléments mobiles du décor."²⁹

Jacques Rouché understood the fruitful result of collaboration between art and theatre, artists and dramatists when he wrote in l'Art Théâtral Moderne:

Nous possédons, en France, une belle école de peintres décorateurs; l'heure semble venue de tenter, avec leur concours, un modeste essai par lequel, sans rien renier des traditions de beauté léguées par le passé, mais en cherchant une note d'art nouvelle, on s'efforcera d'élever l'art dramatique à la hauteur atteinte par la culture artistique de notre époque. 30

²⁸ Alfred Jarry and Lugné-Poe had already taken this idea to its limit in Ubu Roi where actors became the décor.

²⁹ Jean Hugo, "Roméo et Juliette" Cahiers Jean Cocteau: 5 Jean Cocteau et son théâtre, (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 25 Hereafter referred to as Cahiers 5.

³⁰ Jacques Rouché, L'Art Théâtral Moderne, (Paris: Librairie

Jean Cocteau's theatre witnessed a collaboration of theatre and poetry, especially since Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, and of theatre and art, with such painters as Léon Bakst, Pablo Picasso, Jean Hugo and Raoul Dufy. Jacques Rouché was one of the directors to work with painters in his theatre and to realise their contribution to the setting of the play. Cocteau picked up on this important idea of collaboration between painter and dramatist in his work with Picasso and Bakst.

Jacques Copeau and Cocteau

Cocteau was preparing for the theatre world when Jacques Copeau was renovating French theatre. Beginning his career in literary criticism as Director of the Nouvelle Revue Française from 1909 until 1913, Copeau during that same year also founded his Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier, which continued until 1924.

The years between 1910 and 1914 mark what was known as "la belle époque" of the French theatre. Jacques Copeau, aided by two French actors Charles Dullin and Louis Jouvet (both were part of the Cartel des Quatre with Georges Pitoëff and Gaston Baty), undertook to combat the commercialism and artificiality of this genre of theatre. In Copeau's mind "la belle époque" stifled whatever real literary talent there was in theatre.

Jacques Copeau offered the Paris public an eclectic program which consisted of classic plays such as Molière's L'Avare in 1913, and Les Fourberies de Scapin, 1917; a more contemporary play, Saul Bloud et Gay, 1924), p. 11 In addition to following Lugné-Poe's desire to use artists in his theatre, Serge de Diaghilev may also have been influenced by Jacques Rouché. By collaborating with Léon Bakst and Alexandre Benois, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes achieved grand heights. It is of note that Diaghilev had met Rouché in 1914 in St. Petersburg. Rouché, then on a tour of Europe, was very much interested in the Russian stage. In turn, Diaghilev had a great respect for Rouché's talents. Rouché had, in fact, seen every production of the Ballets Russes in Paris.

by André Gide, 1922 (with music by Arthur Honegger, a member of Les Six); Le Paquebot Tenacity by Charles Vildrac, and Le Carrosse du Saint-Sacrement by Prosper Mérimée 1917; and foreign plays, La Nuit des Rois or Ce que vous voudrez by Shakespeare, 1914.

Copeau preferred to have a simplicity that was almost "ascétique" and an aesthetic unity for his functional stage setting. His productions were characterised by décor that had been reduced to the bare minimum, and a mise en scène which returned to the basics. The simplifications of stage setting characterised Jean Cocteau's adaptation of Greek classical theatre, in Antigone, Orphée and La Machine Infernale. In 1914 Paul Claudel's play, L'Echange, was presented at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier. This play exemplified Copeau's new style in theatre, with a décor which was:

-- (. . .) -- extrêmement simplifié: une toile de fond représentant le ciel, et un arbre au premier plan. Simplification ou même suppression de décor, pour mieux concentrer l'attention des spectateurs sur l'action dramatique elle-même, sur la beauté des attitudes et l'harmonie des costumes; c'est d'ailleurs un principe chez M. Copeau; principe qui rentre de l'esprit de la réforme de mise en scène tentée par les premiers symbolistes. 31

Another reform that Copeau undertook was to transform the text into a style: "psalmodié en longues litanies, suivant le rite théâtral néochrétien."³²

The symbolists attempted to institute a theatre which was entirely submissive to art; the Vieux-Colombier completed this effort. As it was essentially an art theatre, writers, and artists were attracted to it. Jean Cocteau's theatre also

³¹ Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction Idéaliste, p. 436.

³² Ibid., p. 436

attracted writers, and artists, but broadened its spectrum to include musicians, composers and dancers.

Décor was realistic in Antoine's Théâtre Libre whereas Copeau utilised a décor which emphasized theatricality, in the sense that it gave the audience the impression that they were actually in a theatre. Copeau eliminated excesses in his décor. He said: "La poésie au théâtre est quelque chose de beaucoup plus simple, de beaucoup plus direct, de beaucoup plus nu."³³

Jacques Copeau wanted to maintain a unity among all elements of his plays. He was more than simply a stage director. Copeau was also an "animateur", the first to ever conceive of undertaking everything from mise en scène, décor, costume and lighting to choice of plays, actors' roles, and their interpretation in conjunction with a closely knit group of friends. By managing and directing all aspects of a production, Copeau would be able to achieve the independent theatre which he had in mind. Copeau has written that the man who directs the theatre must become totally steeped in the theatre in order to create, with a minimum of intermediaries. It is the director who is responsible for bringing into harmony all the elements of a play.

Jean Cocteau aimed for total harmony of décor, characters, text, and music. In a way he as well managed several facets of his own productions, from writing to stage setting, casting to décor. In his preface to Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, Cocteau

³³ Jacques Copeau, Jacques Copeau et le Vieux-Colombier, (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1963), p. xiii.

resumed where Copeau left off:

Une pièce de théâtre devrait être écrite, décorée, costumée, accompagnée de musique, jouée, dansée par un seul homme. Cet athlète complet n'existe pas. Il importe donc de remplacer l'individu par ce qui ressemble le plus à l'individu: un groupe amical. 34

Jacques Copeau's main renewal of theatre was the establishment of an "appel du théâtre à la poésie":

De Paul Claudel à Jean Giraudoux, de Fernand Crommelynck à André Obey, de Jean Cocteau et de Jules Supervielle à Marcel Achard, il me semble bien que le plus précieux de la vie de notre théâtre français se traduit, entre 1919 et 1938, par un appel à la poésie. A la poésie dramatique, bien entendu. A l'idée poétique conçue dramatiquement quelle que soit la forme employée, vers ou prose. 35

This is what revitalised his productions at the Vieux-Colombier. Cocteau inherited this "appel à la poésie" in his plays. All elements in theatre had to be conceived in terms of the text, which in the end remained the most important element of the play, the focus of interest: "La scène est l'instrument du créateur dramatique. Elle est le lieu du drame, non celui du décor et des machines. Elle appartient aux acteurs, non aux machinistes et aux peintres. Elle doit être toujours prête pour l'acteur et pour l'action."³⁶ Jacques Copeau did not deny the importance of décor in this statement; it was the play itself, the text which brought out the stage setting: "La scène s'anime en même temps que le drame."³⁷

Jacques Copeau was the all-round man of the theatre who worked towards unity of elements, especially between décor and text. Cocteau conceived a play along the same lines as Copeau did: a play was to be the creation of one man, or of a homogeneous

³⁴. Jean Cocteau, Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, Préface de 1922, Oeuvres Complètes, VII, 17. Hereafter referred to as Préface de 1922.

³⁵. Jacques Copeau, Jacques Copeau et Le Vieux-Colombier, (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1963), p. ix.

group. Copeau presented plays written by the classical dramatist Molière. Jean Cocteau did not forget his sources in the classical theatre of Greece and of France, with Orphée and his film Ruy Blas.

Cocteau's Formation in the Theatre

From the days of his childhood, Jean Cocteau had always loved the theatre and "le spectacle". At the age of five in 1894, his governess, Fraülein Josephine took him to see the circus, le Nouveau Cirque. He was most interested in the clowns Footit and Chocolat, and the acrobats. Cocteau became almost hypnotised by the pantomime acts. His fascination for the circus was to continue throughout his adult years; Cocteau was able to share this same passion for the circus with the well-known artist Pablo Picasso, who became one of his many collaborators in theatre. Influences from the circus world later developed into practical ideas for Cocteau's theatre, including Parade, Le Boeuf sur le Toit and Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel.

A few years later, Cocteau experienced seeing Le Tour du Monde en 80 Jours at the Théâtre du Châtelet. This theatre closed after it had shown Le Tour du Monde 1550 times. In 1917, Jean Cocteau presented his first original ballet-réaliste, Parade at the Châtelet. The love of theatre encouraged Cocteau to construct his own model theatre in the yard at the Rue Bruyère with school-mate René Rocher. Jean soon caught the "rouge et or" fever;

³⁶ Jacques Copeau, Jacques Copeau et Le Vieux-Colombier (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1963), p. xv.

³⁷ Ibid., p. xvii.

circus, "le spectacle", theatre then combined to create a type of "féerie" which, one day soon, would furnish the initial seed for his future theatre.

By the age of seventeen, Cocteau developed a liking for yet another genre of theatre, the music hall. He would rent a box at the Eldorado Theatre with friends, to watch Mistinguett, a popular music hall singer. He then became one of her fervent admirers, waiting faithfully at the stage door, and throwing her bouquets.

Cocteau did not restrict himself to one kind of theatre. He extended his interests to include the circus, music hall, "le spectacle" and serious theatre. Among two of his most liked performers were Mounet-Sully and Sarah Bernhardt.³⁸ Mounet-Sully oriented Cocteau towards the classics. Among his many roles as an admired actor of the Comédie-Française, Mounet-Sully played in Oedipe roi, Hamlet, Othello, Amphitryon, Ruy Blas and Hernani, with Sarah Bernhardt.

During the era of "la belle époque", a certain actor from the Comédie-Française was the favourite of the Parisian theatre-goers. This was Edouard de Max. He had contributed to Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art. Given an introduction to the actor by René Rocher, Cocteau then received de Max's photograph which was signed: "A vos seize ans en fleur, mes quarante ans en pleurs."

³⁸ Sarah Bernhardt was one of the admired actresses at the end of the nineteenth century in Paris, as well as abroad. She dominated the Théâtre Renaissance in the 1890's in Phèdre, La Dame aux Camélias, Edmond Rostand's La Princesse Loïtaine, Lorenzaccio, Les Revenants by Ibsen. In 1899 she left the Renaissance to establish her own theatre Sarah Bernhardt; there she played in Hamlet, L'Aiglon, and many others.

De Max and Sarah Bernhardt were two of what Cocteau later called "les monstres sacrés" of the theatre.³⁹

Cocteau began to associate with de Max; he read his first poetic offerings to him; de Max was highly impressed and convinced that he had discovered a new poet, proceeded to organise a recital at the Théâtre Fémina in order to present Cocteau to the public. The recital, which de Max had organised and financed himself, was set for the afternoon of April 4, 1908. This event marked Cocteau's real debut in the theatre, yet as a performer and not as a writer.

One person who came to hear Cocteau's first poetry was Roger Martin du Gard, who kept a written account of the momentous afternoon. Martin du Gard, a young writer, published this account in his work Devenir! Cocteau provided the model for Martin du Gard who gave Cocteau a favourable portrait. The young poet's debut in Paris was a great success in Devenir!⁴⁰ Years after his first public poetry recital, Cocteau expressed his initial interest in poetry: "Lorsque j'avais seize ans, la poésie m'apparaissait comme une fête où m'invitaient les muses, espèces de bonnes fées bienfaisantes."⁴¹

³⁹Cocteau wrote a play entitled Les Monstres Sacrés in 1940. It took as its theme the theatre itself, in all its glory, and faults, "ses jeux de glaces, ses rapports avec la vie réelle." The main character of the play was a great actress, "une bête de théâtre", based on Réjane or Sarah Bernhardt. This play showed Cocteau's true love of the theatre. "Le théâtre, ses miroirs déformants et pourtant fidèles, voilà Les Monstres Sacrés". (Pierre Dubourg, Dramaturgie de Jean Cocteau, (Paris: Grasset, 1954), p. 99

⁴⁰Cocteau found Martin du Gard's account pleasing as he was able to see beyond Cocteau's extreme youth through to his enthusiasm. Although Cocteau regarded his early poetry as "niaiseries", he remained proud of his debut at the Théâtre Fémina. The text read: ". . . révéler aux artistes deux génies jumeaux, MM. Raoul Jemm et Maté Coczani, -- (. . .) -- Le soir même, un journal publie un entrefilet sous la rubrique: Un triomphe." Roger Martin du Gard, Oeuvres Complètes Tome 1, Devenir! (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1962), p. 77.

After Cocteau's debut with de Max, he joined the program of the Salon des Poètes in the Grand Palais des Beaux Arts. Paris treated him as the young poet-prodigy, and his verses were acclaimed throughout the city. Cocteau was touted for his "conversation éblouissante"⁴² as he recited his poetry in various salons. Artists including Jacques-Emile Blanche and Frédéric de Madrazo, as well as Picasso, later on, came to paint his portrait; Cocteau began to mingle with the artistic and literary circles of the day. As poet of the salons, Cocteau's work showed a tendency towards Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley. Among his poetry readings there were verses from Salomé and The Picture of Dorian Gray.

These experiences eventually led Cocteau to publish his first poetry under the title Je sais tout. In February, 1909, a volume of verse was printed, La Lampe d'Aladin, by de Bouville and Company. Cocteau continued to recite poetry in the most illustrious of salons; Mme de Chévigné, Mme de Pierrebourg, la Duchesse de Rohan and Mme Lemaire. His public recitations provided his next step into the theatre world.

By reciting in these Paris salons, Cocteau soon met with many well-known personalities, including Sacha Guitry,⁴³ the Rostands,⁴⁴ and Misia Sert, who in turn introduced him to her

⁴¹Jean Cocteau, "Rencontres, Devenir ou l'âme exquise de Roger Martin du Gard", La Nouvelle Revue Française, LXXII, (December 1958), 994.

⁴²André Fraigneau, Cocteau par lui-même, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1957) p. 19

⁴³Sacha Guitry, author, dramatist and actor, was the son of well-known actor Lucien Guitry. Sacha, who was brought up on theatre, shared Cocteau's enthusiasm for the theatre.

⁴⁴Edmond Rostand belongs to the "théâtre en vers" or the "théâtre poétique" as it was also called. He wrote the successful Cyrano de Bergerac, L'Aiglon, and Chantecler. His son Maurice, also a writer, wrote La Gloire.

friend Serge de Diaghilev.

With many varied experiences behind him: the circus, music hall, theatre, poetry recitals, and meetings with artists and writers, the young Jean Cocteau was well-equipped for the Paris of 1910, the centre of artistic activity. The precursors in theatre, Antoine, Fort, Lugné-Poe, Rouché and Copeau, were to provide a starting point for Jean Cocteau's theatre, which would develop and modify itself throughout the years as he associated himself with pioneering forces in theatre, art, music and dance.

CHAPTER II

COCTEAU AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Cocteau and Dance

The year is 1910: Jacques Rouché's Théâtre des Arts has been presenting innovative plays, Jean Cocteau has been charming Parisian society with his poetry, and the Russian impresario Serge de Diaghilev has invaded Paris with the Ballets Russes. It was in 1910 when Cocteau met Diaghilev who, immediately upon recognising his genius, as yet undeveloped, began to exert his considerable influence on Cocteau, which was to last his entire life.

Two years after their meeting, Cocteau's first scénario, Le Dieu Bleu, was shown at the Théâtre du Châtelet. This experiment in ballet combined the dancing of Nijinsky to choreography by Michel Fokine, with the music of Reynaldo Hahn,¹ and décors and costumes by Léon Bakst.²

When the Ballets Russes came to Paris, they overwhelmed the artistic and literary circles, including Jean Cocteau. They were able to provide what the Paris audiences were longing to see, a more exciting, sensational program, especially through such ballet productions as Schéhérazade, Carnaval, Les Orientales, and

¹ Singer, composer and pianist, Reynaldo Hahn was a pupil of Massenet and Saint-Saëns, at the Conservatoire de Paris. Holding anti-Wagnerian views, Hahn was indifferent to innovators such as Fauré and Debussy, preferring to follow the classicism of Mozart. He became a close friend of Marcel Proust who used to meet him at Mme. Lemaire's "Tuesdays" salon where he would sing Les Chansons Grises.

² Léon Bakst: see Appendix A

L'Oiseau de Feu. Author Serge Lifar attributed much of the Ballets Russes' success to Russian painter Léon Bakst's exotic, colourful décor and costume.

It is possible to divide Cocteau's literary and dramatic career into several stages, each one dominated by a "maître": the first stage was Edouard de Max, the man responsible for launching his career in poetry and stage; Diaghilev was the next, followed by Stravinsky, Picasso and Erik Satie.

Cocteau's great enthusiasm was the main characteristic which inspired Diaghilev to approach him for the design of two posters announcing the 1911 production of Le Spectre de la Rose. Before Diaghilev's arrival in Paris, Jean Cocteau had already acquired a certain passion for ballet, which was for Cocteau, yet another form of theatre. A ballet of Michel Fokine, Le Pavillon d'Armide, served as inspiration.

Of all the outside influences received, Cocteau's greatest was the combination of the Ballet Russes and Diaghilev's ceaseless encouragement, a stimulus always to search for something new. One evening while walking in the Place de la Concorde, Diaghilev provided Cocteau with the challenge: "Etonne-moi!"

While working with Diaghilev, Nijinsky and Stravinsky, Cocteau was inspired to write a work to be called David. The work however, was never completed, although it did become the preliminary sketch for his ballet-réaliste Parade.

Cocteau and Diaghilev benefited from each other's influences. Diaghilev encouraged Cocteau, who, in turn added to

the impresario's productions by introducing two new collaborators: Erik Satie and Pablo Picasso. Parade received inspiration when Cocteau first listened to Satie's piano piece Trois Morceaux en forme de poire, which was written in 1903. Later Picasso contributed décor and costumes to Parade.

In 1917, Parade was the answer to Diaghilev's challenge. The ballet-réaliste not only astounded Diaghilev but also the audience. It provoked a scandal with its avant-garde music written by Erik Satie, gesture-like choreography of Massine and cubist décor of Picasso.³

The ballet-réaliste was innovative in the sense that gestures, adapted from real life, were amplified thus lending themselves to dance. Décor and costumes were pure cubism. Accompanying "music" came in the form of various sound effects ranging from typewriters, and morse code to sirens.

Judged to be too advanced for the public, who were expecting to view another music hall performance, Parade received hostile reactions. However, the ballet proved to be a personal success for Eric Satie and Pablo Picasso, whose talents came to be more widely recognised, as a result of its publicity. It was Parade's notoriety which gained a wider public for the two innovators.

Despite the disapproval of the audience, Cocteau felt

³The programme of Parade included a preface written by Guillaume Apollinaire: " De cette alliance nouvelle, car jusqu'ici les décors et les costumes d'une part, la chorégraphie d'autre part n'avaient entre eux qu'un lien factice, il est résulté, dans Parade une sorte de sur-réalisme où je vois le point de départ d'une série de manifestations de cet Esprit Nouveau, . . ." Jean-Jacques Kihm and Elizabeth Sprigge, Jean Cocteau: l'homme et les miroirs, (Paris: Editions de la Table Ronde, 1968), p. 101. As an interesting note, this was the first instance where the term "sur-réalisme" had been used.

that he had achieved his own particular success in astounding Diaghilev. Parade has become a precedent for many forms of modern ballet, as well as for many choreographers. Margaret Crosland has remarked on the inventive choreography that Cocteau managed to create in collaboration with Léonide Massine.⁴ The technique used borrowed from both music hall and circus acrobatics.

Jean Cocteau found unending inspiration and strength in Diaghilev to create, and also to create a novelty. By means of Diaghilev's support, Cocteau was able to invent a new form of ballet. The impresario that he was, Diaghilev was responsible for introducing many a young artist to the world, including Léon Bakst and Nijinsky. Both Diaghilev and Cocteau encouraged a collaboration of art, music, literature, and dance. Diaghilev believed that Cocteau contributed by incorporating the avant-garde element with ballet, therefore totally renovating the dance form.

Cocteau and Music

An important event in the evolution of ballet came about in 1913, when Igor Stravinsky's Le Sacre du Printemps made its debut. This work provoked one of the greatest artistic scandals in the first half of the twentieth century:

Tant il est vrai que les premiers auditeurs du Sacre, et les plus éminents d'eux, ont été d'abord saisis par l'étrangeté et "l'exotisme" de la musique. Mais personne, à cette époque, n'analysera sérieusement la partition sinon pour y remarquer des "dissonances" --(. . .)--et une frénésie rythmique, farouche, sauvage ."⁵

⁴ Léonide Massine: see Appendix B.

⁵ Claude Samuel, "Histoire d'une Bataille", Stravinsky, (Paris: Hachette, 1968), p. 59.

The 1913 showing of Le Sacre scandalised Paris and Jean Cocteau. Cocteau, who was shocked by this scandal, was inspired to write Le Potomak⁶ dedicated to Stravinsky.

Stravinsky's music, unorthodox, and anti-Wagnerian, opposed the exoticism displayed by Russian composers who preceded him.⁷ Instead, he employed a more contemporary style of writing. This tone of modernism penetrated Stravinsky's ballets, the ballets, his favourite form of musical expression. All these characteristics constituting Stravinsky's genius were instantly recognised by the shrewd Diaghilev. Along with Bakst they worked to bring about a renaissance of the ballet.

Well-known ballets such as L'Oiseau de Feu, Petrouchka and Le Sacre du Printemps established the one-act ballet as a new form. Les Noces, Pulcinella, and Oedipus-Rex⁸ also contained bright innovations. Stravinsky's music exemplified practically every significant musical tendency of the first half of the twentieth century; indeed his music covered a wide range of styles. This music affected composers' music three generations after him. One can see a parallel between Stravinsky and Cocteau, who, through intake of various sources and stimuli, utilised elements from diverse forms of theatre to create reforms and new styles in his own theatre. Just as Stravinsky created music

⁶Le Potomak: see Appendix C.

⁷Towards the latter half of the nineteenth century, many Russian composers wrote music which evoked an element of exoticism. Inspired by the attraction of distant countries, these composers produced music with an international flavour: Glinka's two Spanish Overtures, Tchaikovsky's Capriccio Italien, and Rimsky-Korsakov's Capriccio Espagnol evoked the sunny warmth of Latin atmosphere; the latter's Schéhérazade played upon the mysteries of the oriental tale.

⁸After seeing Cocteau's revised classic Antigone, Stravinsky had asked Cocteau to compose for him a text based upon a theme of Greek tragedy, which was to be translated into Latin. The work was entitled Oedipus-Rex, a surprise production to celebrate the

that displayed characteristics of many styles, Cocteau's theatre was an example of varied forms in theatre: music hall and circus in Parade , and Le Boeuf sur le Toit: adapted Greek tragedy in Antigone; boulevard in Les Parents Terribles; but all of these plays were renovated forms.

Igor Stravinsky advanced music by first combining dissonant chords, introducing as yet undiscovered orchestral effects. One of his most significant innovations lay in the area of rhythm. His was a very irregular form of rhythm in which he often placed two or more different rhythms together. Stravinsky juxtaposed various rhythmic patterns to create polyrhythms which sometimes resulted in a dislocation or relocation of rhythm. Stravinsky also wrote music for a bizarre combination of instruments. These reforms kept each of his compositions unique and fresh in character.

Stravinsky continued producing reforms in music by creating a polytonality which superimposed scale upon scale. Instead of writing a piece of music in one key only, he fused together different keys in the same piece. Cocteau's theatre was a fusion of different elements in one work: art, music, dance, literature. Various sources and elements were superimposed in Cocteau's theatre, a parallel with Stravinsky's polytonality in music.

the twentieth anniversary of Diaghilev's first season. Cocteau undertook the writing of the libretto as well as the design of the décors. Oedipus-Rex was presented on May 30, 1927 at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt. Jean Cocteau also wrote his version of Oedipus-Rex, Oedipe-Roi, after the opera-oratorio of Stravinsky, for performance at the Comédie-Française.

As Cocteau's theatre influenced dramatists of later years, Stravinsky's novel ideas such as unorthodox structure, instrumentation and rhythm, have been readily appreciated and adapted by more recent composers. His new elements have been used to create an even more avant-garde form known as serial music.

There have been numerous commentaries on the revolutionary character of Stravinsky's music, among which conductor Ernest Ansermet has written:

la musique de Stravinsky a littéralement bouleversé le monde musical -- (. . .)-- Elle ne ressemblait à aucune autre, elle apportait des sons nouveaux, des impressions et des émotions musicales d'une espèce encore inconnus. [sic] 9

Cocteau himself has written about Stravinsky in Le Coq et l'Arlequin in 1924:

Le génie ne s'analyse pas mieux que l'électricité. On le possède ou on ne le possède pas. Stravinsky le possède, il ne s'en préoccupe donc jamais. 10

Cocteau and Stravinsky combined artistic and poetic and musical elements to create revolutionary programs' for Diaghilev. The Ballets Russes have adapted eight of Stravinsky's ballets to Diaghilev's style. Stravinsky's extraordinary talent has helped Diaghilev to achieve his aim:

⁹ Henry Sauguet, "Portrait", Stravinsky, (Paris: Hachette, 1968), p. 19

¹⁰ Jean Cocteau, "L'Appendice", Le Rappel à l'Ordre, Oeuvres Complètes, (Genève: Editions Marguerat, 1950), IX, 56. Hereafter referred to as O. C.

Son ambition: réaliser en un spectacle total la synthèse de tous les arts. Avec le chorégraphe Fokine, les peintres Benois et Bakst, il crée les Ballets russes qui bouleversent l'esthétique d'une époque et domineront l'actualité artistique européenne pendant vingt ans. 11

The mutual influence seen in the collaboration between Cocteau and Diaghilev was evidenced in the interaction of Cocteau and Stravinsky. Always "à la recherche d'une place fraîche sur l'oreiller", Cocteau's theatre remained forever young and innovative; this is also what marked Stravinsky's compositions in music.

Of all of his "maîtres", Cocteau has written the least about Erik Satie. Satie was a composer whose avant-garde style of music served as precursor to more modern music of later decades. Cocteau frequently attended the musical gatherings each Wednesday afternoon during 1915, at Valentine Gross'¹² salon. It was at that salon where he acquired the initial taste for Satie's unconventional composition Trois Morceaux en Forme de Poire,¹³ written in 1903.

Trois Morceaux en Forme de Poire became Cocteau's original inspiration for his ballet-réaliste Parade. The piano piece exhibits a musical style quite unlike that of most composers

¹¹ Collection Génies et Réalités, "Stravinsky à Saint Pétersbourg", Stravinsky, (Paris: Hachette, 1968), p. 47.

¹² Cocteau first met Valentine Gross at the rehearsal of the ballet La Légende de Joseph May 1914 at the Opéra. A talented painter, designer and illustrator, she was well-known in the artistic circles of Paris. Her paintings of Diaghilev's dancers were exhibited at the opening festivities of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1913. Valentine Gross held a literary and artistic salon, where Satie, who was one her admirers, first performed his compositions. She designed costumes for works at the Vieux-Colombier; both she and her husband Jean Hugo worked on designs for Cocteau's Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel and Roméo et Juliette.

of Satie's day. He basically rejected impressionism in music, preferring to aim more towards economy, precision and polytonality. Cocteau paralleled Satie through economy in décors and costumes and by using only the essential elements in his theatre, as seen in his adaptations of the Greek tragedies.

Cocteau and Satie first collaborated in an adaptation of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. Satie's contribution was a musical accompaniment entitled Cinq Grimaces. However the work was never presented on stage nor the piece performed.

The second collaboration between Cocteau and Satie was not only performed but also made a considerable impact on the public. Cocteau was so favourably impressed by Trois Morceaux that he asked Satie to work with him on the next theatrical production. The ballet, commissioned by Diaghilev, included two new collaborators, Pablo Picasso and Léonide Massine. Parade, as the "ballet-réaliste" was called, became the first cubist manifestation combining all the arts, as well as Satie's first real success, which resulted in a larger listening audience.

While Massine, Diaghilev, Picasso and Cocteau were working together in Rome, Satie remained alone in Paris. Myers tells us that Satie stayed behind to finish his score, which according to Cocteau, was to provide a musical background using noises such as typewriters, sirens, planes and morse code.

¹³ Trois Morceaux en Forme de Poire, 1903, a piano piece written for four hands, proved to be one of Satie's finest works. It is a caricature of impressionist music with a surrealist title.

Unfortunately many of these sounds had to be omitted from the program due to material shortages. Cocteau called these sounds "trompe-l'oreille", an analogy of trompe-l'oeil.

The cubist character of Satie's score, a combination of two modern musical forms in France at the time: jazz and rag-time, with sounds from everyday life, blended in perfectly with Cocteau's plans for Parade. The cubist thinking also showed itself in Cocteau's suggestion to use megaphones for the Managers. Cocteau and Satie simply modernised ordinary daily objects by tackling them from an innovative perspective.

Picasso's cubist décor and costumes, and Massine's inventive choreography complete the cubist ballet. Parade has become the perfect collaborative effort of such modern elements as jazz, rag-time, and music hall and circus revised. Cocteau and Satie thought along similar lines and their ideas merged to create a unity within the production of Parade. The end product was a collective effort.

Cocteau was constantly searching for a different unique mode of expression through the theatre, just as Satie, Diaghilev and Picasso were doing with their art. Satie's piece Trois Morceaux en Forme de Poire marked his departure from the impressionistic trend. In 1920, his symphonic drama Socrate signalled the return to a simple form: the essential bare harmonies. The character of the piece was devoid of emotion, as Satie paved the way for the neo-classicist movement.

Francis Poulenc, one of the composers of the group Les Six,

compared Socrate to a still-life painting of Picasso. His description of the piece read: "C'est le commencement de la musique horizontale qui succédera à la musique perpendiculaire."¹⁵ Satie further explained it as: "ce retour à la simplicité classique avec sensibilité moderne."¹⁶ Classic simplicity coupled with modern sensibility can be applied to Cocteau's revival of Greek antique myths: simplified structure, décors, and a modernisation through "poésie de théâtre".

Cocteau has been influenced by Satie's invention of neo-classic elements in music, in his own adaptation of Shakespeare's Roméo et Juliette. The Cocteau production contained and retained only the most pertinent parts of décor and costuming. Whatever lyricism there was left became an element of technical creation. Cocteau's version of Shakespeare was more simplified, yet at the same time a stylised adaptation. Satie's music influenced Cocteau's play indirectly. Cocteau, working closely with Satie, adapted certain elements and applied them to his theatre.

The music of Erik Satie unified diverse influences including symbolism, dada, repetitive music and impressionism. He resorted to using various sources to produce new music, a method that Cocteau had also used to create the character of his

¹⁵Ornella Volta, L'Ymagier d'Erik Satie, (Paris: Editions Francis van de Velde, 1979), p. 65. Although the area of arts was different, similar ideas could be seen between a Picasso still-life, Picasso's work for Cocteau's revised Greek classic, Antigone, Cocteau's updated classics and Satie's Socrate. Simplicity, modernity, collaboration of sources, and efforts working together as a single artistic group characterised these men and their products. Their efforts resulted in the creation of new approaches and novel ideas.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 65.

plays. Similar reforms were brought about by painter Pablo Picasso whose interests in cabaret, the bull-fight, and the circus showed in his paintings. All three worked with the idea of bringing together all the arts.

In the early 1900's Satie's music was an introduction to avant-garde style; today it has become timeless. His Rag-time du Paquebot from Parade exemplified the possibilities of experimentation with new ideas.

By the end of the first world war, Cocteau, forsaking the revolutionary compositions of Igor Stravinsky, began to drift towards the "musique neuve" of Erik Satie and six young musicians. Satie became the mentor of this group of French musicians¹⁷ who were capable of sensing and adopting the "esprit nouveau" of his music. "Les Nouveaux Jeunes", of "L'Ecole d'Arcueil" as they were often known, gradually started to build up their reputation as musicians in the artistic circles of Paris society.

About this time, singer/pianist Jane Bathori¹⁸ organised a series of concerts for the musicians to help launch their first public collaboration together as a group. The time was January 1918. The musicians became known under the title Les Six.

¹⁷Not all the six members of Les Six were French; in fact Arthur Honegger was Swiss.

¹⁸Jane Bathori, impresario, took over the avant-garde Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier during the 1917-1918 season for Jacques Copeau, who was away in America. She was responsible for creating various avant-garde programmes at the Vieux-Colombier, which featured productions displaying a growing fusion of the arts. It was Jean Cocteau who actually persuaded her to allow Les Six to perform at the theatre on January 15, 1918. This was their first public appearance as a group.

Cocteau meantime, constantly searching for new ideas and opportunities, immediately seized upon the occasion to become involved with the members of Les Six. This collaboration gave Cocteau a new outlet for his dramatic writings, where theatre and music were combined. In the spring of 1918, he began to write the manifesto Le Coq et l'arlequin. In it he revealed his admiration and praise for young, new music, as performed and composed by Satie and Les Six.

In Le Coq et l'arlequin, which was dedicated to Georges Auric, one of the members of Les Six, Cocteau also praised the style of Picasso, and Raymond Radiguet's poetry, and discussed the character of the music of each of the group Les Six: Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Germaine Tailleferre, Arthur Honegger, and Louis Durey.

The popularity of Les Six' music grew in 1919. Saturdays were dedicated to dinners at Milhaud's, Morand's or Montmartre. Their music was being performed at the Salle Huyghens; and Cocteau was proclaimed their publicist and "porte-parole". From Le Coq et l'arlequin, Cocteau has written: "Je demande une musique française de France."¹⁹ Thirty years before, Antoine had wanted his theatre to take on a French character by presenting plays by French playwrights, whether well-known or obscure; then Paul Fort had continued by including plays written by the lesser-known and young French writers, as well as those which had been judged to

¹⁹ Jean Cocteau, "Le Coq et l'arlequin", Le Rappel à l'Ordre, O. C., IX, 24. Cocteau displayed a mildly revolutionary attitude toward nationalism by labelling the music of Les Six as being French. Yet, he is not the only artist to espouse this attitude; Paul Fort, in his efforts to establish a French character in his theatre, used artists such as les Nabis, and French poets; similarly, Antoine aimed for a more French theatre with French dramatists' works.

be "injouables". In a similar vein, following his predecessors' artistic nationalism, Cocteau believed that Les Six were able to relay a French character in their music.

Continuing on with the tradition of the "salon" from his debut, Cocteau participated in the musical and poetic reunions at the Salle Huyghens. He then began publishing Carte Blanche in the Paris-Midi, whose writings appeared from March 31 to August 11. The eighteenth publication was dedicated to Les Six.²⁰

Les Six grouped themselves around Cocteau. Their collaboration of theatre and music resulted in a variation of forms: opera, ballet, film scores, incidental music for theatrical productions and melodies. Film was a very new form of art around 1919, yet Darius Milhaud's music for Cocteau's Le Boeuf sur le Toit was actually written for silent films. Louis Durey, another member of Les Six, later wrote some film scores, experimenting with a new area.

A "spectacle-concert" was arranged by Cocteau in 1920 at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées whose programme consisted of a slow-motion dance for two acrobats on the fox-trot number written by Georges Auric. Several of Auric's compositions, in particular, Huit Poèmes de Jean Cocteau, have appeared in Cocteau's Poésies; for example Ecole de Guerre and Marie Laurencin.

²⁰ When Les Six gave a concert in 1919, critic Henri Collet of Comoedia wrote an article entitled "Les Cinq Russes et les Six Français"; from then on the group was known as Les Six.

Certainly the most notable collaboration between Auric and Cocteau has been the film Le Sang d'un Poète, made in 1930.²¹ Auric was the closest of the members of Les Six to Cocteau, the one whom Cocteau had dedicated his "Notes autour de la Musique" from Le Coq et l'arlequin. Another outstanding work by the two was Eternel Retour, 1943. Auric contributed an ethereal sounding choir to Cocteau's film La Belle et la Bête (1945), and a royal hymn to L'Aigle à Deux Têtes (1946). Perhaps the most beautiful work by Auric was the ballet Phèdre presented at the Opéra in 1950. Rich orchestration blended harmoniously with Cocteau's scénario, décor, and costumes.

Cocteau also collaborated with Francis Poulenc, combining poetry with instrumentation in Cocardes. This is a collection of popular songs subtitled Petites Pièces Plaisantes. Miel de Narbonne and Enfant de Troupe show an interesting characteristic which repeats the last syllable of each line in the following line: "Use ton coeur. Les clowns fleurissent du crottin d'or./ Dormir! Un coup d'orteils: on vole./ Volez-vous jouer avec moa?/" ²² In Enfant de Troupe: "Affiche, crime en couleurs. Piano mécanique,/ Nick Carter; c'est du joli!/ Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité./" ²³ The everyday vocabulary of these poems, which included another one, Bonne d'Enfant, made them suitable for popular songs.

²¹ Le Sang d'un Poète: see Appendix D.

²² Jean Cocteau, Poésies, O. C., III, 146.

²³ Ibid., p. 147.

Poulenc also worked with Cocteau in Le Toréador, a Spanish song of poetry and music. Cocteau's play-monologue La Voix Humaine was transformed into a "tragédie lyrique" in 1958 by Poulenc for soprano and orchestra. It was performed the following year at the Opéra-Comique with Cocteau providing the mise en scène.

While on a stay in Monte Carlo in 1924, working on Biches (which was danced by the Ballets Russes), Poulenc and Cocteau were inspired to write the "chanson parlée" La Dame de Monté-Carlo. The monologue was created from a text of Cocteau, La Dame de Monté-Carlo and adapted for Denise Duval and an orchestra.

Arthur Honegger composed the incidental music for Cocteau's revival of classical play Antigone in 1922, written for oboe and harp. This music was further developed into an opera based on the condensed text by Cocteau:

...partition fort percutante, rude, violente presque jusqu' à l'insupportable, avec de beaux choeurs, et où le compositeur employait systématiquement une prosodie insolite, qui plaçait l'accent tonique sur la syllabe d'attaque des mots, --(. . .) -- "Is mène, ma soeur, connais-tu un seul fléau de l'héritage d'Oedipe que Jupiter nous épargne?" 24

In 1943 the Opéra de Paris included Honegger's musical version of Antigone in its repertoire, hailing it as one of the best examples of "total theatre". This work was an example of a synthesis of arts.

²⁴ Milorad, "Les Six", Cahiers Jean Cocteau: 7 Avec les Musiciens, (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. 35.

Louis Durey was accompanied by Cocteau to a small Basque village named Ahusky in the summer of 1919. Inspired by a shepherd, Durey wrote the melodies to words written by Cocteau: Prière, Polka and Attelage, the latter appeared in Poésies. These and other songs made up Durey's collection of Chansons Basques,²⁵ which reminded him of his first encounter with folklore, and Cocteau's poetry.

Le Printemps au fond de la Mer set another of Cocteau's poems to music, this time for wind orchestra and soprano. From the time the piece was performed in 1920 through the efforts of Jane Bathori, with the conductor Vladimir Golschmann, it has gained the success and recognition that established Durey as an avant-garde composer.

Durey, the oldest member of Les Six, was also the most solitary whose music was "simple, directe, profonde et sincère"²⁶ according to Darius Milhaud, and which represented no strict formula or style.

The Cocteau "spectacle-concert" at the Champs-Élysées, in addition to Satie's Trois Petites Pièces Montées, Auric's fox-trot Adieu, New York! and Poulenc's Cocardes (sung by Koubitzky), featured a Cocteau-Darius Milhaud collaboration Le Boeuf sur le Toit. A farce as Cocteau called it, was the result of Milhaud's inspiration from Brazilian dances and songs incorporated into a rondo of the same title.²⁷

²⁵The inspiration and subject of Attelage was Basque; Polka revealed a rustic quality found in most folklore; the Chansons Basques displayed simplicity, clarity and bitonality.

²⁶Frédéric Robert, Louis Durey, l'ainé des Six, (Paris: Les Editeurs Français Réunis, 1968), p. 204.

²⁷Milhaud's original intention was to write Le Boeuf sur le Toit as an accompaniment to a Charlie Chaplin silent film. He felt that the character of the music would be suitable for silent

Although Cocteau prevented Milhaud from using his music for a silent film, he seems to have been influenced by Chaplin's silent films. It appears that his scénario and text were based upon Chaplinesque films. His pantomime scénario adapted well to Milhaud's music, a combination of various dance forms: tango, Maxixe and samba. Milhaud was impressed with Cocteau's ability to improvise and innovate:

Jean had engaged the clowns from the Cirque Médrano and the Fratellini's to play the various parts. They followed implicitly all the extremely precise orders he gave them as producer. Albert Fratellini, being an acrobat, could even dance on his hands around the policeman's head. In contrast with the lively tempo of the music, Jean made all the movements slow, as in a slow-motion film. This conferred an unreal almost dreamlike atmosphere on the show. The huge masks lent peculiar distinction to all the gestures, and made hands and feet unperceived. 28

Other collaborations include Caramel Mou, a "shimmy" danced by Gratton, the Negro, scored for clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone and percussion, containing words by Cocteau; Le Train Bleu,²⁹ a ballet by Cocteau commissioned by Diaghilev, was danced by the Ballets Russes; Le Pauvre Matelot, Cocteau's opera of 1927, whose poetic version of a tragic news item appealed to Milhaud, was scored for four singers and an orchestra.

film as it had been the usual procedure to use an orchestra or piano. However, it was Cocteau who disapproved of the idea and Le Boeuf sur le Toit became part of the spectacle-concert.

²⁸ Darius Milhaud, Notes without Music, (New York: De Capo Press, 1970), p. 103.

²⁹ Le Train Bleu, written in 1924, was a ballet by Cocteau set to Milhaud's music. Briefly, it dealt with an elegant train which let off its visitors at a fashionable seaside resort where they engaged in various sports. Diaghilev called it an "Opérette dansée" which was performed in one act only. The choreography was by Massine, derived from the street, slow-motion filming and music-hall. Décor was by Henri Laurens, costumes by Chanel and backdrop by Picasso (which began his series of beach scenes.)

The most important fusion of all the arts created by Cocteau and Les Six was Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, in 1921. George Auric was assigned the overture Le Quatorze Juillet as well as a series of ritournelles. Poulenc wrote La Danse de la Baigneuse de Trouville and Le Discours du General. Germaine Tailleferre added La Valse des Dépêches and Le Quadrille. Arthur Honegger contributed with La Marche Funèbre du Général while Milhaud³⁰ wrote La Marche Nuptiale and La Fugue du Massacre de la Noce. Although no precise details have been given for any of these pieces, it is known that they were composed in a spirit of amusement and satire, in keeping with the atmosphere of the work.

Les Six battled against impressionism, romanticism and Wagnerian thinking; in short, against all that now represented traditional ideas in music. As with Satie, their music searched for a more direct, simple style.

Just as Cocteau kept his theatre alive and youthful with innovations, Les Six have done so with their music. "L'esprit nouveau" permeated their compositions, some of which adapted perfectly to Cocteau's poetry and theatre. Cocteau upheld the rejuvenating quality of their music in the April 14, 1919 publication of Carte Blanche and again in the July 28, 1919 article.

³⁰ Milhaud's compositions for Le Boeuf sur le Toit, Le Train Bleu, and Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel contained elements of frivolity and satire. He was a composer who revealed a facility for converting various outside stimuli into new musical expression. Perhaps one main characteristic which appeared constantly throughout his works was that of polytonality, music written in two or more keys at the same time.

Cocteau and Art

Jean Cocteau extended his collaborations to include certain artists and painters into his theatre. In 1914, he started a magazine called Le Mot with artist Paul Iribe. Two years later he began to mingle with the artists in Paris. Two main groups of artists were centred around Montmartre which included Max Jacob and Juan Gris, and Montparnasse where Modigliani (whose list of portraits include Cocteau, Léon Bakst and others) frequented.

Cocteau's first professional encouragement came from a Russian artist named Léon Bakst, one of the first who painted his portrait. Bakst and Alexandre Benois were the two main painters for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. The elaborate costumes that Bakst designed for the Ballet Cléopâtre³¹ in 1909 influenced radically the Paris fashion during the first two decades of this century.

In 1906 the public began to recognise the remarkable talents of Bakst, due to Diaghilev who first commissioned him to decorate the galleries and arrange a "bosquet" for the Paris Exhibition of Russian art. Thus began his career as set and costume designer for Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes. With each production, the décor and costumes became increasingly lavish and flamboyant. Bakst's great contribution to the splendour of the stage overwhelmed the Parisian audiences with his designs

³¹ Alexandre Benois described Bakst's creations of Cléopâtre as the "crowning glory" of the Ballets Russes' first season. Cocteau too was favourably impressed. What captured the 1909 public the most was Bakst's innovative, daring use of colour and the Egyptian motifs seen, not only in the décor, costume, and ornaments, but also in the dancers' movements. His watercolours set the trend for interior decoration while his costumes dictated what was to be the latest fashion.

for the ballets Schéhérazade,³² Narcisse, Le Spectre de la Rose, Le Dieu Bleu, and L'Après-midi d'une Faune.

Cocteau, who was very much interested in the ballet, was asked to design a poster of Nijinsky for Le Spectre de la Rose. On Bakst's suggestion Gabriel Astruc asked Cocteau to do the poster, which turned out to be an imitation of Bakst's style. This actually marked Cocteau's initiation into Diaghilev's ballet troupe. Cocteau and Bakst were able to draw upon outside influences and inspiration from within to produce a harmoniously integrated whole, as in ballet or in a play. Scenic and theatrical presentations had at least reached a point where all the elements were unified.

Cocteau also worked with other artists: Irène Lagut, who designed the décor for Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel in 1921; Jean Victor-Hugo created the masks and later worked on the costumes for Roméo et Juliette:

They were entirely black except for white gouache stripes outlining the Elizabethan millinery, doublets and bodices. On a dark stage, against a black backdrop, the characters moved like white tracery. 33

According to Jean Cocteau, it was in the spring of 1916 when composer (of electronic music) Edgard Varèse introduced him to Pablo Picasso. In fact, it was autumn of 1915, and Varèse brought Picasso to Cocteau, who was in bed with a cold. Whatever the circumstances, the importance is that Cocteau knew Picasso

³² Schéhérazade: see Appendix E

³³ Frederick Brown, An Impersonation of Angels, a Biography of Jean Cocteau, (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 260.

and retained a great deal of influence from the artist. This began another stage in Cocteau's life, under the influence of a maître.

Picasso has always been considered the exemplary avant-garde painter. Cocteau remarked on his role in Picasso's career, stating that it was himself who was responsible for his becoming a stage designer: "Ce qui me regarde, c'est Picasso décorateur de théâtre. Je l'ai entraîné là."³⁴

Prior to his experimentation as a stage designer however, Picasso had already formed a group of poets and artists who were instrumental in altering the way in which the world around them was seen and comprehended. They revolutionised arts and literature in France during the early decades of this century. Apollinaire, representative for the group, who surrounded Picasso between 1903 and 1914, called them "la bande à Picasso".

Until Picasso's contribution to the 1917 production of Cocteau's first ballet, Parade, he had never designed for the stage. Nonetheless he entered into this new phase armed with the cubist techniques characteristic of Parade. A new dimension was added to theatre with cubism. For the first time, décor was transformed into characters with the Managers.

Although ideas were not always in accord, Picasso managed to teach Cocteau how to blend real and unreal elements in one production. Picasso's was a visual approach. He invented the

³⁴Cocteau, "Picasso", Le Rappel à l'ordre, O. C. IX, 244. When Picasso accepted to design the décor for Cocteau's Parade, cubism had already reached its strictest phase. The cubists considered his accepting to do the scenery as a scandalous venture; they saw this move as breaking the code of cubist ideals and rules. Cubist painters were also physically restricted, not being allowed to move outside a certain section of Paris. Certainly Picasso's move to Rome to work on Parade must have been a great infringement of the cubist code.

circus Managers, huge, miming personages enclosed in cubist constructions which were aimed to dehumanise them. These "superhuman " characters became the false reality on the stage, while reducing the actual circus performers to the stature of puppets, all of which created a heightened illusion of reality.

The Managers were not Picasso's only invention; he was also responsible for the décor, drop curtain and costumes in Parade. The backdrop was kept simple, and dream-like, representing a group of characters from the theatre world: a sailor, two harlequins, a bull-fighter, a young girl and a Negro. These characters remind one of that which Picasso loved and identified with, such as circuses and bull-fights. To the left of the backdrop was a winged horse mounted by a fairy reaching up to a monkey on a ladder. The backdrop prepared the audience for the circus atmosphere of the ballet, and at the same time helped to harmonise with other elements of Parade. Picasso and Cocteau's love and familiarity of the circus was made concrete in this collaboration.

Or, voilà bien le cubisme de "Parade", cette cohésion esthétique, de tous les éléments du spectacle et une vision réellement neuve du monde moderne éclate dans la tradition foraine. Le cubisme était non seulement le style de "Parade" parce que, pour Picasso, le cubisme était une vérité du monde et non pas seulement une vérité de la peinture. 35

With its source in the circus, which was one of the ancient forms of theatre, one that was non-literary and visual, Parade retained the character of the spectacle from Roman times.

³⁵ Musée des Augustins, Picasso et le Théâtre, (Toulouse: Robert Vauthier, 1965), p. 27.

Picasso may well have been influenced by his stay in Rome and Naples. The scandal provoked by Parade was responsible for Picasso's more widespread popularity. In his mind, art and theatre were two inseparable elements; he combined them and rehabilitated them. By encasing the Managers in the cubist cartons, Picasso added a new dimension to them, allowing them to be seen from additional point of view. Picasso was transferring the technique of building up volume on a flat surface through cubism, from his paintings to theatre art.

Cocteau stated from Le Rappel à l'ordre: "N'importe, avant lui le décor ne jouait pas dans la pièce; il y assistait."³⁶ Picasso adapted this idea into the theatre, establishing a role for every part, décor, accessory, costume and character. They were not there in the production to simply provide a background to the text. Cocteau called Picasso's method: "...du plus vrai que le vrai."³⁷ Later on he explained in the Preface to Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel that he wished to: "peindre plus vrai que le vrai."³⁸

Cocteau and Picasso renovated everyday objects and approached the banal from a fresh point of view, the results of which often provoked scandalous reactions. Everyday objects were seen and interpreted in a new way. In painting, fruit,

³⁶Cocteau, Le Rappel à l'ordre, O. C., IX, 246.

³⁷Ibid., p. 246.

³⁸Cocteau, Preface de 1922, p. 12

bottles or a guitar were given another dimension through cubism. Cubist techniques were also applied to music and theatre, as in Parade. Of Picasso, Cocteau wrote:

Picasso s'essaye d'abord sur ce qui se trouve à portée de sa main. Un journal, un verre, une bouteille d'Anis del Mono, une toile cirée, un papier à fleurs, une pipe, un paquet de tabac, une carte à jouer, une guitare, la couverture d'une romance: Ma Paloma. 39

Picasso's oil painting from 1919 entitled Guitar, Bottle, Fruit Dish and Glass on a Table. (this painting in cubist style used brightly coloured shades, creating an illusion of reality, and giving a two-dimensional aspect to the objects, which appeared to be distorted) must have shocked viewers who were used to looking at more traditional, romantic paintings of the real world.

Picasso also designed the backdrop for Le Train Bleu, 1924, and for Antigone an updated classic from 1922. Cocteau gave an account of the décors' origins:

Il commença par frotter un bâton de sanguine sur la planche qui, à cause des inégalités du bois, devint un marbre. Ensuite il prit une bouteille d'encre et traça des motifs d'un effet magistral. Tout à coup il noircit quelques vides et trois colonnes apparurent. L'apparition de ces colonnes était si brusque, si surprenante que nous applaudîmes. 40

³⁹ Cocteau, Le Rappel à l'ordre, O. C., IX, 238. Daily occurrences also played a large role in Cocteau's writings; he was inspired to write Le Pauvre Matelot after reading about a tragedy in a newspaper.

⁴⁰ Cocteau, Le Rappel à l'ordre, O. C. IX, 248.

Picasso's design for Antigone was a good example of creating a Greek atmosphere with a minimum of material. It also followed the format of Cocteau's text which used only the essential elements. All facets of Cocteau's theatre fit together in harmony.

Jean Cocteau's contemporaries in dance, music and art made a considerable contribution to the development of his theatre, and to their respective fields of art. Cocteau's collaborators were experimenters whose new ideas were in keeping with his aim to promote innovations in his theatre. Cocteau achieved a synthesis of arts through co-operation among dramatist, painter, composer and choreographer. Working together in a spirit of revival and renewal with his collaborators, Cocteau created a new theatre.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF JEAN COCTEAU'S THEATRE

The third and final chapter will study several of Jean Cocteau's plays, from Parade (1917) to La Machine à Ecrire (1941). A selection of Cocteau's plays will be looked at according to their particular style of theatre. The components, innovative elements, sources, "Poésie de théâtre" and contribution to theatre will be discussed. This study will show how Cocteau's theatre developed through diverse stages.

Now having left behind the period of the "poète des salons", Jean Cocteau began to devote himself to writing dramatic works. In 1912, Cocteau was still working with Serge de Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, and that same year, wrote his first production, Le Dieu Bleu, whose costumes and décor were designed by Leon Bakst,¹ and which used the music of Reynaldo Hahn's nephew, Federico de Madrazo.

The following year brought about the beginnings of David with Diaghilev and Stravinsky, which although never completed, later served as the original idea for Parade.² By the time Parade was written in 1917, Cocteau had been collaborating with Diaghilev, Nijinsky and the Ballet Russes, Bakst, Picasso, Stravinsky and Erik Satie.

¹Refer to Photo 1. Bakst's designs were colourful and evoked the exoticism of an oriental tale. Shown are the Grand Priest, Pèlerin, and two Bayadères.

²The enthusiasm felt after seeing Stravinsky's Le Sacre du Printemps inspired Cocteau to write David in 1913. Its theme was taken from the Old Testament of the Bible; this idea was to become a ballet written to a score of Stravinsky. Cocteau had hoped that Jacques Copeau would handle the stage production at his newly founded Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier, incorporating the choreography of Swiss painter and dancer Paul Thévenaz. Cocteau

Despite writing Le Dieu Bleu, Cocteau's real debut on the stage was Parade in May, 1917, and one which caused considerable scandal in Paris at the time. The premiere of Parade took place at the Théâtre du Châtelet. First inspiration for this play which Cocteau called a "ballet-réaliste", came from a concert in which Cocteau heard Satie and Ricardo Viñes, a well-known pianist, play the former's Trois Morceaux en Forme de Poire at one of the Paris salons. Parade brought together the music of Erik Satie, the décor, costumes and backdrop of Pablo Picasso, Léonide Massine's choreography, and Cocteau's text.

Cocteau explained that: "Le décor représente les maisons à Paris un dimanche. Théâtre forain. Trois numéros du Music-Hall servent de Parade. Prestidigitateur chinois. Acrobates. Petite fille américaine. Trois managers organisent la réclame."³ Cocteau retained the original idea of using the circus theme, acrobats and music hall elements from David.

Guillaume Apollinaire reviewed the "ballet-réaliste", calling it a:

-- (. . .) -- poème scénique que le musicien novateur Erik Satie a transposé en une musique étonnamment expressive...Le peintre cubiste Picasso et le plus audacieux des chorégraphes, Léonide Massine, l'ont réalisé en consommant, pour la première fois, cette alliance de la peinture et de la danse, de la plastique et de la mimique qui est le signe évident de l'avènement [sic] d'un art plus complet. 4

used the circus for the scene: ". . . Ce n'est pas une danse, mais une acrobatie de gymnasiarque forain. . . C'est une courte chose sans attrait théâtral (et) une Parade. . . C'est de music-hall. Trois numéros d'acrobate." Jean-Jacques Kihm et Elizabeth Sprigge, Jean Cocteau L'Homme et les miroirs, (Paris: Editions de la Table Ronde, 1968), p. 75.

³Jean Cocteau, Parade, Oeuvres Complètes, (Genève: Editions Marguerat, 194), VII, 303. Hereafter referred to as O.C.

⁴Léonide Massine, My Life in Ballet, Edited by Phyllis Hartnoll and Robert Rubens. (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1968), p. 112.

In these few sentences, Apollinaire summarised Cocteau's basic dramatic theory. Poetry played an integral role in each of Cocteau's dramatic productions (just as it did later in his novels, and cinema); he was very concerned with original innovative ideas, which he attempted to create with others who aimed for the daring and challenging. Three people who were instrumental in renewing elements in their fields collaborated with Cocteau in Parade - Eric Satie, Pablo Picasso and Léonide Massine. Cocteau was intent on synthesizing all the arts - painting with dance, music with theatre. Parade was the first combined, collective effort to experiment with a totally new style of theatre.

Perhaps the element which made Parade such a novelty was also the first cubist spectacle ever presented on stage - from Erik Satie's cubist "music" which included typewriters, sirens, lottery wheels, and Morse code - to Cocteau and Picasso's costumes of the Managers and the horse.

Erik Satie managed to convince Cocteau to abandon his dialogue, anonymous voices emerging from loudspeakers, for a series of "trompe-l'oreille" background noises. These sounds, Cocteau said, were taken from the reality of everyday life, not unlike the "fragments de réalité" seen in cubist paintings and collages.

Satie's music however simple, was well-suited to the rest of Parade. Its tempo was very precise, and mechanical, and the music seems to have been written without a trace of emotion.

The musical score opened with a Chorale, followed by the "Suite au Prélude du Rideau Rouge" leading into the entry of the Managers, whose theme translated the busy sounds of the circus grounds into music. The "Ragtime du Paquebot" accompanied the Little American Girl. The Acrobats danced onto the stage to a music hall waltz tune. The ballet-réaliste finished with the final dance of the Managers who danced up a frenzy until they collapsed.

Picasso, a strong follower of the lately discovered cubism, eliminated the problem of coordinating décor and costume in Parade. He constructed two Managers, one French and one American:⁵

Le spectacle était encadré par deux managers dont le costume était une composition architecturale, ne permettant à l'acteur qu'un nombre de gestes limités, imposant un rythme saccadé, un costume qui ressemblait à un fragment de décor en mouvement et qui servait d'intermédiaire entre le décor fixe et les personnages mobiles habillés normalement. 6

Parade totally rejuvenated ballet of Cocteau's time, being a ballet of the "genre nouveau". The production was considered scandalous since it was presented during the First World War, and also because it had no precedent in the history of ballet.⁷

⁵ Refer to Photos 2 and 3. Picasso's designs for the French Manager in Parade, played by Leon Woizikowsky; and the American Manager played by Slatkewicz.

⁶ Raymond Cogniat, Les Décorateurs de Théâtre, (Paris: Librairie Théâtrale, 1956), p. 26.

⁷ The first world war was a time of chaos and upheaval in Europe. Cocteau's ballet-réaliste Parade appeared to reflect this chaos, if anywhere, in its cubist noises. The general cubist concept of the ballet may have seemed so unusual on the stage, as the time that the audiences were simply shocked by its total novelty. "C'était le décor fait personnage et il ne manque plus à Satie, Cocteau et Massine, le chorégraphe, qu'à infliger aux personnages 'normaux' et 'réalistes' une gesticulation de pantin

Again Guillaume Apollinaire has written of Parade:

"-- (. . .) -- le point de départ d'une série de manifestations de cet Esprit Nouveau (. . .) qui se promet de modifier de fond en comble les arts et les moeurs -- (. . .) --"⁸.

Cocteau renovated the ballet through a transposition of the music hall style into the ancient source of the circus, especially evident in the characters and in Picasso's backdrop⁹, and modern elements created by Satie's music and Massine's choreography.

Both Cocteau and Picasso were able to incorporate outside materials into their art, such as the circus. Cocteau and Picasso enriched their theatre and paintings from a variety of sources. Picasso's fascination with the circus stemmed from his childhood, as did Cocteau's. During Picasso's "Blue period" from 1901 to 1904, the cirque forain provided themes - strolling acrobats, harlequins, circus animals, a circus family. He and Cocteau utilised a traditional form of theatre, the circus, and gave it a new, challenging vision with cubist elements in Parade.

Cocteau chose Diaghilev's Russian choreographer, Léonide Massine, to create the gestures and dances for Parade. Although Massine had already worked with the Ballets Russes, this was his first attempt with cubism. A talented choreographer, Massine cubiste pour obtenir ce syncrétisme subversif et profondément novateur qui fit scandale." Ibid., p. 26. Cubism at the early stage was already considered to be a revolutionary, subversive trend in art. The public showed mixed reactions, some confused by the blend of real and unreal elements. Parade was the first of many experiments in theatre to include the best of modern, and sometimes avant-garde artists.

⁸ Jacques Brosse, Jean Cocteau. Orphée, théâtre et cinéma, (Paris: Bordas, 1973), p. 6.

⁹ Refer to Photos 4 and 5: Picasso's backdrop for Parade display elements from the circus - ladder, harlequin, trained monkey- as well as elements of fantasy - a white, winged horse, a fairy-like, winged girl. Picasso's backdrop served to introduce the audience to the ballet.

managed to complete successfully his contribution to the cubist production. His inventive dances and gestures included many varied forms - mime, parody, silent film antics of Charlie Chaplin, melodrama, music hall gestures, ragtime rhythms and jazz.

The two acrobats were played by Nemschinova and Zverev whose movements imitated faithfully real-life tightrope numbers. Maria Chabelska, in the role of the Little American Girl, performed a series of mimed actions to Satie's syncopated rhythms of "le Ragtime du Paquebot".

Right from the beginning of his career in theatre, Jean Cocteau experimented with a new form of dramatic production. He made use of his early interest in the Nouveau Cirque, sharing them with painter Picasso, and created a novelty. Cocteau was successful in that he not only harmonised different forms of arts, but also joined forces with some of the most advanced-thinking of men - Diaghilev, Picasso, Massine, Satie.

Included in Cocteau's early plays were two consecutive works - Le Boeuf sur le Toit, from 1920 and Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, finished in 1921. Le Boeuf sur le Toit was classified as a combination mimo drame/pantomime-farce. Its origins were found in the circus. The first show was presented at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1920. By this time, Cocteau had become the spokesman for the composers of Les Six, one of whom, Darius Milhaud, wrote the music for Le Boeuf sur le Toit.

The famous Fratellini Clowns from the Cirque Médrano took roles in the spectacle. In this play, Cocteau's love of the circus reappeared in theatrical form as Picasso's did in his paintings. His use of real clowns, the Fratellini brothers, proved Cocteau's preference for authentic sources in his works, rather than to use actors to portray the clowns.

Cocteau actually received the idea to write Le Boeuf sur le Toit from a musical composition that Darius Milhaud had written, of the same title. This piece combined various melodies and dances of Brazil, tangos, maxixes, sambas, a Portuguese fado. This fantasia, with a recurring rondo theme was actually the title of a Brazilian popular song. Milhaud had originally written the piece to accompany a Charlie Chaplin silent film. However, after having heard the piece, Cocteau decided to use it for his circus pantomime.

Le Boeuf sur le Toit was changed to the title The Nothing-Doing Bar for the London audiences.¹⁰ The "farce imaginée" was based on a silent film of Charlie Chaplin with a barman, two women, a policeman, a Negro boxer, a bookmaker and a Negro billiard player. Décor and costumes were created this time by artist Raoul Dufy.¹¹

¹⁰ On July 12, 1920, The Nothing-Doing Bar, the subtitle for Le Boeuf sur le Toit, for the English public, opened at the London Coliseum, complete with English cast. The Coliseum, which was the largest music hall at the time, had to extend the production for another week, due to very successful reviews. Darius Milhaud accompanied Cocteau to London for the rehearsals.

¹¹ Refer to Photo 6: Raoul Dufy's set design for Le Boeuf sur le Toit, whose scene is a speakeasy. In the left foreground, a chair and table, some playing cards; the Negro billiard player; behind him is the bar and the barman who is mixing a drink; Dufy took over for Guy-Pierre Fauconnet who started to construct the oversized masks.

Le Boeuf sur le Toit was by no means an ordinary farce. Cocteau renewed certain elements of the production; as in Parade, the characters, who wore oversized carton heads, became part of the décor: "Ils sont du décor qui bouge."¹² The gestures were particularly interesting. They reminded one of a slow-motion film. The scenario dealt basically with a scene in a bar during the American Prohibition. Cocteau, being conscious of constantly creating a fresh, new production, worked this time with a different group of people - Raoul Dufy for décor and costumes Darius Milhaud for music, and the Fratellini Clowns.

Although Cocteau took as his base, the circus for both Parade and Le Boeuf sur le Toit, it was music hall which merged in the former, and American jazz, stylised gestures, slow-motion techniques, and exotic South American rhythms which contributed to the latter. Each play of Cocteau brought with it a fresh theme, and yet another renewed form of theatre.

Cocteau's next play, Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, was first presented on June 18, 1921, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées by Rolf de Maré's company of the Swedish Ballet. For this production Cocteau asked the members of Les Six: Germaine Tailleferre, Georges Auric, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud and Francis Poulenc, to write the music for the numéros. Choreography was written by Cocteau, and décor by Irene Lagut, with costumes and masks designed by Jean Victor-Hugo. The masks were rather grotesque, larger than life, not unlike the masks of a Latin American Carnival.

¹²Jean Cocteau, Le Boeuf sur le Toit, O. C., Vii, 309.

In an "esprit poétique", Jean Cocteau gathered together musicians, painters, dancers and poet to create: "Ce genre nouveau, plus conforme à l'esprit moderne, (reste encore un monde inconnu, riche en découvertes)."¹³ Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel was also ballet revised. Cocteau started with an ordinary situation, a wedding at the Eiffel Tower, and to this banal happening he incorporated elements of satire, music hall, and "féerie". For the first time, Cocteau proposed "la poésie de théâtre" in his play. "La poésie de théâtre" was an invention entirely of Cocteau which he used in all of his writings, from novels to theatre to film. Poetry was applied to his theatre by emphasizing the "poetic" nature of each and every image. There was a symbolism assigned to every element of the play.

Jean Cocteau, who was essentially a poet, believed that a poetic value should be manifest in all forms of art, and theatre. In Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, from the Préface de 1922, Cocteau stated that: "La poésie de théâtre serait une grosse dentelle; une dentelle en cordages, un navire sur la mer."¹⁴ "La poésie de théâtre" would aid the reader or the spectator to discover more clearly the reality of this world, in a very precise manner. Through "la poésie de théâtre", Cocteau was able to create a certain atmosphere surrounding his characters, which intensified the "poetic" in every part of the play, which was so characteristic of a Cocteau play.

¹³ Jean Cocteau, Préface de 1922, O. C., VII, 16.

¹⁴ Jean Cocteau, Préface de 1922, O. C., VII, 14.

Some examples of "poésie de théâtre" are: from Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel - the huge, life-size camera whose front opens and closes to let the characters enter and exit; two actors encased in large carton structures, as Phono 1 and Phono 2, comment on the actions of the play; as the camera starts to take photos, unusual objects and people come out of it, "une baigneuse de Trouville", "un gros enfant", "un lion". In Cocteau's later plays, a real achievement of "poésie de théâtre" is seen where décor, accessories and costumes played a definite role in the play. In La Machine Infernale, "La Voix" appears first on the stage to announce the events in the play, much like the two Phonos in Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel. The long scarf that Jocaste wears contains poetic value: "C'est contre cette écharpe! Je suis entourée d'objets qui me détestent! Tout le jour cette écharpe m'étrangle. -- (. . .) -- C'est affreux! Elle me tuera."¹⁵ "Poésie de théâtre" is applied to voices as well as objects - Jocaste's voice has a very strong accent: "cet accent international des royalties."¹⁶ Here Cocteau specifically chose a foreign actress to play the role of Jocaste, a Rumanian. Death is represented by a beautiful young woman wearing a ball gown in Orphée. Mirrors play a very important role in Orphée, by entering through them one is able to enter into the other world, death. Les Parents Terribles used décor "utile"; for Cocteau the décor was more than a mere visual, physical structure, its role was renewed and doors were solidly constructed so as to slam open and close.

¹⁵ Jean Cocteau, La Machine Infernale, O. C., V. 209.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 208.

The all-encompassing element of "la poésie de théâtre" reached Cocteau's films also; in La Belle et la Bête, Cocteau used real arms in place of chandeliers, to hold the candles.

Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel has been described as a "poème agi" where dialogue, and words have been rediscovered by means of "poésie de théâtre". Cocteau himself said of Les Mariés: "L'action de ma pièce est imagée tandis que le texte ne l'est pas. J'essaie donc de substituer une 'poésie de théâtre' à la 'poésie au théâtre'."¹⁷ In order to achieve "poésie de théâtre", Cocteau exploited all sources of the arts: "la féerie, la danse, l'acrobatie, la pantomime, le drame, la satire, l'orchestre, la parole."¹⁸

One other way in which Cocteau rejuvenated the theatre was through the use of loudspeakers as Phono Un and Phono Deux to comment on the actions of each scene. This innovation of Cocteau was inspired by the ancient Greek chorus.¹⁹ Each phono was played by an actor, encased in a huge carton construction, who announced the scenes and characters' roles, as if they were using a loudspeaker: "Ils parlent très fort, très vite et prononcent distinctement chaque syllabe."²⁰ Cocteau had a tendency to enlarge details, as in the case of the Phonos, and to "peindre plus vrai que le vrai".²¹ Such a tendency became part of his "poésie de théâtre" in an effort to present "Une grosse dentelle"²² to his readers and viewers.

¹⁷ Jean Cocteau, Préface de 1922, O. C., Vii, 14.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 17

¹⁹ Since Jean Cocteau's adolescence and his experience seeing actors such as Mounet-Sully and Sarah Bernhardt perform the Greek classics, he has had an interest in revising various aspects of classical theatre. Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel gave Cocteau his first opportunity to experiment with the renewal of the ancient Greek chorus. In this play, he used the two Phonos;

By rehabilitating the commonplace, Cocteau has said: "A moi de le présenter sous tel angle qu'il retrouve ses vingt ans."²³ He was almost obsessed by the inner desire to constantly renew and rejuvenate his theatre, every time he wrote a new play. In this way, Cocteau was able to create afresh with each work. There were several methods of rehabilitating the commonplace - through the introduction of oversize, almost surreal accessories and décor, by collaborating with innovative choreographers to invent new dances and gestures, through the incorporation of a new, youthful sounding music which: "évoque aussi le charme puissant du trottoir, de la fête populaire."²⁴ Cocteau explained in his Préface de 1922 that Les Six were able to achieve this kind of "French" music.

As the Théâtre d'Art of Paul Fort was the first theatre for and of poets, the idea of "poésie de théâtre" could have been, in part a further exploitation of Fort's theatre. Both Paul Fort and Jean Cocteau established theatres which aimed towards art and poetry; they both wanted to create a synthesis of arts, as did Jacques Copeau, who also insisted that all production arrangements be handled by one person. Cocteau's

later in Antigone, Cocteau again renewed the Greek chorus, as: "une voix qui parle très haut et très vite comme si elle lisait un article de journal. Cette voix sort d'un trou, au centre du décor." Jean Cocteau, Antigone, O. C., V, 143.

²⁰Jean Cocteau, Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, O. C. VII , 21

²¹Jean Cocteau, Préface de 1922, O. C., VII, 12

²²Ibid., p. 14

²³Ibid., p. 43

²⁴Ibid., p. 18

theory echoed this plan - it was the poet or the dramatist's role to organise the elements of the play. Cocteau has stated this in his Préface de 1922: "Une phrase de photographe pourrait me servir de frontispice 'Puisque ces mystères me dépassent, feignons d'en être l'organisateur.' C'est notre phrase par excellence."²⁵ Some fifteen years after Lugné-Poe had first showed the avant-garde Ubu Roi in 1896, by Alfred Jarry, Cocteau's Le Boeuf sur le Toit and Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel were presented with similarities in costume design (masks, oversize heads), and in "décor qui bouge" (actors taking parts as doors in Ubu Roi; Phonos Un and Deux).

Parade, Le Boeuf sur le Toit, and Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel represented Cocteau's early plays. It was from the very outset that Cocteau stressed the idea of collaboration, of working in a group of artists, "un groupe amical"²⁶ which included the painters - Picasso, Raoul Dufy, Irène Lagut and Jean Victor-Hugo; the ballet artists of the Ballets Russes, of Serge de Diaghilev, and of the Ballets Suédois; and the musicians-composers - Stravinsky, Erik Satie and Les Six.

Jean Cocteau may be placed in the lineage of Jacques Rouche's Théâtre des Arts and of Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art, whose painters' décors were of major importance in their theatrical productions. This time however, Cocteau took a further step, to include musicians. Not only a synthesis of the

²⁵Ibid., p. 12

²⁶Ibid., p. 17

major arts (painting, music, dance), but also a harmony of diverse resources found in the theatre itself made their way into Cocteau's early plays: the traditional theatre as in the circus, music hall, pantomime, dance, ballet in particular, farce, orchestral music, jazz and even silent film techniques.

Until 1921, Cocteau's theatre focused mainly on a synthesis of arts, collaboration of various artists, musicians, and dancers, "poésie de théâtre", and always, innovation and renewal.

Ever conscious of the obsession with originality and rehabilitation, Jean Cocteau soon left behind his early plays, for another style of drama. By 1922, he had begun his second, a new phase of theatre with Antigone (1922) and Oedipe-Roi written in 1925 and presented in 1937, and Roméo et Juliette written in 1918, performed in 1924. Antigone made its debut at the Théâtre de l'Atelier on December 20, 1922. Cocteau adapted his play from the original of Sophocles; in the elimination of excess, unnecessary details, and by accelerating the action, he renovated the entire text. In a prefatory note to the text of Antigone, Cocteau gave an account of his adaptation:

C'est tentant de photographier la Grèce en aéroplane. On lui découvre un aspect tout neuf./ Ainsi j'ai voulu traduire Antigone. A vol d'oiseau de grandes beautés disparaissent, d'autres surgissent; il se forme des rapprochements, des blocs, des ombres, des angles, des reliefs inattendus./ Peut-être mon expérience est-elle un moyen de faire vivre les vieux chefs d'oeuvre. -- (. . .) -- 27

²⁷ Jean Cocteau, Antigone, O. C., V. 139.

Cocteau's second phase of theatre was concerned with the adaptation of ancient Greek classics, and of Shakespearean tragedy. Cocteau wished to give these classic plays a new touch, a revitalisation, with his own innovations.

Pablo Picasso designed the décor, Gabrielle (Coco) Chanel created the costumes, and Arthur Honegger, one of the members of Les Six, composed the music. In Antigone, Cocteau gave the ancient Greek chorus a new form, one voice which spoke loudly and clearly and quickly through an opening in the centre of the stage.

Once again, Cocteau used masks in his play: the actors wore transparent masks similar to those worn for fencing; this was a way of renewing the Greek tradition of using masks. Their costumes were put on over black leotards, giving the actors the appearance of insects. Both décor and costume were kept to the bare essential. Cocteau adapted Antigone by reducing it to a one-act play. Oedipe-Roi, Cocteau's second adaptation of Sophocles, was also scaled down to one act; the Greek chorus was replaced by a single voice which appeared in the Prologue.

The Théâtre de la Cigale presented Roméo et Juliette, Cocteau's version of the Shakespeare tragedy, as part of the Soirées de Paris, on June 2, 1924. His adaptation consisted basically of bringing out the visual aspect of the play, with his choreography. Jean Victor-Hugo was asked to design the "décors mobiles" and the costumes: " -- (. . .) -- des décors de velours noir des personnages vêtus de maillots noirs et garnis seulement de bandes de couleur comme un coup de pinceau à la gouache, transformant ainsi les acteurs en silhouettes

précieuses;".²⁸ As in Antigone and Oedipe-Roi, costumes and décor in Roméo et Juliette remained simple, yet at the same time possessing their own evocative poetry. Costumes played a part in the choreography as the actors moved and spoke. All three plays became Cocteau's new experiment in economy: economy of décor, costumes, text and music.

Cocteau may have extended Alfred Jarry's idea to incorporate costume with décor in Roméo et Juliette. Although the costumes were evocative, they also played a functional role, almost replacing décor. Jean Victor-Hugo was aided by Valentine Gross in the creation of décor and costumes:

Elle reproduisit sur un morceau de velours noir un fragment d'ornement; on plaça le bout d'étoffe devant un rideau noir et on éteignit toutes les lumières, sauf une bougie. Les contours du carré de velours disparaurent laissant seule visible l'arabesque peinte. 29

Cocteau's Roméo et Juliette was a very visual adaptation. Characters and costume joined together to become part of the décor.

Composer Roger Désormière wrote the music for the play, basing it on popular English airs. Cocteau had once used popular, everyday music for Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel; here again he appealed to his taste for popular music, which was in keeping with the "poésie de théâtre" of the banal. Cocteau wanted the music of Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel to be banal, but representative of the "French" spirit, and Les Six reproduced this kind of music for him. Roméo et Juliette needed a different style of music, one more suited to the subject and the era of the play; English popular airs contributed to the unity of elements here.

²⁸ Raymond Cogniat, Les Décorateurs de Théâtre (Paris: Librairie Théâtrale, 1956), p. 25. Refer to Photo 7: Jean Hugo's design for décor from Roméo et Juliette in black and white.

A dissatisfied actor in the play complained about the stage setting which appeared to him to be much too gloomy, the result of a predominant use of black in both décor and costumes, and of feeble lighting. Innovations were due to create a certain amount of negative feedback in those days, yet it was precisely this innovation - the replacement of Shakespearean lyricism by technical and visual methods - which Cocteau utilised to update his work. "Trouver l'os sous les ornements"³⁰ was Cocteau's aim in Roméo et Juliette, Antigone and Oedipe-Roi. Economy played the main role; the few basic elements were used to their fullest advantage; "poésie de théâtre" came from the stylisation of gestures, costume and décor.

Orphée, presented at the Théâtre des Arts, June 17, 1926, brought together both Cocteau's "poésie de théâtre" and the renewal of Greek classics. Continuing in the vein of the three previous plays, Orphée was also a condensed version: "tragédie en un acte et un intervalle"³¹ This rejuvenated classic

²⁹ Jean Hugo, "Roméo et Juliette", Cahiers Jean Cocteau: 5 Jean Cocteau et son théâtre, (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 26.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 25.

³¹ Jean Cocteau, Orphée, O. C., V. 10. The play opens with the poet Orphée bewitched by the white horse. Infuriated by this transformation, Eurydice, Orphée's wife, asks Heurtebise, the guardian angel, to help her. Eurydice is poisoned by Aglaonice, through a poisoned envelope, and dies. Death takes her into the realm of Death, where she pleads with Heurtebise to bring Orphée out of his enchantment. He penetrates through the mirror and enters searching for Eurydice. They are finally united but only for a moment when Orphée weakens and looks at her, thus losing her. Orphée is torn apart by the Bacchantes. The end of the play brings both Orphée and Eurydice back together, with Heurtebise as they rise into the heavens.

was rich in innovations - Gabrielle Coco Chanel designed the costumes which were indicative of the fashion of the time; the costumes did not represent ancient Greece. The main characters of Orphée and Eurydice wore simple, combat dress; the guardian angel Heurtebise, whom Cocteau invented, appeared as a modern "vitrier": "avec la cote blue pâle des ouvriers, un foulard sombre autour du cou et des espadrilles blanches. Il est hâlé, tête nue. Il ne quitte jamais son appareil à vitres."³²

Cocteau continued to give a description of his characters:

"Le commissaire et l'huissier portent des redingotes noires, des panamas, des barbiches, des bottones à boutons."³³ The intro-

duction of La Mort was another of Cocteau's new adaptations,

which did not appear in the original Greek version. His

introduction of the character of La Mort was actually a double invention, in that it was totally absent from the Greek tragedy,

and that it appeared on the stage as an antithesis of the idea

of Death. In Orphée, La Mort was presented as a: "jeune femme

très belle en robe de bal rose vif et en manteau de fourrure."³⁴

~~This portrayal of Death was hardly the picture of what audiences~~

were used to seeing. La Mort, came as a beautiful, young woman

dressed in the latest fashion. Cocteau continued: "Cheveux, robe, manteau, souliers, gestes, démarche à la dernière mode.

Elle a de grands yeux bleus peints sur un loup. -- (. . .) --Sa

blouse d'infirmière doit être l'élégance même."³⁵ Cocteau, always

³² Ibid., p. 14. Refer to Photo 8: Jean Cocteau as Heurtebise. The source for the name Heurtebise was an elevator sign. Cocteau created his Ange Heurtebise in the style of Angel Gabriel. This character appeared in his poetry, l'Ange Heurtebise, and was the personification of Cocteau's poetic inspiration. Heurtebise's mirrored, transparent wings were unconventional and modern. His wings allowed Orphée to see Eurydice after she had been taken away by Death, and let Orphée see himself as he was destined to be, a poet.

always searching for authentic sources for his plays, made a wise choice of couturiere in Coco Chanel to design the costumes. Chanel was, and still remains today for many, the "maîtresse de la mode parisienne". All the characters in Orphée wore modern dress: La Mort's assistants, Azraël and Raphaël, were dressed in uniform: "le masque de linge, les gants de caoutchouc des chirurgiens qui opèrent."³⁶ Cocteau made sure that each detail of costume represented the modernity of Paris.

Décor in Orphée was constructed by Jean Victor-Hugo, Georges and Ludmilla Pitoëff.³⁷ Although set in Thrace, Orphée's homeland, the setting did not resemble a traditional Greek setting. Instead, the salon in the villa of Orphée gave a strange impression to the spectators: "Il ressemble pas mal aux salons des prestidigitateurs. Malgré le ciel d'avril et sa lumière franche, on devine ce salon cerné par des forces mystérieuses. Même les objets familiers ont un air suspect. --(. . .)-- Le décor rappellera les avions ou navires trompe-l'oeil chez les photographes forains."³⁸ Many of the accessories in Orphée were assigned "Poésie de théâtre" thus possessing a certain

³³ Ibid., p. 14

³⁴ Ibid., p. 14

³⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

³⁷ Georges and Ludmilla Pitoëff, actors and stage designers, who had come to France on Jacques Copeau's invitation were originally from Russia. They directed the Théâtre des Arts (founded by Jacques Rouché) presenting plays written by Henrik Ibsen and Pirandello. The Pitoëffs were also responsible for having introduced Russian classical theatre to Paris.

³⁸ Jean Cocteau, Orphée, O. C., V. 15-16

mysterious force. Décor and costumes were to be useful and practical for the rest of the play.

In the library, Cocteau placed a real book on the shelf, from which Orphée took his birth certificate. Even a chair played a role in the play - Heurtebise, the angel, got up on the chair, while a few minutes later Orphée took that chair to look for his birth certificate - meanwhile Heurtebise was left in the air. The mirror was the most mysterious of all the objects. A recurring theme in many of Cocteau's works, the mirror in Orphée, through "poésie de théâtre", allowed the characters ("La Mort", her assistants, Orphée, Eurydice) to enter and leave the world of Death. Heurtebise's wings were made of small mirrors which reflected light throughout the stage. These were the mirrors which also reflected some of the other world, from which Heurtebise came.

Cocteau's décor and mise en scène appeared to be basically quite simple (as they were in his previous three plays), with only the essential elements. The décor also followed in the style of Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel - banal, everyday settings. Characters added to this notion of the banal, in their modern costumes; Heurtebise appeared as a young "vitrier", and even "La Mort", a beautiful woman dressed in the latest style. To contrast with the banal, Cocteau gave accessories and characters "poésie de théâtre". The horse who spelled out words was a Satanic agent and held the key to Orphée's destiny as a poet.³⁹

³⁹ Orphée knew that this horse was anything but ordinary. The horse seemed to be divine; in its ability to spell out mysterious messages, it was clear to Orphée that this horse came for the other world. The horse's messages were poetry, which came from the world of Death (which was where Orphée's destiny remained): "Ce cheval entre dans ma nuit et il en sort comme un plongeur. Il en rapporte des phrases. Ne sens-tu pas que la

The mirror was transformed into an instrument of supernatural vision, giving the characters a look into the world of Death. The guardian angel Heurtebise, first appeared as a "vitrier", yet gradually revealed himself as a mysterious, supernatural being, who had equally supernatural powers.⁴⁰ A notion of "féerie" and magic permeated Orphée, adding another dimension of mystery and "poésie".

By making "poésie de théâtre" the central element of the play, Cocteau completely renewed the "lieu commun", the characters, the accessories - the Greek tragedy. This was one method of letting the audience see the play in a new light. At the same time, Cocteau gave the audience a personal interpretation of Orphée as the poet. Orphée was Cocteau's personal triumph in finding his own dramatic style - this was his original play, whose portrayal of poetry and death renovated the text. Orphée also brought with it the triumph of Cocteau's "poésie de théâtre".

moindre de ces phrases est plus étonnante que tous les poèmes? Je donnerais mes oeuvres complètes pour une seule de ces phrases où je m'écoute comme on écoute la mer dans un coquillage. -- (. . .) -- Je découvre un monde. Je retourne ma peau. Je traque l'inconnu." Ibid., p. 24. Orphée realised that poetry originated in the mysteries of the other world; poetry came from divine creation. In order to follow his fate as a creator of poetry, Orphée had to go to the world of Death.

⁴⁰In Scene IX, Heurtebise is questioned by the police (a parody on the police's routine interrogation by Cocteau) who asks how old he is. Heurtebise answers, eighteen years old, which reminds the reader that Cocteau himself was about that age when he began his career as a young poet, de Max's prodigy. Eurydice cannot comprehend Heurtebise's character, "vous êtes celle du cheval." Ibid., p. 40. His supernatural forces frighten her. Cocteau makes mention of the circus in Scene V: "J'ai vu à la foire une dame marcher au plafond." Ibid., p. 40. The use of mysterious happenings in Orphée brings to mind the atmosphere of the circus with its magician, and the circus theme in Parade, and Le Boeuf sur le Toit.

While all parts of the play merged together in harmony, unity was achieved between the play itself and the spectators: "Mesdames, Messieurs. La Mort me charge de demander à l'assistance si un spectateur serait assez aimable pour lui prêter une montre? (A un monsieur qui, au premier rang, lève la main.) Merci, Monsieur. Raphaël, voulez-vous prendre la montre de Monsieur."⁴¹ This is another of Cocteau's debts to music hall acts, as this was the regular routine of stage magicians. A "jeu de scène" followed as "La Mort" and her assistants continued with their "operation."

The mysterious circumstances in Orphée were commentaries on the mysteries of poetic creation. During the activities of "La Mort", she gestures as if she were a hypnotist; at the end of the scene, "La Mort" seemed to awaken herself, as if out of a deep hypnotic sleep. Such a portrayal of Death must have had lasting impressions on the audience in Cocteau's time, adding a further air of mystery to the play.⁴²

Orphée was able to enter through to the realm of Death by passing through the mirror; by wearing the gloves of Death he was able to look through Heurtebise's mirrored wings, in order to see Eurydice, who was already dead. These were more examples of "poésie de théâtre". Orphée was only able to discover his true self, as a poet, by entering Death. His destiny belonged to poetry and artistic creation. Heurtebise explained to Orphée: "Je vous livre le secret des secrets. Les miroirs sont les portes par lesquelles la Mort va et vient. Ne dites à personne. Du reste, regardez-vous toute votre vie dans une glace et vous verrez la Mort travailler comme des abeilles dans une ruche de verre."⁴³

Essentially what one had seen in Cocteau's Orphée was a maturing of his personal style of theatre with "poésie de théâtre" permeating the entire play (décor, costumes, characters, accessories) and a personal interpretation of Greek tragedy which placed himself in the role of the poet. This was the first original play of Cocteau. He renewed the classics by first condensing the play, and at the same time bringing out some major aspect, here, "poésie". Orphée was further revived through contemporary costumes and accessories. Ordinary elements gained an unknown, creative power through "poésie de théâtre".

The final renewal of Greek myth to be looked at here is La Machine Infernale from 1932, presented in 1934 by Louis Jouvet at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. The ancient myth, which Cocteau rehabilitated "au rythme de nos temps"⁴⁴ used the costumes and décor of Christian Bérard. Décor helped to create the proper atmosphere for the play - in the first act, it was a thunderous, stormy night; the second act took place in a deserted area, in the moonlight; act three was in Jocaste's bedroom, red as a butcher's shop and filled with a suffocating heat; the final act had an atmosphere of pestilence or plague.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 51

⁴² Integrating the idea of hypnotism into Orphée, was a way of renewing the play. La Mort entered and left the stage through the mirror, in a dreamlike manner, her ballgown trailing behind.

⁴³ Jean Cocteau, Orphée, O. C., V. 58.

⁴⁴ Paul Surer, Le Théâtre Français Contemporain, (Paris: Société d'Édition et d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1964), p. 270.

The role of La Voix was taken by Jean Cocteau, again another interpretation of the ancient Greek chorus. He carried on his renewed chorus from Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel when it was divided into two phonographs.⁴⁵ Cocteau took up from where he had left off in Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, by leaving everything out in the open, and by allowing "poésie de théâtre" to reveal the mysteries:

Ici, je renonce au mystère. J'allume tout, je souligne tout, (Vide du dimanche, bétail humain, expressions toutes faites, dissociations d'idées en chair et en os, férocité de l'enfance, poésie et miracle de la vie quotidienne:) voilà ma pièce, si bien comprise par les jeunes musiciens qui l'accompagnent. 46

Cocteau renovated his play by inserting a modern element, that of the now fashionable Freudian psychology:

Un des moyens les plus efficaces de renouveler l'intérêt consiste à déplacer l'axe du mythe antique: -- (. . .) -- Jocaste deviendra un sujet de choix pour psychanalyste: ce sera une femme chez qui le regret du nourrisson jadis perdu se mêle à une très nette attirance pour les beaux garçons. 47

Jocaste's maternal love has become a sensual love for young men and boys. Her obsession for young men has been bothering her ever since she abandoned her own baby son many years ago:

"L'endroit du rêve ressemble un peu à cette plate-forme; alors je te le raconte. Je suis debout, le nuit; je berce une espèce de nourrisson. Tout à coup ce nourrisson devient une pâte gluante qui me coule entre les doigts. -- (. . .) --
Et elle se glisse partout: elle cherche mon ventre, mes cuisses.

⁴⁵ Cocteau may have used this dislocation of speech (a voice without a human body, either coming through an opening in the wall, or from an inanimate-looking structure) as a precursor to later avant-garde works such as Ionesco's La Cantatrice Chauve where characters exchange roles and dialogue at the end. This sort of innovation of dialogue was rare in theatre at the time. Cocteau's treatment of the Greek chorus could be paralleled in Edith Sitwell's Façade, which used megaphones with the speaker concealed behind a curtain.

Quelle horreur!"⁴⁸ When the young soldier arrived she felt very attracted to him: "Juste son âge! Il aurait son âge... Il est beau! Avance un peu. Regarde-moi. Zizi, quels muscles! J'adore les genoux. -- (. . .) --" 49

Cocteau has inserted several references to modern psychology in La Machine Infernale - Jocaste was talking about the Oedipus complex when she mentioned: "Les petits garçons disent tous: 'Je veux devenir un homme pour me marier avec maman!'"⁵⁰ Without knowing, Jocaste married her son Oedipe in Act III, thus fulfilling the voice of prophecy heard at the beginning of the play. She and Oedipe have both become victims of fate, or of the "machine infernale". The character of Jocaste revealed that of a woman who was caught up in her own personal neuroses, always haunted by her nightmares. To unveil these psychological problems to the reader, Cocteau applied "poésie de théâtre" to both dialogue and to accessories.

For the first act, a young soldier tried to warn Jocaste about a certain danger, to which she seemed to be blind. Jocaste's own words spelled out her destiny. Her nervousness kept her wary of even the most ordinary objects - the staircase continually bothered her: "--(. . .) -- mais les escaliers me rendent folle.";⁵¹

⁴⁶ Jean Cocteau, Préface de 1922, p. 12

⁴⁷ Paul Surer, Le Théâtre Français Contemporain, (Paris: Société d'Édition et d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1964), p. 270.

⁴⁸ Jean Cocteau, La Machine Infernale, O. C., V, 211

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 219

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 227

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 208

her long scarf nearly choked her when Tirésias stepped on it: "Je suis entourée d'objets qui me détestent! Tout le jour cette écharpe m'étrangle. -- (. . .) -- C'est affreux! Elle me tuera."⁵² At the end of the play, the "machine infernale" finally exploded, when Oedipe discovered that Jocaste was strangled by her scarf: "Elle est là...Pendue... pendue à son écharpe... Elle est morte...messieurs, elle est morte...c'est fini."⁵³ Words played an integral role in La Machine Infernale, adding to the atmosphere of suffocation, to the actions of fate. The voice of Jocaste was also very important - Cocteau chose a specific actress to play her role, a Rumanian named Elvira Popesco; whose foreign accent fit in with Jocaste's role: "cet accent international des royalties."⁵⁴

Since décor was to be an organic part of the play structure Cocteau assigned the role of fate to certain objects, including the brooch "qui crève l'oeil de tout le monde"⁵⁵ - this phrase of Jocaste's in the first act was but a foreshadowing of Oedipe's fate in the final act: "Il se donne des coups dans les yeux avec sa grosse broche en or. Il y a du sang partout."⁵⁶ Here the irony revealed itself; just as Oedipe's eyes opened to the reality of fate's cruelty, he became blind, physically.

Jean Cocteau created a rich drama when he renovated the ancient myth of Oedipus. His "poésie de théâtre" was everywhere, from the décor which established the atmosphere of suffocation and

⁵² Ibid., p. 209

⁵³ Ibid., p. 333 Cocteau, who remained constantly aware of the events of his day, patterned the death of Jocaste on that of the actress Isadora Duncan, who was strangled by her long scarf when it became entangled in the wheel of her Bugatti sports car in Nice.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 208

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 228

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 336

and uneasiness; to the accessories which transformed themselves into instruments of destiny. Cocteau further renewed his tragedy by incorporating into it modern psychoanalysis to give his characters a different interpretation. Destiny central to classical tragedy is still at work today, but through hidden psychological forces which direct men to follow its prescribed path. Certain underlying themes became manifest through objects and characters, such as the theme of strangulation - brought out through the scarf, the heavy atmosphere, the introduction of the Sphinx,⁵⁷ and its assistant Anubis. Dreams and nightmares added to an air of "féerie", and tied in with the theme of analysing neuroses. Finally, Cocteau employed many anachronisms in his dialogue to rejuvenate his play: "mon pauvre bleu"⁵⁸ in military argot means a young soldier, "on lui jetait des fleurs",⁵⁹ another popular expression, the use of the more modern term to describe persons of royal blood, "royalties".

La Machine Infernale concluded Cocteau's experimentation with the modernisation of ancient Greek classics. So far, one has seen his early plays which emphasized heavily the idea of a collaboration of all arts, the development of "poésie de théâtre", and novel changes which had never been attempted before. Cocteau's next phase borrowed from the Greek theatre, varied its elements, and reconstructed them according to the modern style. Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde signalled yet another break with

⁵⁷ One aspect of Cocteau's theatre doctrine was the association of beauty and monstrosity or ugliness. The Sphinx, although a monster of Greek legend meaning "strangler", was played by a beautiful actress, Lucienne Bogaert. In Orphée, Death, usually an ugly, frightening fact of life, was also played by a beautiful actress, dressed in a fashionable pink ballgown

previous theories to start afresh on new ones. This play used French medieval mythology as its base.

Written in 1932 and presented in 1937 at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde was a play in three acts. As Cocteau was obsessed with diversity in his theatre, he decided to concentrate on adapting medieval myth by emphasizing the aspect of "féerie". Cocteau designed his décor and mise en scène to give an impression of both realism and fantasy; Coco Chanel created the costumes, which united: "les forces légères de l'actualité élégante et de l'inactualité mythologique."⁶⁰ In Act I Arthur's castle was bewitched by Merlin the magician's spell. By the final act the castle was rid of its falseness and left open to the hardships of reality.

Décor and accessories contributed to the "féerie" atmosphere:

(Lancelot:) (Il considère la table.) Les beaux échecs...
Et si j'avancais la partie. (Il pousse une pièce. Une
pièce adverse se déplace toute seule. Lancelot
sursaute.) Est-ce que je dors encore? (Il se pince.)
Je ne dors pas. Quel est ce nouvel artifice? Je ne
dors pas et ces échecs jouent tout seuls. -- (. . .) --
A ce moment tous les échecs sont renversés sur l'échiquier.
La chaise vide tombe à la renverse, la porte s'ouvre et
se referme. Ce vacarme réveille en sursaut Ségramor. 61

Once again "poésie de théâtre" was evident in the objects. Cocteau

Cocteau continued this theory of beauty and ugliness in his film La Belle et la Bête. His play Les Monstres Sacrés was centred around the lives of actors and actresses; perhaps around the beauty and the ugliness of the theatre. In his Dédicace to Orphée, Cocteau wrote: "Qu'il est laid le bonheur qu'on veut/ Qu'il est beau le malheur qu'on a" p. 11.

⁵⁸ Jean Cocteau, La Machine Infernale, O. C., V, 194

⁵⁹ Ibid., p 204.

⁶⁰ Jean Cocteau, Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde, O.C., VI, 121.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 197.

was extending Paul Fort's desire to create a décor of atmosphere. Although simple and functional, the décor lent itself to evoke mystery and magic. The "féerie" in Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde was a reminder of the supernatural setting of Maurice Maeterlinck's Pelléas et Mélisande as Lugné-Poe had staged it, forty years earlier.

Music for the play was taken from the English Baroque era, three melodies written by Henry Purcell: Trompettes de Galaad et Marche triomphale which announced the first act, from the Trumpet voluntary; La partie d'échecs de Lancelot in the second act, for Hornpie; and Mort de la reine, from Solemn Melody. This music brought into harmony the other elements of the play, and provided the proper atmosphere for a medieval play.

Basically the play dealt with King Arthur, keeper of the Grail which was hidden somewhere in the castle. Galaad, the most pure of all knights, was the only one capable of finding the Grail, and the play showed his victory and the consequences of it. Underneath this exterior was the real theme, the battle between "vrai" and "faux", good and evil. In the first act, the castle was under Merlin's spell of lies and "faux", enveloping the truth. While in this state, Arthur kept his eyes closed to the pain of reality, preferring to live in a blind state of happiness, (also a false happiness) Ginifer, Cocteau's invented character, and helper of the evil Merlin, appeared only in the form of Gauvain, Guinevere or Galaad. Ginifer, was the incarnation of lies, whose perverseness came out in the dialogue, of the "faux Gauvain": "C'est esprès."⁶² Ginifer introduced surprise, and a sort of comic bouffonnerie.

⁶² Ibid , p. 132.

Lancelot and Galaad the pure represented the forces of good and reality while Merlin and Ginifer defended the falseness and evil. The dream was a very predominant element in Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde. In the Preface, Cocteau said: "Mais vivre n'est pas un rêve; la pièce le prouve, hélas! et le château désensorcelé - j'allais écrire désintoxiqué - sera moins léger pour les uns, plus solide pour les autres et de toute manière inhabitable aux âmes qui n'envisagent pas la terre comme un éden."⁶³ A state of dreamlike atmosphere which reigned over the first and second acts produced an ambiguity, heightened by Ginifer's false characters. The results were a confusion between the real and the unreal. Lancelot mentioned that Arthur's castle was merely living in a dream. Arthur himself seemed to be content in the atmosphere of Merlin's sorcery. By the third act, when the enchantment was lifted from the castle, one could see how each character reacted in a different way. Lancelot and Guinevere were reunited in happiness, Galaad was responsible for restoring order and reality back to the castle; King Arthur did not however continue to live in contentment as he had done in the first act. He seemed to be happier living in a dream, rather than face the harsh real life. The third act presented his crisis which began with his jealousy of Lancelot and Guinevere's love.

Cocteau treated the breakdown of Arthur as a psychoanalyst, in terms of modern psychology. A victim of fate, his awakening proved to be a bitter one. It was in Arthur's jealous passion that the real tragedy of the play lay. Arthur was consumed by this evil passion: "J'ai perdu la tête. Partout

⁶³ Ibid., p. 274.

je vous entendais.. La jalousie est une arme effrayante. Ma main a trouvé sa dague. C'est ma main qui a frappé, ce n'est pas moi....⁶⁴ Guinevere was dead, and the fairies took her to the Lake to join Lancelot. The reality was more than Arthur could tolerate: "J'aime mieux de vrais morts qu'une fausse vie."⁶⁵

Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde was renewed as only Jean Cocteau could do, by introducing his invention Ginifer, the main character who spread evil within the characters he inhabited. Décor was actually full of "poésie de théâtre" and added to the mysterious, fairy-tale environment. Arthur's downfall was given a new interpretation through modern psychoanalysis. Tragedy, comedy (supplied by Ginifer and seen in the text) and "féerie" blended together.

In 1938, Cocteau was to abandon his adaptation of myths, ancient or medieval. "Féerie" belonged to Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde and its magical chessboard; the poet and his fate were left behind in Orphée and in La Machine Infernale. When Cocteau wrote his Les Parents Terribles, he was beginning another trend in his list of diverse styles of theatre. Categorised as a "modern" play, Les Parents Terribles were presented at the Théâtre des Ambassadeurs on November 14, 1938.⁶⁶

The critic Dubourg called the play "la tragédie à notre époque"; André Fraigneau praised it as "la plus parfaite des oeuvres théâtrales de Jean Cocteau." Innovation of theatre lay

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 259.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 274.

⁶⁶ Louis Jouvet's troupe had refused to put on the play, and after its first presentation in 1938, the Conseil Municipal judged it to be scandalous. Only after it was performed at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiennes did Les Parents Terribles enjoy a much greater success.

in the merging of role with actor in Les Parents Terribles. Previously Cocteau had wanted collaboration of artists with the play; here he wanted a perfect unity between the role and the actor. He was inspired by the "boulevard" actors and actresses: Lucien Guitry, Réjane; and by his "monstres sacrés" Sarah Bernhardt and the actors Mounet-Sully and de Max. The play was dedicated to one great actress, Yvonne de Bray, Cocteau's "actrice de type moderne". He chose two "boulevard" artists, Alice Cocéa and Marcel André, to play the roles of Madeleine and Georges. Actor Jean Marais was cast as Michel,⁶⁷ Gabrielle Dorziat was Léonie and since Yvonne de Bray's health prevented her from playing the role of the mother, Yvonne, Germaine Dermoiz replaced her. Mlle de Bray later took the mother's role in the film version in 1948.⁶⁸

In casting these artists Cocteau took up once again his idea of working with a "groupe amical", but in a new, diversified form. Since his own adolescence Jean Cocteau was greatly impressed by sophisticated actors and actresses (Guitry, de Max, Mounet-Sully and Sarah Bernhardt). These "monstres sacrés" of the theatre gave him the initial taste for drama.

⁶⁷ Jean Marais, a painter, set decorator and actor, entered Cocteau's life in 1937. He trained under Charles Dullin: "J'aimais le théâtre, et le théâtre, comme moi, était mutilé par sa mort." Jean Marais, Histoires de ma Vie, (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1975), p. 64. The conflict he had with his mother, who wanted him to have a "serious" career, inspired Cocteau to write Les Parents Terribles, Marais' personal triumph in theatre. "Comme je sentais jadis que Les Parents Terribles décideraient de ma carrière théâtrale, je devinai que ma carrière cinématographique dépendrait de L'Eternel Retour." Jean Cocteau, Jean Marais, (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1951), p. 45. Among his numerous roles in both theatre and in film, Jean Marais played in L'Aigle à Deux Têtes, Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde, as Galaad, La Machine à Ecrire, as Maxime, La Belle et la Bête, as Malcolm in Macbeth, In Britannicus as Néron, and Cyrano de Bergerac.

For Les Parents Terribles, Cocteau combined boulevard elements with modern elements. Firstly, he picked his actors from the boulevard theatre. The theme of the play borrowed from the boulevard theatre: the tragedy and scandal of the bourgeois family who represented "la société à la dérive". It was both tragedy and comedy at the same time; the play also contained more than a hint of vaudeville theatre in its theme. The décors "très réalistes", which "seront construits assez solidement pour que les portes puissent claquer"⁶⁹ were set in Paris "de nos jours". Décor was renewed when Cocteau gave it a role to play. To characterise the disorder of the family, especially that of the mother, Yvonne, Cocteau presented a room, very untidy, covered in clothes, and left in darkness. "Poésie de théâtre" resided in the most noticeable of décor, the doors which were slammed noisily every time someone came or left the apartment. As the mother finally lapsed into unconsciousness at the end of the play, the same noisy doors continued to slam. Yvonne, dressed in her "peignoir éponge", with "cheveux décoiffés" was the visual incarnation of the abusive, possessive mother and disorder. Her cluttered apartment was a spatial extension of her character. "Les portes qui claquent" represented the neurotic family of the bourgeois society, along with their disorder.

In contrast to the disorder of the family, Michel's fiancée, Madeleine lived in a large brightly lit apartment which was the model of order and cleanliness. The doors were a main part of

⁶⁸ This was the actress to whom Cocteau had dedicated his play. Mlle de Bray was much admired by fellow actor and friend, Jean Marais. The film of Les Parents Terribles was a great success in the technical sense. Cocteau, who valued highly Yvonne de Bray's acting talent, had written the play for her, for Gabrielle Dorziat and Marais.

⁶⁹ Jean Cocteau, Les Parents Terribles, O.C., VII, 88

"décors qui jouent", as they allowed Michel, the son, to leave the apartment of his parents, thus escaping the unbearable family situation. The same doors also let Madeleine enter, bringing the outside problems into the family, and creating further conflict.

Les Parents Terribles centred itself around the conflict between order (characterised by the aunt Léonie, and Madeleine) and disorder (Yvonne, George and Michel). Underlying this main conflict was an added psychological dimension. Yvonne personified the modern woman gradually experiencing a nervous breakdown: "Irrationnelle, absurde, cette femme mûre, perpétuellement vêtue d'un peignoir de bain hantée par une maladie à demi imaginaire, ne vivait que par le chantage, est un monstre d'assez belle venue."⁷⁰ Yvonne's "peignoir éponge", her uncombed hair, the untidiness of her room, the insulin that she always had to rely on, all become vehicles for neuroses. They formed part of Cocteau's "poésie de théâtre" which translated Yvonne's breakdown into concrete terms. She dies at the end of the play, her manifestation of refusal to face up to reality. Accompanied by the sound of the slamming doors, Yvonne became increasingly melodramatic in her desperation, and committed suicide. These were the outward signs of a society on the road to ruin.

Les Parents Terribles, a "boulevard" drama, renewed through "poésie de théâtre" in décors and costumes, through a modern psychological view of the neuroses of the bourgeois family, was Cocteau's method of attacking the decadence of the bourgeoisie. Where Cocteau had formerly used the circus, music hall, Greek tragedy and "féerie" to inspire his plays, he turned

⁷⁰ Guy Dumur, "Un clin d'oeil au drame bourgeois", Cahiers Jean Cocteau: 5 Jean Cocteau et son théâtre, (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 53.

towards an entirely different source, "boulevard" and vaudeville for Les Parents Terribles, another indication of his varied interests. One final addition to his modern play was the insertion of different names in theatre: Balzac, La Cousine Bette, Jules Verne, "C'est-à-dire qu'il n'existe aucun vaudeville, aucune pièce de Labiche mieux agencés que ce drame."⁷¹ Britannicus, Lorenzaccio. These were intertextualities which remind one of the importance of all forms of theatre for Cocteau.

Although "boulevard" characteristics were found in Cocteau's play La Machine à Ecrire (written in 1941), the play was basically a renovation of the "drame policier", yet another literary form. He was inspired to write the play after a scandal in a provincial town, Tulle involving anonymous letters. Once again, Cocteau remembered Diaghilev's challenge: "Etonne-moi.", and followed Stravinsky's words: "Car la nouveauté, -- (. . .) -- ne saurait être que la recherche d'une place fraîche sur l'oreiller. La place fraîche se réchauffe vite et la place chaude retrouve sa fraîcheur."⁷² By using the "drame policier" as his basis, Cocteau's theatrical doctrine reflected his versatility. A paragraph from his Preface gives an outline:

Avec La Machine à Ecrire, une fausse intrigue policière me permet de peindre la terrible province féodale d'avant la débâcle, province dont les vices et l'hypocrisie poussent les uns à se défendre mal, les autres (la jeunesse romanesque) à devenir mythomanes. ⁷³

⁷¹ Jean Cocteau, Les Parents Terribles, O. C., VII, 145.

⁷² Jean Cocteau, La Machine à Ecrire, O. C., VIII, 13

⁷³ Ibid., p. 14

Drama was created through "faux", as in Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde. Here it was the "fausse intrigue" which created the drama. For Cocteau, the notion of "faux" formed an integral portion of his theatre.

La Machine à Ecrire (itself a modern instrument already seen in an early play, Parade), opened at the Théâtre Hébertot on April 29, 1941, with décors designed by Jean Marais. The action centered around the search for the villain, "la machine à écrire", but Cocteau's main interest lay in the conflict of character between Didier's twin sons Pascal and Maxime, their adopted sister Margot and Solange, Maxime's mistress (who was twice his age).

The first two acts exposed the intrigue, in the style of the "drame policier", surprising the spectators with "coups de théâtre" and illusions. A recurring theme in Cocteau's theatre, a merging of "vrai" and "faux" was the work of the two young people, Maxime and Margot. Confusion was created because of the identical twins, and also by the romantic intrigue between Pascal and Margot, Maxime and Solange.

Just as Cocteau had attacked the neuroses of the bourgeoisie in Les Parents Terribles, here he made use of an actual incident to show the faults of provincial life: lies, suspicion, hypocrisy. The characters of his play were essentially battling against these faults. Pascal and Maxime were the most wary of the hypocritical bourgeoisie. The sordid affair of the anonymous letters has produced sensationalism in the town: " -- (. . .) -- brouiller les uns et de pousser les autres au suicide, les journaux ne parlent plus d'autre chose, n'hésitent

pas à raconter en détails les moindres secrets des familles."⁷⁴ Although many have confessed to be the villain of "la machine à écrire", it was actually the instrument itself that caused the problems; it was the agent which shocked the whole town into facing up to the truth of scandal. The typewriter was "l'arme la plus sale, la plus crapuleuse."⁷⁵ Even Solange who claimed to have written the anonymous letters, committed suicide, herself another victim of the scandal.

Cocteau added interest to his play making allusions to authors and works of theatre in his verbal text - Margot seemed to be living in the theatre, dressing up in her stepmother's costumes of Lucrece Borgia: "Ma vérité consiste peut-être à jouer des rôles. J'ai été élevée par une actrice."⁷⁶ As in Les Parents Terribles, La Machine à Ecrire contained many inter-textualities - plays mentioned, Phèdre, Tristan et Yseult; works such as Barbe-Bleue and Mme Bovary. The whole affair of the letters was referred to as "cette comédie honteuse"⁷⁷ and two of the characters, Margot and her dead stepmother, were actresses.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 33

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 181. As Cocteau had used the typewriter for background "music" in his scandal-provoking first ballet, Parade, it may have been considered a weapon (avant-garde) against the traditional ballet of the time. Whether or not this was the intention, the idea of it as a weapon to destroy and attack was actually a means of creation and renewal, and the ballet did shock the public.

⁷⁶. Ibid., p. 79

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 126.

La Machine à Ecrire was Cocteau's "drame policier" renovated. The intrigue of scandal produced an increasingly melodramatic atmosphere towards the end, as the truth about the lies and suspicion of the town was revealed. Ambiguity between the "faux" and the "vrai" accompanied by various surprise situations (concerning the real identity of the "machine à écrire") were inserted by Cocteau. He also made use of a contemporary incident to keep the play up to date, as well as assigning the role of the villain to an object, through "poésie de théâtre", to the typewriter. Cocteau's love of theatre showed through in the references to other plays, and in the role of Margot.

This examination of Cocteau's plays has given us an overall view of his innovations. His early plays demonstrated the results of collaboration and synthesis of the arts. His adaptations of Greek tragedy brought a return to economy, simplicity and conciseness of the text, scenery and costumes. One of his major innovations, "poésie de théâtre", developed in Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel and which reached its peak in Orphée, gave the theatre an original way of seeing costumes, objects and settings. Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde renewed the French medieval myth in the form of a "féerie" and allowed "poésie de théâtre" to permeate the décors, accessories and atmosphere. Cocteau revived two other forms of writing, the boulevard play and the detective novel through Les Parents Terrible and La Machine à Ecrire.

Cocteau's versatility and ability to exploit the rich possibilities of a wide range of sources enabled him to explore the theatre's potential. His discoveries have confirmed him as an unequalled innovator in the theatre and have reaffirmed the place of choreographers, artists and musicians in modern drama.

CONCLUSION

Our investigation into the new expression in the theatre reveals, after detailed research into theatre history, the very complex nature of Jean Cocteau's theatre. The example of this unparalleled innovator demonstrates that the combination of influences and innovations has set his theatre apart from any other. Novel expression has to be a feature of a man who upset the predominating trend of his times.

Our study has shown Cocteau's debt to his predecessors and collaborators. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the one common denominator linking these men to Cocteau, was their function as pioneering forces in the arts. They, like Cocteau reacted against the conventions of traditional forms, striving towards a goal of renovation and innovation. Yet there lies within Cocteau the interesting paradox of the revolutionary who stood in the tradition of revolution. It is possible to talk about Cocteau's conforming to established patterns of innovation in the theatre.

The real innovations of Jean Cocteau cannot possibly exist without his many sources and parallels, both provided by his precursors in the theatre, who broke with tradition in order to introduce new ideas. Cocteau, in fact, goes further than his predecessors. It is true that Jacques Copeau in his Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier, by 1924, worked together with a group who shared his goals, and that Jacques Rouché before him, co-operated with painters in his Théâtre des Arts, but neither

of these men developed the art of collaboration as a source of dramatic creation to the degree that Jean Cocteau did. Other directors merely used painters, choreographers and composers for staging purposes.

Jean Cocteau's goal of total theatre became the final collective product of dramatist, painter, choreographer and composer. Cocteau differs from his precursors in that the very conception of his dramatic work depended on collaboration. The Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier could have existed without Jouvet and Dullin, and Jacques Rouché's theatre productions at the Théâtre des Arts may have lacked somewhat without the decorations of his painters, but Parade would not have been possible without Jean Cocteau's collaborations.

From the perspective of collaboration, we have witnessed Jean Cocteau, the master of diverse techniques as he incorporated select, modern trends into the theatre: the dynamism of Diaghilev's Russian Ballet, Léonide Massine's creative choreography which combined mime, pantomime and danse, Picasso's cubist influence and Stravinsky's revolutionary compositions.

Jean Cocteau's plays are the testament to his constant variation and innovations. The synthesis of the arts achieved through Cocteau and his contemporaries was an unprecedented step in the theatre. Cocteau, through his novel ideas, was to the theatre what Picasso was, in his exploitations of cubism, to art, and what Stravinsky was to music in the invention of his unconventional polyrhythms.

In essence, the novel theory of Jean Cocteau consisted of his collaboration with contemporaries to produce a synthesis of the arts, and his implementation of diverse sources. In addition to being the expert at handling modern trends such as twentieth-century thought, American jazz, and cubism, Cocteau worked at continuous and productive experimentation. His theatre evolved around change, innovation and diversity.

The fact that Cocteau was a poet in the theatre is proof of his novel approach to the theatre. Far from being merely the technician who implemented his "poésie de théâtre", which individualised his theatre by bringing out the poetic value in every aspect of staging, he was the dramatist who used the poet's insight into the theatre as an investigation into human psychology.

This poet's insight gave Cocteau a genuine understanding into human psychology which was again in the line of modern trends incorporated into his theatre. "La bourgeoisie" and its neuroses, or as Cocteau named it "la société à la dérive", was often his subject. Yvonne, one of "les parents terribles" brought to the reader or the spectator a superb understanding of the human psyche. Another example was Jocaste, from Cocteau's Greek adaptation La Machine Infernale, the expression of whose human qualities were mysteriously carried over into the accessories and the mise en scène. Solange, Maxime's mistress in La Machine à Ecrire portrayed the older woman engaged in a scandalous relationship with a younger man, but whose unhappiness ultimately destroys her. In presenting the portrait of the mature woman, Cocteau has had no rival.

The characters in Jean Cocteau's theatre were not the eccentric personalities of Giraudoux's La Folle de Chaillot, but rather the products of a contemporary society with which he was so familiar. The portrayal of modern psychological thought individualised Cocteau's theatre as much as did his "poésie de théâtre". Both of these elements were innovative at the time and expanded the sources for his theatre.

The theatre of Cocteau functioned as a distillery for a vast array of sources and trends, and consequently became a source itself. As a man who was continually searching for "la place fraîche sur l'oreiller", Cocteau was not content to limit his creativity to the theatre, poem or novel. He felt an inner need to extend his search to the film.

In this new medium, "poésie de cinéma" became the novel vehicle for the innovations in his films. Cocteau's first film, from 1930, Le Sang d'un Poète, began a trend of introspective, poetic films. In 1946, Cocteau wrote La Belle et la Bête, which set a precedent for new cinematic techniques by creating a dream-like atmosphere through the lens of the camera. His screenplay, Ruy Blas, dating from 1947, modernised Victor Hugo's classic five-act Romantic play by giving actor Jean Marais the double role of Ruy Blas and Don César, and exploiting the possibilities of the cinema. Once again, Cocteau was using old sources to create new forms of theatre.

What we see is Jean Cocteau's theatre giving birth to new trends in the theatre, art and cinema. His theatre is now setting the precedent. The search for new expression marked Cocteau's theatre as unique, absorbing influences from the

innovators, both past and present, and producing a forerunner for the new trends in the theatre: the dadaist and surrealist plays of Tristan Tzara, (Le Coeur à Gaz), Louis Aragon (L'Armoire à Glace un beau soir), and Roger Vitrac (Victor ou les enfants au pouvoir), Ghelderode's aim for total theatre and his use of outside sources including music hall and vaudeville, Ionesco, whose dislocation of language in La Cantatrice Chauve and La Leçon has a precursor in Cocteau's Phonos, and experimental cinema.

Jean Cocteau's manifestation of new expression in the form of his theatre was a creation of a poet and dramatist whose broad vision followed a dual path: a backward glance to the past innovations and a signpost to the trends of the future.

APPENDIX A

Léon Bakst

Léon Bakst was one of the artists employed by Serge de Diaghilev to decorate his ballet productions. Thanks to Diaghilev, Bakst's original talents in art, especially his decorative art for the theatre, were given wider recognition. His desire was to emancipate theatre art by proposing new themes, bursts of exotic imagery, luminous colours evoking oriental fantasies and an overall harmony of the model or "maquette".

Perhaps one of Bakst's greatest accomplishments in theatre was to create a perfect unity amongst all elements of the production, an idea which during the beginning of the twentieth century in Paris had not yet been discovered. In fact, at that time it was customary for theatrical productions to design costumes and décors to fit in with more than one play. Costumes and décors taken from one play were later used in a different production, with the necessary adjustment to suit the theme.

By 1910, Bakst began truly to dominate the Ballets Russes, whose ballets Schéhérazade, Carnaval, The Firebird (l'Oiseau de Feu) and Les Orientales triumphed with huge success. Not only did Bakst's designs influence theatre décor, but also fashion and interior design. Of all the ballets presented, Schéhérazade proved to be the most successful for the Ballets Russes,

especially from the scenic point of view. Bakst's costumes and décors displayed excess in colour and design. For Cocteau, Bakst was one of the best collaborators in the artistic world. He was endowed with the ability to interpret words, music, dance, and incorporate them into his maquette. This harmony of elements which helped achieve a synthesis of arts was an idea also developed by Cocteau, and Diaghilev.

As with Cocteau, Diaghilev and Stravinsky, Léon Bakst was primarily an innovator, whose talent instilled a new free, challenging opposition to the traditional Imperial Ballet, and to all forms of ballet in Western Europe.

APPENDIX B

Léonide Massine

Capriccio Espagnol, music by Rimsky-Korsakov, Pulcinella, music arranged by Stravinsky, Petrouchka and Le Sacre du Printemps by Stravinsky, and Schéhérazade, Rimsky-Korsakov, are among the many ballets whose scénarios, costumes, and settings were designed by Léonide Massine, choreographer for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.

His talents were also put to good use in Cocteau's Parade, which contained a choreographic style based on jazz and rag-time music written by composer Erik Satie. Combining these styles, Massine began to invent his own new forms of dance. One of Cocteau's Managers moved about with jerky rhythms in a staccato-like fashion, which Massine himself described:

. . . the Chinese conjurer, whom I envisaged as a parody of the usual pseudo-oriental entertainer with endless tricks up his sleeve. Dressed in a mandarin jacket and floppy trousers, I marched stiffly around the stage jerking my head at each step. 1

One of his ways of creating dance movements was to use mime:

I stretched out my arms, slid my left leg sideways till I was almost sitting down, and with my left hand pretended to pull the egg from the toe of my shoe. The whole thing took only a few minutes, but it had to be done with the most clearly defined movements and broad mime. 2

One of the characters in Parade was the American Girl. Massine found his source for the American Girl's dance in the gestures of Charlie Chaplin. Her number evolved into mimed interpretations of the syncopated rhythms of rag-time music. Massine's choreography was one of the elements that helped to transform

the ballet into a modern, almost surrealistic form of theatre, in keeping with the "esprit nouveau" espoused by Picasso, Satie and Diaghilev. Cocteau was shocking audiences with *Parade* and its cubist aspect created by Picasso's décor, Satie's music and Massine's audacious choreography. Massine explained *Parade*: "Parade was not so much a satire on popular art as an attempt to translate it into a totally new form. It is true that we utilized certain elements of contemporary show-business - ragtime music, jazz, the cinema, billboard advertising, circus and music-hall techniques - but we took only their salient features, adapting them to our own ends."³ At the time, Massine and his friends were introducing the avant-gard into theatre; their creative elements have lasted up to theatre, art and cinema of the present-day.

¹ Léonide Massine, My Life in Ballet, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1968), p. 103.

² Ibid., p. 103

³ Ibid., p. 105

APPENDIX C

Le Potomak

En fait, le manuscrit se présente dans des conditions telles que nous savons ni où commence le travail, ni où il se termine. Il est constitué par deux cent trente-deux pages de notes en apparence indépendantes les unes des autres, sur papiers de formats divers, d'écriture variable, et qui offrent l'aspect du plus grand désordre. Il comporte même quatre petits cahiers de musique qui pourraient avoir été donnés à Cocteau par Stravinsky lorsqu'il continuera Le Potomak auprès de lui. Certaines pages sont ornées de dessins ou d'esquisses plus ou moins en rapport avec le texte. ¹

This was how Jean-Jacques Kihm and Elizabeth Sprigge described the initial manuscript of Jean Cocteau's Le Potomak, inspired by the scandal of Igor Stravinsky's anti-conformist ballet Le Sacre du Printemps (1913). The book was begun during 1912-1913 and finally completed in 1924. Cocteau's "poésie de roman", dedicated to Stravinsky, took its title from the name of a river in Washington, U. S. A., the Potomac; the last letter was changed to a "k".

After having seen the ballet, Cocteau wrote the preliminary sketches and later consumed sugar, believing that it would produce dreams powerful enough to inspire anti-conformist ideas. Le Potomak was essentially a collection of drawings, poems, prose "dialoguée" and some portraits, of Anna de Noailles, Catulle Mendès, Edmond Rostand. One critic has suggested that Cocteau may have been influenced by the painter Odilon Redon, who designed décors for Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art.

One third of the book is dedicated to les Eugène:

¹ Jean-Jacques Kihm and Elizabeth Sprigge, Jean Cocteau L'Homme et les Miroirs, (Paris: Editions de la Table Ronde, 1968), p. 72.

Cocteau dessine d'abord les Eugènes -- l'album des Eugènes: personnages cruels qui dérangent les braves Mortimer. (l'équivalent des Durand: tout le monde) -- (. . .) -- Il en parle quotidiennement comme si les personnages existaient --- ainsi devait faire Jarry avec le Père et la Mère Ubu, auxquels les dessins des Eugènes et des Mortimer font irrésistiblement penser. 2

Cocteau described Le Potomak, the central figure of the book, as a "monstre écrit", a graphic monster: "C'est un gros monstre flasque dans un aquarium; l'aquarium, gardé par Alfred, est situé dans des caves, sous l'église de la Madeleine."³

In 1939, Cocteau wrote La Fin du Potomak . After the experience of writing this book, he discovered something more about himself, that he, the poet, had become "... bref un instrument capable de percevoir et de traduire les appels du réel profond, de lieux communs et de formules toutes faites."⁴

² Ibid., pp. 72-73

³ Ibid., p. 73

⁴ André Fraigneau, Cocteau par lui-même, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1957), p. 27

APPENDIX D

Le Sang d'un Poète

Le Sang d'un Poète, 1930, was a notable creation of Jean Cocteau and closest composer of Les Six, George Auric. The film, Cocteau's first, had its debut screening at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier on January 20, 1932, where Cocteau appeared to deliver the introductory speech: "Avec le film on tue la mort, on tue la littérature, on fait vivre la poésie d'une vie directe."¹ This, Cocteau's first experiment in the cinema, was not to be repeated. It was also Georges Auric's first collaboration in film: "Georges Auric, qui trouve ici le point de départ de la considérable carrière de compositeur de "cinématographe" que l'on soit, signera en particulier la musique de presque tous les films réalisés ou écrits par Cocteau."²

Le Sang d'un Poète has been compared to film-maker Luis Buñuel's L'Age D'or, which came out at the same time. A surrealist, Buñuel created his film in collaboration with surrealist painter Salvador Dali. Cocteau's Le Sang d'un Poète has been labelled surrealist for its strange imagery, and atmosphere of dreamlike trance. By the time the films were presented Cocteau had already declared himself an enemy of the Surrealists, whose leader was André Breton. Rene Gilson wrote: "Dans Le Sang d'un Poète, Cocteau organise les associations -- nous sommes donc très loin du surréalisme-- associations d'actes, et non d'idées et le premier film de Cocteau était déjà un film d'actes remontée [sic]

¹René Gilson, Jean Cocteau, (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1964), p. 66

²Milorad, "Les Six" Cahiers Jean Cocteau: 7 Avec les Musiciens (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. 39.

des souvenirs tout proches et du jeu actif des préoccupations présentes."³

There have been many attempts to decipher Cocteau's first film, and it seems as though Le Sang d'un Poète is basically a reflection of the author: "Les surprises de la photographie" un sous-titre du Sang d'un Poète, ou Cocteau "pris au piège par son propre film" mettait sur le compte du discernement de l'appareil la révélation de son visage à la place de son héros."⁴

³ René Gilson, Jean Cocteau, (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1964), p. 65

⁴ Ibid., p. 147

APPENDIX E
Schéhérazade

The height of the Ballets Russes' 1910 season at the Opera, Schéhérazade was a one-act ballet by Léon Bakst and Michel Fokine, based on the music of Rimsky-Korsakov. One of the factors, if not the main one, contributing to the ballet's huge success were the outstanding designs and décors of Russian painter Léon Bakst. He then began to dominate the company as set and costume designer, and gradually started to gain international fame for his creations.

What essentially held the Paris audiences' attention were the bright colours, one of Bakst's trademarks. Igor Stravinsky looked upon the ballet as the Ballets Russes' most overwhelming achievements especially from the point of view of its scenery. Bakst knew how to choose his shades of colour: "Against a lugubrious green I put a blue full of despair, paradoxical as it may seem. There are reds which are triumphal and there are reds which assassinate. There is a blue which can be the colour of a St. Madeleine and there is a blue of a Messalina."¹

Schéhérazade has once been described as an experiment in excess. As each ballet was created Bakst would literally exceed himself in his costumes and décor. As a result, Paris fashion and interior design began to follow Bakst's trends for exoticism and orientalism. Cocteau wrote in his Notes sur les Ballets:

¹ Charles Spencer, Léon Bakst, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), p. 70

Les aquarelles de M. Bakst, qui éclaboussent ces lignes comme les yeux alternent avec les petites penes grises sur la roue du paon expliquent mieux qu'il ne m'est possible de l'exprimer, la température de cette serre à passions. / C'est la féerie de l'inconséquence, de l'inquiétude, et de l'irréparable. 2

² Jean Cocteau "Textes de Jean Cocteau", Cahiers Jean Cocteau: 7 Avec les Musiciens, (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. 121

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