

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

ASPECTS OF SURREALISM IN THE WORK OF JEAN COCTEAU

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by

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A V A N T - P R O P O S

My children have lived with this work all through their growing up. Fortunately they appear in good health and spirits and I hope that anyone who takes the trouble to read it will be equally cheerful on completion of their assignment.

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G . M. Cook. Sunderland. March 1978.

P R E F A C E

1.

The work of Jean Cocteau reveals connections, similarities and differences between him and the writers of the surrealist movement. In order to appreciate the links it is also necessary to examine the principles of Surrealism to determine the extent to which they have similar origins to some of Cocteau's own ideas.

This line of inquiry leads to an examination of the part played by the work of Freud and Jung in inspiring both Surrealism and Cocteau. To a certain degree one is led to question the association between Freud and Surrealism which has often been taken for granted and to look for the origins of surrealist thought in more specifically French sources to which Freud also had access. Whilst it is difficult to bring about a rapprochement between Cocteau and Freud, there is a much smaller problem in comparing the work of Jung and that of Cocteau. There are striking similarities which indicate not only a divergence of thought between Cocteau and the surrealists but which also tempt one to extrapolate a direct link between Cocteau and Jung for which there is virtually no direct evidence. What is achieved in comparing the two is a greater understanding of the creative method of Cocteau, of the forces which drove him, and of his basic position as a child of the 20th century, yet as a poet of all ages. One begins also to have a clearer vision of the reasons which underlie his all important interest in mythology as a source of pure emotion and distilled poetic essence. For personal rather than artistic reasons a close rapport between Cocteau and the surrealist group is unthinkable as well as generally known, so that there is an enhanced interest not only in a direct comparison but also in comparing Cocteau with artists and poets who worked close to official movement but were not, at least for very long, part of it. Garcia Lorca is a Spanish writer in this position whose ideas and background so closely resemble Cocteau's that it is almost surprising to find that he was at least tolerated if not completely accepted by the Surrealists; his friends Dalí and

and Bunuel even joined the group formally. On the other hand Cocteau's proclaimed admiration for Garcia Lorca indicated at least some feeling in not being able to participate directly in the Surrealist experience. Comparing Cocteau with Lorca necessitates an examination of the creeds and ideals of them both, highlighting aspects of poetic power and creativity in the process.

It is hoped to place in the context of 20th century thought the work of both Cocteau and the Surrealists. A continuity between the second half of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century should also be established and the manner in which the First World War acts as a watershed made clear. From the study Cocteau emerges as a more consistent and deeper thinker than he is often considered. The parallels found in the work which he presented in a variety of different artistic fields coupled with the overpowering sense of mission which begins to appear, dispel for ever the myths of the careless and carefree casual adolescent dilettante and reveal instead a conscious artist, a thinking poet, a careful craftsman and a profoundly proud human figure wrought with deep seated anxieties often masqued with flippancy. Undeniably however, consciously or unconsciously, whether or not the Surrealist liked the idea, there was an affinity between them and Cocteau which was sometimes a very close link and at others flared up into an open hostility which at least indicated that they were working in the same areas.

Since it was the fashion at the time to accept the view of Freud as a scientist and a medical practitioner in the field of psychiatry, a view which he himself insisted upon, it has been felt justifiable to accept it, although nowadays he is partially discredited. The concept of the subconscious is also not considered favourably although it seemed real to Freud, Jung, the Surrealists and to Cocteau. Consequently it is desirable to work within the parameters of their imagination rather than to take the stance of modern

behaviourist psychiatrists whose ideas are irrelevant to the literary  
uses made of the work of Freud and Jung.

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# INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION: THE EMERGENCE OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

IN LITERATURE.

THE GAP BETWEEN COCTEAU AND THE SURREALISTS

Jean Cocteau's life spans a wide section of the 20th century. He was fully mature when he began his period of prodigious creativity towards the end of the First World War, yet made a point of keeping up with and even <sup>being</sup> ahead of the literary and artistic avant-garde movements which are usually dominated by the young. He always retained his individuality; whatever points of contact his work may reveal with his contemporaries, he did not formally join any group, although several accused him of stealing their ideas and certainly his concepts and ideals can be traced directly to several different sources, some artistic, some poetic, some philosophical, and some scientific. If there is a sphere in which he preferred not to be involved it was that of politics, in contrast with the inclinations of many of his contemporaries. However, his social origin and connections linked him firmly with the Right Bank and this alone, without any other consideration was sufficient to exclude him from close participation in such movements as Surrealism. Yet Cocteau just as much as the Surrealists was a product of his time: in his own way he was under the same influences as they were, knew the same people, even shared some of the same problems and concerns. By the success of his works, the way he sought and enjoyed acclaim, the manner in which he lived he was poles apart from them. On the surface the breach could not be sealed but the poetic links, unadmitted, were still very real. Since Cocteau had so much in common with the Surrealists, one cannot fail to wonder at the bitterness of the quarrel which separated them during the 1920's and 30's. Although he made up many of the differences between himself and certain of the group notably Aragon, Eluard, Picasso (if he can be called a Surrealist) and Desnos, he never did succeed in becoming reconciled with André Breton. The nature of Breton in this matter was unbending even though Cocteau himself did not hold grudges very long. Suzanne Bernard shows that she was aware that to talk in terms of reconciliation between Cocteau and the Surrealists would not meet with universal approval yet she was one of the first to perceive that the bonds of hostility held them close.

"Un rapprochement entre Cocteau et les Surréalistes ne peut, c'est probable, que déplaire à l'un comme aux autres. Si les derniers ont toujours montré la plus vive suspicion à l'égard de la poésie de Cocteau et ont parfois violemment pris à partie l'homme plus encore que le poète, Cocteau de son côté couvrait de sarcasmes, dès 1923, le "cornet à surprises" (1) qu'il voyait déverser sur l'Europe "Hypnoses, envoûtements exquis, dentelles" en marche, insolences, épouvantails, aérogynes, ronds de fumée, perce-neige, corsets-mystère, diables à ressort et feux de Bengale." (2)

Bernard gives as evidence of the quarrel the number of 'La Révolution Surréaliste' dated 1 March 1926 in which there was an attack on Cocteau on account of something said in the number of 'Le Disque Vert' dedicated to Lautréamont. Cocteau was not blaming the Surrealists for the "cornet à surprises" but rather cataloguing the march of history and wondering what was to come next. His piece on Picasso was written before 1926 and could not therefore refer to the whole of the Surrealist period.

At least one word in his catalogue "aérogynes", appears to relate more to his own work than to the Surrealists'. However there are examples of Cocteau's criticism of the Surrealists during their formative period in the early twenties; he castigates as "une mode pedante" "des parallèles qu'on a coutume de faire entre Bergson, Freud, Einstein et l'art." (3)

1. quoted from Cocteau, 'Picasso' 1923, in Le Rappel à l'ordre, Stock, 1948. p.291.
2. S. Bernard. Le Poème en Prose, p. 690.
3. Le Rappel à l'ordre ;op.cit. p. 27.

Most of the people about whom Cocteau is complaining here were, or were about to become, surrealists who were seeking philosophical justification for their theories and their art, although he may well be looking also in other directions in mentioning Bergson and Einstein who are not normally regarded as inspirers of Surrealism. In fact, certain of their ideas dealing with intuition, scientific ideas of time and space as well as with the laws of chance do have fundamental links both with Surrealism and with Cocteau himself, even the literary and artistic forms which they eventually took bear little resemblance to the models suggested. Dr. Bernard shows her appreciation of the revolution in thought already begun in the 19th century by scientific thinkers, which was to affect profoundly the direction taken by literary movements seeking new modes of expression at the beginning of this century;

"avec le recul du temps, nous sommes plus sensibles à ce qui fait de Cocteau non seulement un contemporain du Surréalisme....mais un franc-tireur engagé dans la même lutte pour la libération de l'esprit."(1)

Cocteau is thus presented as a kind of guerrilla fighter engaged in a different single handed struggle with ultimate objectives not unlike the Surrealist working as a group. Although the desire for freedom which Dr. Bernard mentions is typical of many aspects of modern culture, its presence in Cocteau is ambiguous; on the one hand he is attempting a free style of expression in all forms of art, yet on the other hand he looks for a fixed form for his ideas even to the extent of looking to classical literature and mythology in ancient Greece and Egypt. Possibly the necessity for form was impressed on him most by Radiguet but the manner in which he perceived the whole of man's subconscious in mythology and particularly in Greek mythology is a personal contribution to literature which is paralleled by the work of Jung in psychotherapy. Previously Freud too had studied the motivation of Oedipus and Apollinaire had chosen the example

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1. Dr. S. Bernard. Le Poème en Prose; op. cit. p. 690.

of Orphée but these myths find a new expression in Cocteau for in his mind they penetrate the very essence of humanity and find an echo in his own personality which is why these particular myths became such an obsession with him. His reaction against tradition was against the stereotyped standardised modes of presentation and thought which were the result of taking history too seriously without seeking new and original forms. He did not share the fundamental despair in the past the present, or in the whole of contemporary civilisation which was the mark of the Dadaists and the Surrealists. Consequently he felt less the need to revolutionize the whole of thought, literature, and society, to recreate a new mankind from the basis of primeval instincts urges and passions which civilized man had concealed, even wilfully, in the depths of his subconscious. At the time, the basic difference was the more important. In perspective it now appears that the similarity of objective in trying to awaken man to the full realisation of his spirit is the more important. In looking back over the period of the formation of Surrealism in his later life, Cocteau shows that he is cognisant of the shift in emphasis as well as of a community of idea which was eventually to assume greater importance.

"Ma rupture avec les surréalistes devait être plus confuse, plus âpre et plus longue. Elle venait, d'une part, de ma désobéissance aux ukases, de l'autre - et je m'en accuse - d'un instinct de la valeur plus fort en moi que la valeur même que je pouvais alors mettre au service d'une cause. Nous devions nous réconcilier dix-sept ans plus tard, et pendant ces dix-sept ans je n'avais jamais cessé de prétendre que certains ennemis, habités par des problèmes analogues sont davantage des amis que les amis de simple surface." (1)

In demonstrating his independence, Cocteau also indicates how sympathetic

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1. J. Cocteau. 'Le Discours d'Oxford'; in Poésie Critique 2, Gallimard, p.189.  
Originally published 1956.

he was to surrealist ambitions. His claim to have held out the olive branch so consistently is hardly borne out by the facts, although it is certainly true that he was much less bitter in pursuing the quarrel than they. Cocteau shows here his pride and unwavering sense of his mission as a poet which would not allow him to join with the Surrealist group and yet because of the basic similarity of their inspiration, eventually, the barriers between himself and some of the surrealists were broken down.

"C'est ainsi par exemple que ma longue bataille avec les surréalistes, beaucoup plus tard, a davantage, à mes yeux, le poids d'une amitié que d'une inimitié. Nous nous battions, eux en groupe, et moi seul, pour les mêmes causes. C'est pourquoi nous nous sommes tellement liés par la suite. J'ai été si lié avec le pauvre Desnos, et je suis si lié avec Eluard et Aragon." (1)

The reference to Desnos who died at Auschwitz in 1944 is interesting as it is an indication that Cocteau may have known Desnos during the war, although he could have been in contact with him in the late 1930's. Cocteau was not liked by many patriots during the Occupation and was fortunate that his association with Jean Desbordes and Max Jacob served as evidence absolving him from charges of collaboration. Jean Desbordes of course, died in similar circumstances to Desnos. Cocteau may have been tempted to transpose the past surrealistically into one which he would have liked, rather than state bold reality. A further hint that Cocteau did not adhere strictly to the truth in his efforts to gloss over his quarrel with the Surrealists appears in one of his last published works, a tribute to Picasso broadcast over a public address system at a Rome exhibition.

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1. J. Cocteau. Entretiens avec André Fraigneau. Paris 1965, p. 26

(Publication of radio interviews by Editions 10/18).

"Brouillé avec les surréalistes, je défendais les mêmes causes qu'eux mais je travaillais seul, alors qu'ils travaillaient en groupe. Ils annexèrent Picasso, et ce qui prouve le style de cet homme, c'est que jamais il n'a épousé notre querelle, qui a duré dix-sept ans et que cette brouille n'a jamais glissé aucun nuage entre nous." (1)

Picasso and Cocteau had very little contact between 1926 and the late 1940's when Picasso left the Communist Party, although Cocteau's admiration in the period was unwavering. The importance of these comments is that they show that Cocteau wanted to be associated with the Surrealists and that he bore no continuing grudge against them. Although he never became reconciled with André Breton, the breach between himself and some of the Surrealists or former surrealists was healed without Cocteau having to compromise his own individuality by formal adherence to the group leaving himself free to pursue his own line of thought but departing from some of the same sources and borrowing some of the same methods which they themselves held as the true method of poetry. Although they all considered that the essence of art, of which poetry in verse was but one form, was deeply mysterious, they also saw a value in comprehending the enigma. Cocteau relied on instinct and revelation for his understanding whereas the others believed it was necessary to cultivate the power to penetrate the mystery by diligently practising Surrealistic techniques. While some of these involved relatively simple interpretation of dreams, others had something of the magical about them. Both the Surrealists and Cocteau were greatly interested in problems of the occult, of extra-sensory perception (2) but most of all in the sub-conscious. They did not share exactly the same viewpoint in respect

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1. J. Cocteau, La Corrida du premier mai, Paris, 1958p. 201 'L'improvisation de Rome'.

2. These aspects of surrealism are explored by Carrouges in his work, André Breton et les Données fondamentales du Surréalisme, op. cit.



especially of the subconscious, for the Surrealists looked to Freudian psychology for their major guidance, whereas it was clear that Cocteau had artistic grounds for mistrusting Freud and not scientific ones.

PART I

THE DISCOVERY

OF THE

SUBCONSCIOUS

i THE SUBCONSCIOUS IN

LITERATURE

One of the most important of the contributions to literature is the revelation of the subconscious workings of the mind as a new field for literary and artistic expressions. The concept itself was still new and controversial, although André Breton shows that psychiatry was already making use of medical discoveries in connection with it during the First World War. The Encyclopedia Universalis defined the Subconscious as;

"Vaste espace mental soustrait à la conscience de l'individu, où cependant les souvenirs refoulés et les désirs interdits restent éternellement actifs." (1)

The scientific formulation of this concept began during the 1880's with the work of Charcot in France. It was in the period 1893 - 9 that Sigmund Freud's investigations and early publications in Vienna established the subconscious as a concept in psychology although he had to wait many years before the value of his work was generally recognised. When one considers the nature of the subconscious it is not surprising that one can discern its characteristics in the work of writers of earlier generations, traits which they had perceived intuitively before the scientific formulation of the idea as such. The name of the Oedipus complex, a basic tenet in psycho-analysis, itself is derived from the father-hate and mother-love in Sophocles plays, which later found a new expression in Stendhal's Julien Sorel, before being taken up as a scientific idea by Freud and eventually a literary and poetical one by Cocteau. Freud himself published psycho-analytical studies of characters in novels written prior to his own discoveries, for instance Dostoevsky's Raskolnikof. The Surrealist use of the idea of the subconscious was an attempt to exploit it in a controlled organised way, not only in order to create poetry but also to enable man to attain the full realisation of his mental powers. There was no effort on their part to make use of access to subconscious

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1. Encyclopedia Universalis. ref cit.

as a therapeutic tactic intended to cure mental ailments of the conscious state. In the poetry of the nineteenth century there had been examples of attempts to expand the limits of consciousness, so that the Surrealist initiative was not entirely new even though it became fashionable in a way that earlier ventures did not. De Quincey's "Confessions of an Opium Eater" had been popularised in France by Baudelaire who suggested a new world of the senses in "Paradis Artificiels". However, Breton specifically denied his followers the use of drugs partly because of his innate puritanism and also because they may furnish a false inspiration not genuinely based in the subconscious:

"Il en va des images surréalistes comme de ces images de l'opium que l'homme n'évoque plus, mais qui s'offre à lui spontanément, despotiquement. Il ne peut pas le congédier; car la volonté n'a plus de force et ne gouverne plus les facultés." (1)

Breton's distaste for drugs may also derive in part from the death of his friend Jacques Vaché. The story most often told is that Vaché killed himself by blowing his brains out with a pistol shot in a fairly typical surrealist gesture. However, Breton has another version of the story;

"Jacques Vaché s'est suicidé à Nantes..... Il absorba, je crois, quarante grammes d'opium, bien que, comme on pense, il ne fût pas un fumeur expérimenté. En revanche, il est fort possible que ses malheureux compagnons ignoraient l'usage de la drogue et qu'il voulut en disparaissant commettre à leur dépens, une dernière fourberie drôle." (2)

Breton was loyal enough to blame even his comrade's suicide on to a black joke of a particularly bitter kind but he was certainly affected by Vaché's death and could have conceived as a consequence sufficient distaste for opium

1. A. Breton. Manifestes du Surréalisme. op. cit. p. 50.

2. A. Breton. Les Pas Perdus. op. cit. p. 24.

to be especially offended by Cocteau's light hearted flaunting of his own use of it. Certainly there is parallel obsession with death in the work of both Cocteau and of the Surrealists although the former claimed to know enough about death not to need to participate in it consciously until the moment when his time came of its own accord. Breton's reference to his friend's decease is also interesting in that it comes as near as possible to an admission of an interest in the supernatural, whereas Surrealism always claimed to be completely material, avoiding reference to Coctelian topics such as Gods, spirits, and journeys into the world of death.

Breton quoted from 'Les Paradis Artificiels' to show the nature of the perception he was hoping to achieve but he considered that he had found a superior method of achieving it, based on the new Freudian discoveries. Cocteau was, on the other hand, well known to have smoked opium for many years and he claimed only to be able to achieve full integration of his personality when under its influence. When it affected his capacity to work he did attempt to give it up and then with the regret that science was not trying hard enough to make the drug harmless.

Both Cocteau and Breton have debts other than opium to Baudelaire. It was Breton who chose the line from 'Le Beau Navire' to emphasize his search for the lost power within himself;

"Au fond de l'inconnu pour trouver du nouveau". (1)

The search for novelty was one of the themes of Surrealism in its efforts to create a completely new genre. Under Radiguet's influence Cocteau was soon to rebel against novelty, preferring to look for the eternal truths of man's nature in classical legend and traditional stories and to treat his stories as a form of introspection. L'inconnu' suggests an approach to the subconscious as long as Baudelaire was considering it to be within himself. It could equally well represent some unknown aspect of the exterior world; only exploration would reveal it. The very word suggests not only

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1. A. Breton, La Clé des Champs, p 9.

that Baudelaire was groping for a new idea but also that he was not clear in his mind where he would find it. However, he did prepare the terrain so that when psychology had made the way clear, the Surrealists and others were in a position to exploit the new knowledge. In another way too, Baudelaire prepared the way for the Surrealists. The concept of art which he put forward brings to mind Breton's notion of a "transcendental point" in which the differences between the real and the imaginary, the spiritual and the material, could be reconciled. Baudelaire defined art as;

"une magie suggestive contenant à la fois l'objet et le sujet, le monde extérieur à l'artiste et l'artiste lui-même." (1)

Such a total view of art is breathtaking in its scope yet both Breton and Cocteau were to take it up and to develop it further, even to the point of adding new dimensions to it; the world within the artist and the universe of the unreal. In Baudelaire's more introspective moments, in 'Les Fleurs du mal', he had already come near to a perception of the subconscious but his preoccupation was with sight and sound and touch as expressions of sentiment and feeling. In this collection, the poet makes a comparison between the feelings inspired by the cat and the woman. By using the phrase 'en esprit' he stresses that the vision is within the consciousness of his mind and uses vocabulary implying conscious and physical perception like 'caressent' and 'regard':

"Lorsque mes doigts caressent à loisir

Ta tête, ton dos élastique

.....

Je vois ma femme en esprit; son regard

Comme le tien, aimable bête,

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1. C. Baudelaire, L'Art philosophique; Oeuvres Complètes,  
vol. 2, p 487. Gallimard, Paris,

Profond et froid, coupé et tend comme un dard." (1)

Baudelaire did not pursue his image into the subconscious. Poetry was to develop in that way later on. Had he done so, he might have discovered a wealth of deep-seated neuroses and obsessions explaining why he further indicated in 'Le Balcon' where he deals with Beauty in terms of art and evocation, by reference to touch and appearance. Although he can bring to mind "les minutes heureuses", he considers it futile to seek beauty beyond the immediate reality:

"Car à quoi bon chercher tes beautés langoureuses

Ailleurs qu'en ton cher corps et qu'en ton cœur si doux?" (2)

It was in the next century that poets were to try and solve the problem of finding if his question had an answer and also examine in a different light the deeper meaning of "corps" and "cœur" as the definitive aspects of the reality or the form of existence. Neither Cocteau nor the Surrealists were satisfied that emotion, thought and feeling were limited to the visual world and tried hard to bring into the orbit of physical perception the unreal, the imaginary, the remoteness of time and space. In their efforts they moved far from a mere attempt to recreate a transitory happiness. Cocteau considered that poetry was born in suffering and that creation was a beautiful anguish whilst the Surrealists looked for inspiration within themselves but they were concerned with the future rather than the past. Baudelaire evolved a concept of Beauty which broke through the bounds of comprehension in a similar way to Rimbaud in his voyant period. He identifies Beauty with poetry<sup>and</sup> placed them both on a supernatural level:

1. C. Baudelaire Les Fleurs du Mal No. 34

2. C. Baudelaire Le Balcon, Les Fleurs du Mal.



"Ainsi le principe de la poésie est, strictement et simplement, l'aspiration humaine vers une Beauté supérieure..."(1)

He leaves no doubt in discussing "les régions surnaturelles de la poésie" (1) that he places them beyond the comprehension of the normal state of mind for he specifies the effect which Beauty has on him;

"C'est cet admirable, cet immortel instinct du Beau qui nous fait considérer la Terre et ses spectacles comme un aperçu, comme une correspondance du ciel. La soif insatiable de tout ce qui est au delà, et que révèle la vie, est la preuve la plus vivante de notre immortalité, C'est à la fois par la poésie et à travers la poésie, par et à travers la musique que l'âme entrevoit les splendeurs situées derrière le tombeau." (2)

Through the magical powers of poetry and music, we can see in this world a reflection of the next. They reveal not only man's immortality but also the glory yet to come. This passage has none of the gloom and satanism of later years and yet the powerful vision of poetry has much in common with Cocteau's view of the role of the poet as a medium expressing divine truths in a form accessible to the senses of normal beings, so that his frequently expressed admiration is also indicated in an inspiration of a very direct nature.

The revelation of the power which the poet can cultivate was the aspect of Baudelairean poetry which the Surrealists were to cultivate in an effort to synthesize it with a study of the subconscious so that by the practise of appropriate techniques, that power might be made available to everyone. A divergence of approach between Cocteau and the Surrealists begins to be seen in the differing ways in which they accepted their legacy from Baudelaire. When he pointed the way to a search beyond the grave he opened a perspective

1. Baudelaire; L'Art Romantique; Théophile Gautier, ed M.J. Crépet. Conard, Paris, 1925, p. 159

2. Baudelaire; L'Art Romantique; Théophile Gautier, ed M.J. Crépet. Conard, Paris, 1925, p. 159

which held great appeal for Cocteau but not to the Surrealists who always tried to deny the existence of a world other than the material; at least if they ever did admit its existence they affirmed that it was not part of their concern. Another aspect of the bequest was the theory of "correspondances" which adduces an aspect of poetic vision in which some magical hallucination transposes the real world into an image of another one vastly enhanced in beauty. Cocteau was to develop this idea into a personal vision of an expanded universe into which the poet and his heroes have the power to penetrate physically. From Baudelaire Cocteau was to take both the idea of the poet as a specially gifted privileged person with a duty to the rest of mankind, derived from the need to exercise his powers in their interest and also the concept of another universe beyond our own to which he had access by virtue of his special contemplative abilities. The Surrealists were more concerned with the idea of the power of poetic vision, of transposition, and believed that by finding methods of access into the inner world of the thoughts any person could make use of this new heightened perception for the general good of mankind.

The "correspondance" theme also came to the poets of the twentieth century by another route; in the original sonnet the idea had been treated by suggestion that each of the senses could perceive an aspect of the same object and when all the senses were so concentrated, to the exclusion of other impressions, then a perfect state of poetic contemplation was achieved;

"Les parfums, les couleurs, les sons se répondent." (1)

Rimbaud took up the concept of heightened perception through this kind of meditation and in his period of "voyance" he thought that he had managed to capture it(2)

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1. Baudelaire ; 'Correspondances' in Les Fleurs du Mal, op. cit.
  2. See section on Rimbaud.

Breton was later to claim the visions and hallucinations of "Alchimie du Verbe" as the source of Surrealistic practice, laying great stress on the importance of the word containing elements of its essence in its form. For Cocteau it was Rimbaud's mysticism which held the greater appeal. His view of the poet's isolated and superior position is very close to that of Cocteau but quite the reverse to that of Breton who considered that the practise of Surrealism brought poetry and perception within the scope of everyone who would submit to its discipline. This democratic ideal of Art, suggesting that we all have an inner spring of poetry waiting to be tapped has become important as an element in contemporary educational philosophy and technique and has done much to encourage popular participation in the arts and makes a tremendous distinction between this and the austere priestly view held by Baudelaire and later by Cocteau;

"Un poète aurait le droit de répondre; je me suis imposé de si hauts devoirs que quidquid humani a me alienum puto. Ma fonction est extra humaine!" (1)

The Surrealists recognised other precursors among the poets of the nineteenth century. Also having a capacity for hallucinations and living outside reality, Gérard de Nerval had an obvious appeal. Indeed he almost coined their name; they failed to use the word he invented partly because of other associations which it had and also because just at the moment when they were starting to look for a word, a suitable one was invented for them:

"À plus juste titre encore, sans doute aurions-nous pu nous emparer du mot supernaturalisme, employé par Gérard de Nerval dans la dédicace des

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1. C. Baudelaire. 'L'Art Romantique', in Oeuvres Complètes, op. cit. p. 1036.

'Filles de Feu'. Il semble, en effet, que Nerval posséda à merveille l'esprit dont nous nous réclamons. Apollinaire n'ayant possédé, par contre que la lettre, encore imparfaite, du surréalisme". (1)

As a materialist Breton wanted to avoid being associated with the supernatural and he saw the trap opened for him if he adopted Nerval's word even in the sense of "more than natural". He considered that there was nothing supernatural or unnatural in tapping the powers hidden in the subconscious. In view of these factors he chose a word for his movement which denotes going beyond the accepted norms of reality. Indeed he specifically dissociated his group from the spiritual aspects of unreality in rather scornful terms;

"Tout ce qui ressortit du domaine du spiritisme et s'est arrogé, depuis le XIX<sup>me</sup> siècle, une grande part du merveilleux, était tenu par nous en grande suspicion. Plus exactement nous en revoquions sans appel le principe (pas de communication possible entre les vivants et les morts) tout en marquant un très vif intérêt en certains phénomènes dont il avait permis la manifestation." (2)

There is evidently a big difference between Cocteau and Breton in this respect for the former made his stock-in-trade precisely of a facet of the mystical which the latter shunned yet in either case a similar source can be identified as well as objectives which have much in common.

The word "surréalisme" was coined by Apollinaire but that is not the only way in which he was an inspiration for the post-war generation; both Cocteau and Breton acknowledged a debt to him, as indeed did many of the other writers of their age. His essay 'L'Esprit Nouveau' set the tone for the poetry of the twenties not least by its very title for by this time

1. A. Breton, Les Manifestes du Surréalisme, op. cit. p 36.

2. ibid; Entretiens, op. cit. p 80.

there was a consciousness of the need to rebuild an entirely new culture from the shattered remnants of the old that had been destroyed in the war. In his work an evolution can be seen from Baudelaire's sensual appeal towards something deeper and more haunting. He did not reach the stage of making poetry out of the ceaselessly active memories buried in the subconscious. Indeed in *Alcools* it appears that he considered the past as remote and beyond recall:

"Les souvenirs sont cors de chasse

Dont meurt le bruit parmi le vent." (1)

It was in *Les Collines* that he showed the spirit of *L'Esprit Nouveau* and looked forward to the future:

"Profondeurs de la conscience, on vous explorera demain." (2)

He was thus able to indicate a way but demonstrated equally clearly that so far the way of the depths of the hidden consciousness had not yet been taken. The passive note of his cry may also indicate his feeling that the way was for someone else to tread. However, in his play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* he made a real effort to rejuvenate the theatre by treating the problems of life and creativity in a new light.

His theme awakens echoes of Jung's concept that every man has within him something of the feminine providing his creative urge, in the artistic sense. In setting his play in Zanzibar, he at once makes it remote from reality and provides a negative, in the photographic meaning of the word, aspect on modes of human behaviour.

Cocteau was grateful to him for the support he gave for his ballet *'Parade'* which was his own attempt to establish new forms of theatre based on Apollinaire's principles but his favorite memory of him is the one in *'La Difficulté d'être'*;

1. G. Apollinaire; *Alcools*, in *Oeuvres Poétiques*, Paris, 1965, p 146.

2. G. Apollinaire; *Calligrammes*, *ibid.*, p 172.

"On eût cru que ce petit casque cachait un microphone par l'entremise duquel il entendait ce que les autres ne peuvent entendre et surveillait secrètement un monde exquis. Il en transcrivait les messages..... Nous le vîmes souvent à l'écoute". (1)

Cocteau here hints at the idea that Apollinaire wrote his poetry at the dictation of some hidden muse, or that his 'monde exquis' existed within the poet himself. If this is how Apollinaire viewed his own manner of poetry, then he was closer to the subconscious than is generally recognised. We shall see, however, that Cocteau describes in someone else an attitude which is extremely close to one of his own concepts of the creation of a work of art.

Apollinaire frequently discussed the new spirit which was prevailing among poets and which had to be cultivated. Many of his ideas were put forward in an article which he wrote shortly before his death and which was published posthumously. His definition of "l'esprit nouveau" indicates that the whole universe is within the compass of the poet and he gives a hint that the new poets will not only be looking outward and objectively at the exterior world but will also be studying the inner workings of the mind:

"L'esprit nouveau est toute étude de la nature extérieure et intérieure. Il est toute ardeur pour la vérité". (2)

In stressing truth Apollinaire adds to his new spirit the enquiring mind of science. Already a pattern is beginning to emerge in which some of the lines of thought of Cocteau and the Surrealists can be traced. Apollinaire emphasized the role of imagination in the new poetry; the realism of the

1. J. Cocteau, La Difficulté d'être, p 113,

2. G. Apollinaire, L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes. 'Mercure de France', 1918, p 391.

end of the nineteenth century and of pre-war days was now ended; the new era was to add new dimensions to life:

"Les jeux divins de la vie et de l'imagination donnent carrière à une activité poétique toute nouvelle." (1)

In his preface to 'Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel', Cocteau was to show how well he had taken the lesson to heart. (2) Action rather than dialogue was the keynote of his theatrical productions at this period. Indeed 'Parade' (3) (written before 'L'Esprit Nouveau') and his next work 'Le Boeuf sur le Toit' (4) were ballets without any dialogue at all. It was in Les Mariés (5) that Cocteau restored the dialogue to the theatre and even in this work, dialogue played a minor role:

"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." (6)

Although working from similar principles to the Surrealists, Cocteau at this time, was running entirely counter to their love of the word and of language almost as much for its own sake as for its mystic power. However both Dadaism, the iconoclastic movement which had preceded Surrealism, and Surrealism itself in its very early stages had placed considerable stress on the Surrealistic act, which seemed to be anything thoroughly shocking, outrageous frightening and sometimes deadly. Breton quotes an example of firing a revolver

1. G. Apollinaire, L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes, Mercure de France, 1918, p 391.
2. J. Cocteau, Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, Paris, 1921. Preface.
3. J. Cocteau, Parade, Paris, 1918.
4. J. Cocteau, Le Boeuf sur le Toit, Paris, 1919. *ibid.*
5. Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, Paris, 1921.
6. *Ibid.*, Preface.

at random in the street. (1) Soupault is said to have gone round Paris asking strangers if they knew where he lived. Vaché is said to have caused an uproar at the première of Apollinaire's 'Mamelles de Tirésias', dressed as an English Officer carrying a revolver with which he threatened the audience. (2) The idea of the cathartic part language could play in the liberation of the mind was a later development, crystalised in 1920 with the publication of "Les Champs Magnétiques" by Breton and Soupault. (3) However in the early stages the dramatic gesture, brought into real life, was thought more important than the word. One thus notices a parallel development in Cocteau and in Surrealism at least in style, although Cocteau kept most of his drama for the stage.

Apollinaire's article contained other elements which can be found in Cocteau. Cocteau claimed in his "Entretiens avec André Fraigneau"<sup>(4)</sup> that his intention to cause surprise in his bid to captivate a public, was the result of an outburst by Dhiagelev, "Etonne-moi", which the poet had taken both as a challenge and a motto. However, "L'Esprit nouveau" appears as a more likely source of a cultivated literary effort to cause surprises:

"La surprise est le plus grand ressort nouveau". (5)

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1. Breton, 2nd Manifeste du Surréalisme, Paris, 1930. p. 78.
  2. A. Breton, Les Pas Perdus, op. cit. p. 19.
  3. Breton and Soupault, Les Champs Magnétiques, Paris, 1919.
  4. J. Cocteau. Entretiens avec André Fraigneau, Paris, 1965.
  5. G. Apollinaire, L'Esprit Nouveau, op. cit. p 391.



It is of course possible and indeed likely that the idea was current in literary circles at the end of the First World War. Dada itself based its philosophy on the need to surprise and to shock the world out of its complacency in order to rebuild it. The concept of truth in 'Esprit Nouveau' was also taken up by Cocteau. Apollinaire showed how looking at something familiar, for example *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* from a new viewpoint, could cause one to have a totally different impression:

"Beaucoup de ces vérités n'ont pas été examinées. Il suffit de les dévoiler pour causer une surprise." (1)

Cocteau took the idea literally; '*Le Boeuf sur le Toit*' (2) is an ordinary bar with characters which in their own setting would not be out of place. It is the juxtaposition of the unexpected and the everyday in the action of the ballet which causes the drama. In explaining his technique the author also reveals, how close his intention is to exemplify Apollinaire's assertion:

"Dans notre spectacle, je réhabilite le lieu commun. A moi de le présenter sous tel angle qu'il retrouve ses vingt ans." (3)

The effort to rejuvenate and to see things in a new light was the heart of the quest of the postwar generation including both Cocteau and the Surrealists so that they should naturally turn to Apollinaire who gave expression to their aspirations in his posthumously published essay (4). He suggested a new look at the past as well as a glance at the future so that in every respect his followers had new horizons to explore:

"Je dirai plus, les fables s'étant pour la plupart réalisées et au delà c'est au poète d'en imaginer des nouvelles que les inventeurs puissent à leur tour réaliser." (4)

1. G. Apollinaire, *ibid.*

2. J. Cocteau, *Le Boeuf sur le Toit.*

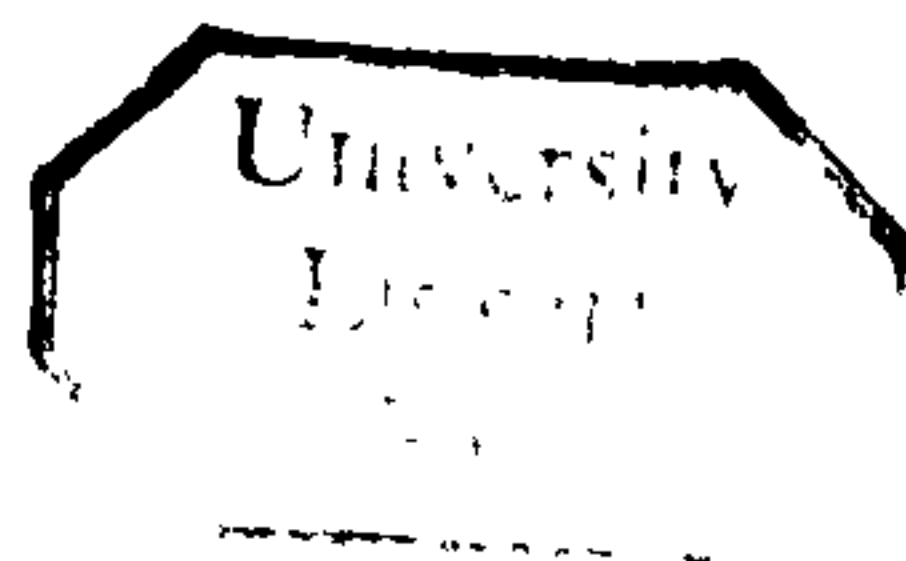
3. Preface to *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel.*

4. *L'Esprit Nouveau .*

Cocteau needed no encouragement to re-examine the myths of ancient Greece and to evolve new interpretations of these time honoured stories which to him represent the archetypes of man, choosing those stories which most faithfully reflect his own obsessions with death, re-creation and pre-destination; Orphée, Antigone and Oedipe (1) all have counterparts deep inside Cocteau's psyche and remained with him until the very end, leaving him only his last full length film, "Le Testament d'Orphée". (2) However Apollinaire demanded that his followers look at the future, to show man the way he must tread;

"L'Esprit nouveau exige qu'on se donne de ses tâches prophétiques".(3) He was thus renewing the old demand of Hugo that the new poets should adopt a special function. Cocteau saw the role of the poet as esoteric, a special kind of person, whereas the Surrealists were hoping to release these special powers in any one who became a devotee. There was an implication that the new generation should study the occult mysteries and certainly both Cocteau and Breton devoted some attention to Cabalistic studies although there is little evidence of it in the literary production of the former. The final claim in "L'Esprit Nouveau", "on peut être poète dans tous les domaines", (3) was another indication that by 1918 the distinction between the various forms of the arts were becoming blurred and so Apollinaire was foreshadowing or even merely reflecting the link between poetry, drama, music and the fine arts which Cocteau was to exploit to the full and was to be demonstrated in the Surrealist ranks by a splendid congregation of poets, painters and sculptors. However Breton was not a music lover and the growth of modern music was to be on different lines, to some extent dictated by the newly American genres. Cocteau realized the potential of the new era opened by Apollinaire giving it expression in lyrical terms;

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1. J. Cocteau. Orphée, Antigone, La Machine Infernale, 1926, 1922, 1934
  2. Le Testament d'Orphée. 1959
  3. L'Esprit Nouveau.



"Révolution qui ouvre toute grande une porte aux explorateurs.

Les jeunes peuvent poursuivre les recherches où la féerie, la danse, l'acrobatie, la pantomime, le drame, le satire, l'orchestre, la parole combinés réapparaissent sous une forme inédite." (1)

Cocteau was a music lover and he did his best to bring music to the theatre.

'Parade', 'Le Boeuf sur le Toit', 'Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel' all stem both from the author's love of music as well as from his experiences with Dhiagelev's ballet company. They begin a tradition which the poet took up again in 1946 with 'Le Jeune Homme et la Mort.' His love of music is also reflected in his friendship with Jean Wiener, Les Six (2) and with his tremendous respect for Erik Satie. He wrote works in collaboration with all these musicians and also with Strawinsky, One of Les Six, Georges Auric also composed music for Cocteau's films, notably 'La Belle et la Bête.' Nowadays we accept as normal the intermingling of music and drama outside opera and the ballet. Television and cinema would not be the same if one took away the music, but in the days before sound came to the cinema the idea was new, shocking and exciting. Surprisingly enough, Cocteau omitted Apollinaire when he quoted the names of writers who had had most influence on the younger generation. In 'Opium' he wrote;

"Les véritables maîtres de la jeunesse entre 1912 et 1930 furent Rimbaud, Ducasse, Nerval, Sade. Mallarmé influence plutôt le style du journalisme. Baudelaire se ride, mais conserve une jeunesse étonnante." (3)

Cocteau's admiration for Apollinaire was not in question. The omission is either because he thought of Apollinaire's influence in more general terms than simply of his influence on young people, or it is simply a slip caused by agitation in his state of disintoxication. There is also a question of perspective with Cocteau looking to the more remote past. Of the poets he mentioned he saw Rimbaud as a tremendous influence not only because of

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1. Preface to Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel.

2. "Les Six" - Auric, Milhaud, Durey, Honegger, Poulenc and G. Taillefer

3. J. Cocteau, Opium, op.cit, p. 30

the merits of his work but also on account of his own youth when he produced most of his poetry and the highly colourful nature of his life. Rimbaud lived poetry in a totally committed way, so that eventually he had no need to write it. His rebellion against society was only part of his appeal. His poetry itself, incorporating such new notions as systematic dislocation of the senses,(1) was also to be exploited by his successors.

However Rimbaud's correspondence in which these ideas were stated was not published until after his death (2,f). Indeed his letter to Isambard was published in 1926, after the Surrealist movement was under way. The letter to Paul Démeny is therefore the source to which the Surrealists had recourse for knowledge of Rimbaud's experiment as a "voyant". Here he made what is probably literature's first statement of intent to explore the subconscious;

"La première étude de l'homme qui veut être poète est sa propre connaissance,entière; il cherche son âme, il l'inspecte , il la tente,il l'apprend." (3)

However in spite of his search he could not know of the existence of the subconscious as a scientific principle yet his poetic intuition took him into this realm. He fails to indicate the direction of the probe into his inner self: Instead taking a false trail, he sets out on his attempt to become a voyant. In this state he is able to make his visions real, but his 'inconnu' is no Nirvana. His experiment ends inconclusively and in torment. He breaks off his letter at that point, going on to describe the poet in promethean terms as "voleur de feu"!(1)

"Le poète se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens.(4)

1. A. Rimbaud , Letter to Isambard,Published *Revue Européenne*,1926.
2. J. Cocteau,Opium,op.cit. p.30, *Reference to the publication of the Letter to Isambard.*
3. A. Rimbaud,Letter to Paul Démeny,published,NRF, October, 1912 ,  
Both from Garnier edition of 'Oeuvres Complètes',Paris,1960. p.343-6.
4. Quoted by Breton in Second Manifeste,p. 135,from "Alchimie du Verbe",

Toutes les formes d'amour, de souffrance, de folie; il cherche lui-même, il épuise en lui tous les poisons, pour n'en garder que les quintessences. Ineffable torture où il a besoin de toute la foi, de toute la force surhumaine, où il devient entre tous le grand malade, le grand criminel, le grand maudit, - et le suprême Savant! il arrive à l'inconnu." (1)

Although still containing traces of the mal du siècle, Rimbaud's statement contains enough that is new, rebellious and mystical to appeal to the senses of the Surrealists. His attempt to break through the bounds of normal comprehension is their quest too. However his concept of the isolated position of the poet and of poetry being created in suffering has more that is kindred in Cocteau's work than in that of the Surrealists. Yet it is on account of their common objective that Breton referred to "Alchimie du Verbe" in which Rimbaud acknowledges the failure of his attempt as a 'voyant' not because of his failure but because he was a precursor.

"L'écriture automatique, pratiquée avec quelque ferveur, mène tout droit à l'hallucination visuelle, j'en ai fait personnellement l'expérience, et il suffit de se reporter à "Alchimie du Verbe" pour constater que Rimbaud l'avait fait bien avant moi!" (2)

The tone of Rimbaud's poem (3) is indeed feverish although it is an open question whether it is a case of automatic writing in the surrealist sense of pure thought uncontrolled by the conscious mind. The poet is describing hallucinations, which appear first as visions and are then transposed into poetry by the magic or alchemy of the poet.

"J'expliquai mes sophismes magiques avec l'hallucination des mots." (4)

In retrospect, the poet was able to see the falsehood of his method and to recognise that he was both deceived and fascinated by words. What he fails to realize is the immense power which might be contained in the word

1. Alchimie du Verbe,

2. A. Breton, Point du Jour, Gallimard, Paris, p. 248,

3. A. Rimbaud, Alchimie du Verbe, Oeuvres, Paris 1960, pp 228-234.

4 Alchimie du Verbe, *ibid*,

itself; It was this that the Surrealists as well as Cocteau sought to exploit in converting their inner visions into words and in making use of stream of pure thought in the subconscious. Breton disregards Rimbaud's retreat as "une petite lâcheté bien ordinaire" (1) thus showing precisely where his interest lies. Rimbaud had certainly experienced hallucinations, as Breton says, but he himself claims that his poem is "l'histoire d'une de mes folies"(2), which he has now put behind him in favour of a different kind of inspiration. He continues his description of his period as a voyant as though it is definitely in the past;

"Enfin ô bonheur, ô raison, j'écartai du ciel l'azur..... et je vécus.." (2)

Ironically it was the voyant period which was to provide much of the inspiration for the post-war generation so that Rimbaud's almost remorseful claim is the one that was to strike the greatest spark :

"Je me flattai d'inventer un verbe poétique accessible un jour ou l'autre à tous les sens". (1)(3)

Fascination with the access to new forms of reality through the word was a main feature of Surrealism, which was also dedicated to new forms of expression of ideas in the arts, many of which had their germ already in Rimbaud. There are also phrases in the poem "Alchimie du Verbe" which are forerunners of some of Cocteau's. Cocteau loved to pun on his own name, on different occasions referring to himself obliquely as "le coq" or "l'oiseleur" so that such phrases as "sa dent.. m'avertissait au chant du coq" and "Salut à lui, chaque fois/ Que chante le coq gaulois" (4) have an almost prophetic ring about them. Cocteau's concept of the night from which inspiration arrives is foreshadowed in "J'écrivais des silences des nuits". (4)

1. Second Manifeste p. 137,

2. Alchimie du Verbe, *ibid.*

3. see Baudelaire: Correspondances (Baudelaire: Les Classiques pour Tous, No 84, Hatier, 1946) "Les parfums, les couleurs, les sons se répondent" p.37,

4. Alchimie du Verbe . *op. cit.*

One can also see an element of Cocteau's phénixologie or science of resurrection, in the line;

"A chaque être, plusieurs autres vies me semblaient dues." (1)

The theme of a poet's being able to live several lives at different points in time, is a familiar one in Cocteau's work, being most clearly stated in "le Testament d'Orphée":

"C'est la science qui permet de mourir un grand nombre de fois pour renaître." (2)

The obsession with death and with the fatal nature of beauty are traits found in both poets. In 'Alchimie du Verbe', the poet exclaims;

"Le bonheur était ma fatalité, mon vers; ma vie serait toujours trop immense pour être dévouée à la force et à la beauté. Le Bonheur! Sa dent, douce à la mort, m'avertissait au chant du coq..." (3)

Here he shows a linking of happiness with death and with poetry, but also indicates that his life-force is too strong to be confined by the destructive force of poetic beauty. He had been warned in time of the dangers which his experiments were incurring for him and would be able to leave that form of poetry in favour of a more realistic appraisal of beauty;

"Cela s'est passé. Je sais aujourd'hui saluer la beauté", (3)

Cocteau reveals a similar disenchantment with the idea of happiness but without Rimbaud's hope of having found a better way of living:

"A force de plaisirs, notre bonheur s'abîme.

.....

Je n'ai plus, d'être heureux, ni l'espoir, ni l'envie." (4)

1. *ibid.*

2. J. Cocteau; Le Testament d'Orphée, Monaco, 1957; p. 31-2.

3. Alchimie du Verbe. *op. cit.*

4. J. Cocteau, Vocabulaire, 1922. in Cocteau; R. Lannes: Poètes d'aujourd'hui; Paris 1968. p 112.

In Cocteau's case, his servitude to poetry was to be lifelong and was to replace the desire for happiness, which is not the concern or the need of the poet. In his description of Dargelos, he shows the same awe of beauty which appears in Rimbaud's poem;

".....Les atteintes terribles que porte à toute âme délicate le sexe surnaturel de la beauté." (1)

Here Cocteau hints at homosexuality rather more obviously than Rimbaud does in his letter to Demeny;

"Toutes les formes de l'amour". (2)

However Cocteau accepted his nature without letting his sexuality become a major theme in his work, whereas Rimbaud's reaction to all his early experience as a poet was in flight and denial, which eventually led him to seeking an uncongenial living in an inhospitable part of East Africa. The most intense part of his poetic experience became his "saison en enfer" from which he considered himself fortunate to escape.. In contrast, Cocteau described his total dedication to poetry in terms which he had once used of Proust;

"A l'âge de vingt ans, après quelques graves erreurs de jeunesse, je suis entré dans la poésie comme on entre dans les ordres." (3)

His monastic life was so remote from reality that in one of his last works he could write;

"La terre après tout n'est pas ma patrie

Et il me plairait de connaître

De quelle ancestrale chimie

Mon encre sort....." (4)

1. J. Cocteau, Portraits-Souvenir, Grasset, Paris, 1935, p. 111.

2. *op.cit.*

3. J. Cocteau, Le Requiem, Paris, 1962. Preface, p. 10

4. *ibid*, p. 113.



From this one can deduce that he did not see in death an end but a new beginning, the eternal recurrence of Nietzsche, of which he made his own version on film in 1943 (1). One can also see that he saw in death the re-encounter with the source of his inspiration. This particular type of mysticism is one which he could not share with the Surrealists who claimed to be materialists and believed there could be no contact with the dead. Once more Cocteau shows himself closer to Rimbaud than the Surrealists; it was Rimbaud who said:

"Je suis réellement d'outre-tombe." (2)

In spite of all the similarities, there are few references to Rimbaud's work in Cocteau, although there is acknowledgement of his influence. However the title of Cocteau's ballet 'Parade' is directly due to Rimbaud's poem of the same name in 'Les Illuminations,' which ends with an enigmatic phrase typical of Cocteau as much as of Rimbaud:

"J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage." (3)

Breton shows the nature and extent of his indebtedness to Rimbaud as well as his own interest in hallucination and the power of language:

"Alchimie du Verbe: ces mots qu'on va répétant un peu au hasard aujourd'hui demandent à être pris au pied de la lettre. Si le chapitre d'Une Saison en enfer qu'ils désignent ne justifie peut-être pas toute leur ambition, il n'en est pas moins vrai qu'il peut être tenu le plus authentiquement pour l'amorce de l'activité difficile qu'aujourd'hui seul le surréalisme poursuit." (4)

1. J. Cocteau, L'Éternel Retour. Filmed Paris, 1943.
2. Rimbaud, Oeuvres, p. 261, The quotation is reminiscent of Châteaubriand but without a direct comparison.
3. Rimbaud, Oeuvres, p. 265, op.cit.
4. Second Manifeste, p.134 The activity to which Breton refers is presumably investigation of dreams and knowledge of the inner self.

By his arrogant assumption, Breton would exclude Cocteau from sharing Rimbaud's heritage, were it not apparent that he had already staked his own claim to it. Nevertheless whilst it is clear that Breton regards Rimbaud as a mainspring behind the Surrealist cause, it was Cocteau who paid the finer compliment:

"Jusqu'à nouvel ordre, Arthur Rimbaud reste le type de l'ange sûr terre."(1)

For Cocteau the "ange" was a very special person indeed having something of the divine and something of the poet in his make-up. Cocteau's admiration for Rimbaud was thus of an especially high order. The next writer who appeared in "Opium" on Cocteau's list of precursors, was Ducasse. There appears to be no particular reason why Cocteau should have used his real name rather than his more familiar pen-name, Le Comte de Lautréamont, unless it is to indicate an element of familiarity or fellow feeling. A lonely, introverted figure, Lautréamont had taken his revenge on society, while barely out of his adolescence, with his sulphurous yet strangely introspective poetry. His "Chants de Maldoror" (2) little known in his own lifetime and in his own century, had a powerful influence just after the first world war. Breton quotes him often in the two 'Manifestes du Surréalisme' (3) and since his work was out of print, had made a manuscript copy at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Garcia Lorca called Ducasse "el loco y fantástico conde de Lautréamont" and contrasts his howling dogs with Maeterlinck's friend of man (4). Maldoror's hostility to God and the violent imagery appealed to the Surrealists. In one sense, Cocteau's Oedipe (5)

1. Le Secret Professionnel, p. 39, The comparison of Rimbaud with "L'ange sur terre" calls to mind Baudelaire's image of the Albatross, the symbol of the poet. Out of its natural element "ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher".
2. Lautréamont, Chants de Maldoror, in Oeuvres Complètes, Corti, Paris, 1938.
3. Breton, Manifestes du Surréalisme, 1924 & 30:reed, Paris, 1972.
4. F. Garcia Lorca, Obrros Completas, Aguilar, Madrid, 1960. p. 1468.
5. Cocteau, La Machine Infernale, Paris, 1934.

resembles Maldoror for both live in defiance of the Gods, one of their most salient traits being their desire to gratify forbidden passions, love is forbidden, impossible or fated and the Gods will punish or prevent fulfilment. This is a prominent feature of Cocteau's drama and of his novels, being exemplified in different forms in "Romeo and Juliette" (1924), Les Enfants Terribles (1929), Le Fantôme de Marseille (1933), La Machine Interne (1934), L'Eternel Retour (1936), Les Parents Terribles (1938), Renaud et Armide (1942) L'Eternel Retour (Film)(1943), L'Aigle a deux têtes (1946), Orphée (film) (1950), and in Bacchus (1952). Giving expression to such forbidden passions and in<sup>a</sup> way indicating frustration, underlies some psychological disorder and may reflect the author's sexuality. It is completely counter to the general theme of love and passion among the Surrealists for whom each action is its own justification. Cocteau and the Surrealists have a different kind of debt to Lautréamont which finds its own expression in their works with common ground in revolt against God or society or the frustration repressed in their own subconscious.

Because of its antireligious, rebellious nature, Sade's work, with its gratification of passion, worthy and unworthy, also appealed to the shattered senses of the post-war generation, but more so to the Surrealists than to Cocteau. Indicating the appreciation of the Surrealists for Sade, Breton shows how Sade was attempting an assault on the traditional nature of poetry. Cocteau's concern for poetry was not to destroy it but to reform it into a suitable vehicle of thought and revelation in the twentieth century. In 'Plain-chant' he tried to return to forms which had been abandoned by other poets as too formal and too restrictive, because of his concern that thought should have shape and expression. By contrast, Breton admired Sade specifically on a human rather than poetic level, so that the essential difference between Cocteau and Breton is once more thrown into relief by their different attitudes to him:

".....Sade, dont la volonté d'affranchissement moral et social... est hors de cause, pour obliger l'esprit humain à secouer ses chaînes, a seulement voulu par là s'en prendre à l'idole poétique, à cette vertu de

convention qui, bon gré, mal gré, fait d'une fleur, dans la mesure même où chacun peut l'offrir, le véhicule brillant des sentiments les plus nobles comme les plus bas." (1)

After Sade, Mallarmé completes Cocteau's list of poets influencing the young. Cocteau's comment on Mallarmé as an influence on journalism seems at odds with the admiration which lead him to base the style of 'Le Cap de Bonne Espérance' on 'Un Coup de Dés' but when one thinks of the elliptical nature of newspaper headlines which Surrealists have clipped out and used as poetry (2) one realises that Cocteau's apparently cruel aphorism has more than just an element of the truth in it. Breton had admired Mallarmé but he barely accords him more than a passing mention in his 'Manifestes' (3) Mademoiselle Monnier's list of precursors of the Surrealists contains several of the same names which Cocteau had recorded but also adds several new ones:(4)

"Sans doute les surréalistes ont-ils reconnu avec élan ce qu'ils devaient à Apollinaire et à Reverdy. Ils ont inscrit dans leur ciel les noms de Poe, Hugo, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Jarry. Ils ont donné de bons points à Saint-Pol-Roux, à Fargue et à Saint-Jean-Perse..."

This list corresponds very closely to the one which appears in the first 'Manifeste' (5) to which Breton adds:

"...ils ne sont pas toujours surréalistes en ce sens que je démêle chez chacun d'eux un certain nombre d'idées préconçues auxquelles - très naïvement - ils tenaient. Ils y tenaient parce qu'ils n'avaient pas entendu

1. A. Breton, Second Manifeste du Surréalisme, 1930, reed., Gallimard, Paris, 1972. p.148.
2. T. Tzara, Pour faire un poème Dadaïste, 'Littérature', Paris, 1920; also in Breton, 'Le Premier Manifeste du Surréalisme', Paris, 1924. p.56. The Parallel serves to show the closeness between Dadaism and Surrealism in the early days of Breton's Movement.
3. Manifestes, p.39 & 123. "Mallarmé est Surréaliste dans la confidence". "On s'attriste de penser que Mallarmé fut un parfait petit bourgeois".
4. A. Monnier, La Rue de l'Odéon, Paris, 1960. p. 116.
5. Manifestes, p. 39.

La voix surréaliste..... Mais nous qui ne sommes livrés à aucun travail de filtration, qui nous sommes faits les sourds réceptacles de tant d'échos, les modestes appareils enregistreurs qui ne s'hypnotisent pas sur le dessin qu'ils tracent, nous servons peut-être une plus noble cause."

Breton distinguishes between his harbingers and his own group on account of the direct communication which the Surrealists cultivated with the hitherto unknown forces of the subconscious. In doing so, he made use of a phrase "appareils enregistreurs" which has a very Coctelian ring about it, being particularly close to his description of Guillaume Apollinaire (1). However Bernard in making the comparison (2) between Cocteau and Breton in her Chapter "Cocteau et l'électricité poétique", stressing the *manner* in which both poets attuned to their poetic messages like radio operators, paid less attention than was due to the source of the messages, which for Breton is within the mind whereas for Cocteau, it may be within the mind or it may be completely outside the normal span of human consciousness. Breton makes it plain that he goes beyond his predecessors in his attempt to expand human consciousness and so increase its powers. Cocteau's ambition was more modest; even at the end of his life he tried to put himself in a position;

"où l'écrivain s'apparente à un médium et ne cherche pas à désobéir aux ordres.." (3)

He saw himself purely as a poet and did not seek the philosophical and soi-disant scientific goal of the Surrealists, which went outside the scope of the arts altogether even into politics and psychology. The sources of Surrealism were characterised by their individuality and their revolt against society or religion as well as by their revelations of the secret powers of the mind and the pure quality of their thought.

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1. See section on Apollinaire, La Difficulté d'être, p. 113.

2. *op.cit.*, p. 690-698.

3. Preface to Le Requiem, p. 10.

On looking at the others mentioned by Adrienne Monnier the dark elements in them can be clearly seen. Poe, like Sade, Baudelaire and Lautréamont, had elements of Satanism in his work. Jarry's 'Ubu-Roi' was a violent comic satire on contemporary society. All these were components which went into the make-up of the Surrealist movement and which Cocteau accepted as having an influence on his own work. Whereas some of these influences had a bearing on the subconscious, others serve to show the complex nature of Surrealism and indicate why it became so strongly antireligious and hostile to the traditional forms of society. In this respect, Cocteau had little or nothing in common with the Surrealists. He was not very interested in politics, otherwise he could hardly have claimed both Maurice Barres and Picasso as friends along with such diverse personalities as Maria Sert, Francine Weisweiler, Paul Eluard, Louis Aragon and Max Jacob. Cocteau's work shows a continuing if unorthodox spirituality, with his brief conversion with the aid of Jacques Maritain as its highest point, just when Surrealism was at its strongest. Joseph Cary indicates the nature of Cocteau's rebellion against established forms and shows that it takes quite a different form from that of the Surrealist:

"...While Marinetti despised reason and logic, Cocteau and Apollinaire appreciate them and extend their usage from the world of perception to the new world of apperception. The break with tradition for them meant not the denial of the past but the denial of its stereotypic effect on creative mind." (1) Cocteau and Apollinaire, like Garcia Lorca in Spain, saw the advantages in the use of intuition in poetry, of writing about feelings and impulses, of giving shape to emotions, of creating poetry of pure imagination with a base in the subconscious, but they were not willing to desert poetic and dramatic form to do so. On the other hand, they saw that the old forms of poetry and drama were outworn and so shaped by custom and tradition that they could no longer express ideas or convey emotion with sufficient intensity to hold their public. 'Parade' and 'Le Boeuf sur le Toit' were Cocteau's early attempts

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1. Joseph Cary, Futurism and the French Theatre d'avant-garde, Modern philosophy no. 57. 1959.

to give a new significance to the theatre by making it reflect the stresses of everyday life in a series of scenes in which unexpected and even ludicrous figures confront each other so that in the juxtaposition and the clash, a new theatre of interior, psychological action can emerge. He was trying to portray raw emotion on the stage, the impulses and fears which guide us instead of portraying the traditional elaborate plot and counter plot built up on a series of stylized characters.

Apart from elements of Marinetti's futurism, several other movements of the first decade of this century contributed to Surrealism. From Cubism came the ideal of the primitive and the techniques of physical distortion and dislocation which they used to portray inner disturbances. The Germanic Expressionism (1) foreshadowed certain of the ideals promulgated by Breton's group. The concept of the artist as a man involved in the fate of the world and the consequent necessity of rebellion, came from Germany and also the idea of art as representing something within the artist's mind. Cocteau's notion of the independent life of a work of art, once created, is also to be found in the Expressionist code. Some elements of Expressionism were also to be found in the work of the French Artist, Odilon Redon, who proclaimed the involvement of art in life and of dreams in art (2);

"L'art participe aussi des événements de la vie", (3)

With so much in common, it is not surprising to find Cocteau writing to him in 1913 but the terms of his letter show an awareness, even at that time, of features that were not to become accepted artistic formulae until the Surrealist movement was under way some ten years later:

"C'est toujours le même miracle 'un rêve éveillé que nous offre le moins littéraire et le plus poétique des génies." (4)

1. Encyclopedia Universalis ; article on Expressionism.

2. Ibid; article on Redon.

3. O. Redon, A soi-même, Introduction, Paris 1922; re-ed, 1963. The re-edition coincided with a new public interest in popular participation in the arts manifest in 'pop-art', happenings chat-shows and audience participation on stage and television performances.

4. Lettres à Odilon Redon. ed R Bacou, Paris, 1961.

He was already using the word 'Littéraire' in Verlaine's sense of 'hack writing', and 'poétique' in the classical sense of the pure creation in the arts which he was later to call 'la preuve par neuf', meaning that a work of art must meet with the approval of all nine muses (1). Here was one of the sources of the mixing of the genres which was to be a feature of the work of Cocteau, the Surrealists, Picasso and others in succeeding years. However it is most important to note the interest Cocteau was showing already in "Le rêve éveillé", which he expressed again in "Le Cordon Omphalique" published in 1962. Besides Redon's work as an artist, he placed considerable importance on the role of the writer, which may provide a partial explanation for Cocteau's terms of reference to him. We owe to this emphasis the care with which he preserved his correspondence and his journal for eventual publication. Redon's declared objective, "mettre la logique du visible au service de l'invisible"(2), is a forerunner of the Surrealist attempt to express pure thought in art and also finds renewed expression in the preface to "Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel"(3) where Cocteau draws the distinction between the 'théâtre invisible' of psychological conflict which he advocates and the 'théâtre visible' in which all the action of a play occurs in a traditional way on the open stage. The conflict need not necessarily be in the form of a confrontation between different characters; it can develop within the mind of a single character. Antigone (4) has to choose between obeying or disobeying her uncle's interdiction on the burial of her brother. Orphée (5) has to choose whether to bring back Eurydice from the dead, and whether to send her back again, although the rolling back of time in the film version (6) takes the choice away from him.

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1. J. Cocteau, Le Coq et L'Arlequin, Paris, 1918, p. 2.

2. Encyclopaedia Universalis; article on Redon.

3. Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, Préface.

4. Antigone, J. Cocteau, 1922.

5. Orphée, J. Cocteau, 1926.

6. Orphée (film), 1950.



The reason for the change in emphasis is that in the first version the question is whether Orphée loves his wife or the false inspiration of <sup>the</sup> talking horse; in the later version *La Princesse, the Death of Orphée*, is the rival of Eurydice in her love for Orphée and makes a heroic self-sacrifice to undo the wrong she has done to Orphée and Eurydice. The tragedy of Oedipe (1) occurs separately to both Oedipe and Jocaste when they realise how the Gods have trapped them into unforgivable sin. The technique of interiorising conflict within the mind of the protagonists reaches its culmination in '*La Voix Humaine*' (2) where the heroine is the only character so that the drama lies in the pathos, despair and hope of her last conversation on the telephone with her lover. These separate examples show how Cocteau's objective is to bring to the surface or make visible conflicts or emotions buried so deeply within the character's psyche that they are invisible and in the domain of the subconscious.

In her vast work on "*Le Poème en Prose*" (3), Suzanne Bernard draws attention to other predecessors of Surrealism. Quoting from the work of Saint-Pol-Roux (4), she portrays the poet as a seeker of beauty, using words to create a poetic form synthesised from the abstract and the real:

"Le monde des choses... est.. l'enseigne inadéquate du monde des idées; l'homme ne paraît habiter qu'une féerie d'indices vagues, de légers prétextes de provocations timides, d'affinités lointaines, d'énigmes."(4)

Breton later developed this idea of Saint-Pol-Roux and others into his "transcendental point" in which the real and the abstract meet (5). Breton's concept of the fusion of opposites is Hegelian and occult but a similar synthesis is evident here in the work of the nineteenth century French poet.

1. La Machine Infernale, Cocteau, 1934.
2. Cocteau, La Voix Humaine, Paris, 1930.
3. Dr. S. Bernard, Le Poème en Prose, Paris, p. 567.
4. Saint-Pol-Roux, Liminaire du premier volume des Reposoirs de La Procession.
5. A. Breton, 2nd Manifeste de Surréalisme, Paris, 1930, p. 77

Cocteau compares more with Saint-Pol-Roux in his attempt to penetrate beyond reality, in his themes of death, fate, re-creation and the unreal, which form the essence of his work and take him even further than the realm of the surreal. Surrealism was thus not entirely new or original. It is erroneous to suppose that it grew spontaneously out of the Catastrophe of the First World War. It certainly gave expression to the feelings of despair, revolt and determination to rebuild the world which marked the period but it is also a natural evolution from movements already visible during the nineteenth century. Much of this heritage was shared with Cocteau who had himself been born and grown up during this formative period for he was older than many of the members of the budding Surrealist group. The great discovery of the Surrealists was the deliberate artistic use of techniques developed by the early psychoanalysts, although these techniques too had literary as well as scientific and even occult sources. It is to the credit of the Surrealists that they recognised their indebtedness as they endeavoured to make these different factors blend into a new ideal involving all the arts. It appears that Cocteau also used similar techniques and acknowledged like influences on his work. Differences emerge in that Cocteau made instinctive inspired poetic use of his material whereas Breton's group were more scientific, cultivating their intelligence deliberately. Whilst they used Freud's discovery of the subconscious to further their creative aims Cocteau's work bears comparison in several respects with that of Freud's great pupil C.G. Jung. On both sides it was accepted that there was no frontier between the different forms of the arts, that all were appropriate for poetic expression. \*By some strange irony the finest flowering of Surrealism lay in the visual and plastic arts for which they are best known and have left a mark on many aspects of life today. Their poetry is relatively unknown whilst Cocteau's talent has become celebrated rather in the theatre and verse-poetry where he achieved an acclaim which the Surrealist envied and affected to scorn. To some extent the different successes are a reflection of the suitability of the way they used their material. The rest of the

difference lied in the quality of the work and the receptivity of the public. Cocteau had an uncanny flair for anticipating public taste and made superb use of his sources. As an extravert he developed a rapport with the public which the Surrealists could not manage, so that they succeeded most in areas where that personal quality was less essential.

ii. THE INFLUENCE OF EXPERIMENTERS IN THE MEDICAL  
FIELD ON THE USE OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS IN  
LITERATURE, ESPECIALLY FREUD AND JANET.

Allied to the literary origins of Surrealism were its scientific or pseudo-scientific origins. Breton was particularly interested in medical work dealing with elemental thought processes. His philosophical ideal of recuperating man's lost powers can be traced to the writings of William James Harvard, whose book "Précis de Psychologie" appeared in French in 1892 although the American original dates from 1875:

"Comparés à ce que nous devrions être, nous ne sommes qu'à demi-éveillés. Nous n'utilisons qu'une faible partie de nos ressources physiques et mentales. D'une manière générale, l'être humain vit bien en deça de ses possibilités. Il possède toutes sortes de trésors qu'il laisse dormir." (1)

Ideas leading up to the formulation of the theory of the subconscious had clearly been developed on both sides of the Atlantic before 1890 but so far without being applied to literature. Similar ideas to Harvard's may be traced in Cabalistic literature and in other forms of occult writing, with which Breton was certainly familiar, since he quoted:

"Tout homme qui, désireux d'atteindre le but suprême de l'âme, part pour aller demander des Oracles, lit-on dans le troisième livre de la Magie, doit pour y arriver, détacher entièrement son esprit des choses vulgaires, il doit se purifier de toute maladie, faiblesse de l'esprit, malice ou semblables défauts, et de toute condition contraire à la raison qui la suit comme la rouille suit le fer." (2)

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1. P.Jaccard, L'inconscient, les rêves, les complexes, Payot, Paris, 1973. p.22, quoting the words of Harvard.
  2. Second Manifeste du Surréalisme, p.141-2. The author of the books of magic is not named but the reference would appear to be to Cabalistic literature or to the work of Hermes Trismégiste.

In seeking a renewal of his psychic powers, Breton owed as much to mystic sources as to scientific ones. However, Harvard specifically indicated that the recuperation could be achieved by scientific means. He did not state that these possibilities lay in the subconscious, if for no better reason than that it had not been formulated as a concept, yet he gave the strongest possible hint to later researchers of where to look. In stating 'treasures' Harvard is in conflict with Freud who considered that the subconscious was the repository of guilty secrets, fears and repressions. It took the genius of Breton to make the step of releasing the secrets of the subconscious in artistic form, seeing the things of which man was afraid and ashamed as things of drama, pathos and even beauty. Breton thus attempted what was in effect a synthesis of the theses of Harvard and Freud, seeking to organise the thoughts of subconscious formulated by the one into the psychic power postulated by the other.

Although many different sources contributed to the basic ideas of the Surrealists, with some justification André Breton was able to claim that his group were innovators in deliberately exploiting the subconscious as a poetic medium. The concept of the subconscious was propounded by Sigmund Freud in Vienna in the 1890's, although he owed a debt to work carried on in France by Charcot and Janet. Breton indicated his gratitude to Freud in a phrase which revealed his intention in using the subconscious also showed the importance which he attached to the discoveries of the Viennese psychiatrist:

"C'est par le plus grand hasard en apparence, qu'a été récemment rendue à la lumière une partie du monde intellectuel..... Il faut en rendre grâce aux découvertes de M. Freud." (1)

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1. A. Breton, Premier Manifeste.

The Surrealists considered the subconscious as a part of the intellect which had been lost and which could be brought back into use to extend man's powers. Breton also indicated his belief in objective chance, in suggesting that it was inevitable that the discovery should be made at some time, and that since it had been made, it was necessary to make use of it in as productive a manner as possible. For many years he had been concerned with the laws of chance and probability, (1) hoping that systematic exploitation of chance in the subconscious would enable him to use the lost potentiality of the mind for bringing about the fusion of the spiritual and the material. He points to his preoccupation with this synthesis for he uses the word 'Lumière' or 'illumination' in a special sense of subfusing the unperceived with intelligence. It is a little strange that even in 1924 Breton should claim that his ideas derive directly from Freud. Breton did not read German, at least well enough to be able to read Freud's treatises and was therefore obliged to read on the subject such material as came available in French. In 'Les Pas Perdus'(2) Breton reports an interview with Freud during which the latter showed him a copy of the first French edition of his work fresh from the press in Geneva. In 'Les Entretiens'(3) he gives the date of this interview as 1921. The work in question must therefore have been 'La Psychanalyse'(4) published by les Editions Sonores. Yet it is significant that Breton was sufficiently impressed by Freud in 1921 to seek an interview with him even before his work was

1. There is a connexion here with Mallarmé, especially with 'Un Coup de dés'. Adrienne Monnier (opcit p. 97) emphasizes Mallarmé's influence on Breton in the post-war period. 'Au début de nos relations, Breton éprouvait autant que celle d'Apollinaire, la domination de Mallarmé.'
2. A. Breton, Les Pas Perdus, Paris, 1924.
3. ibid, Les Entretiens, Paris, p. 76. 1952.
4. S. Freud, La Psychanalyse, Les Editions Sonores, Geneva, 1921.

generally available in French. Breton had clearly gained a knowledge of some of Freud's principles before 1921 through some indirect source which may not have been completely authentic. The first Paris edition of Freud's work was published in 1923 by the NRF (1). Breton was friendly with Jean Paulhan who was working for it at that time and may have been a factor in persuading it to publish the work. The only previous publications in French on Freudian psychology were in 'L'Encéphale' in 1913 by Régis and Hésnard (2) with two articles on 'La Doctrine de Freud et son école', these articles were followed by a book published by Alcan in 1914 (3) accessible to Breton who was a medical student at the time. However in considering Breton's knowledge of the subconscious, one cannot ignore the work of French psychotherapists and especially Jean-Marie Charcot (under whom Freud had studied in 1885) and Dr. Pierre Janet whose work L'Automatisme Psychique (4) went through nine editions between 1889 and 1921 and appeared on medical school reading lists. Balakian shows the importance of the influence of Janet, stating (5):

"The resemblance between Jung's notion of the collective self and the Surrealists' concept of what Paul Eluard was to call "Les Dessous d'une Vie"(6)

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1. ibid, Trois essais sur la théorie de la sexualité, tr B Reverchon,  
NRF, Paris, 1923.
  2. Régis and Hésnard, La doctrine de Freud et son école, in "L'Encéphale", 1913.
  3. Trois Essais sur la Sexualité, op. cit.
  4. P. Janet, L'Automatisme Psychique, Paris, 1889-1921
  5. A. Balakian, André Breton, Paris, 1950. p. 28.
  6. P. Eluard, Les dessous d'une vie ou la pyramide humaine,  
Cahiers du Sud, Paris, 1926.



is due to the fact that they both derive from Pierre Janet, whose character as a psychologist was quite different from Freud's. If we examine the monumental works of Janet, we come upon the very vocabulary that André Breton was to transform into a lexicon for surrealism." (4)

Balakian thus excludes the possibility of the psychology of Jung being an influential factor in Surrealism at the same time intimating that Breton's concept of the subconscious was based as much on Janet as on Freud and that it had something in common with Jung but not directly due to his influence. Janet wrote extensively on automatic writing (1) as a means of revealing the subconscious, a procedure to which Freud paid relatively little attention. Although Jaccard (2) says that the 1913 (7th) edition of Janet's work did not mention Freud at all, in later editions it presented aspects of Freudian psychology albeit with considerable reservations. It therefore seems likely that the stress which the Surrealists placed on automatic writing was derived from Janet rather than Freud. Breton himself confirms the view that some aspects of his inspiration to apply the concepts of the inner working of the mind to artistic expression originate not only in sources other than Freud but in French sources which antedate him, including not only Janet but also Charcot who taught at the Salpêtrière during the period when Freud was studying there:

"...certains d'entre nous prétendent faire remonter à Charcot, à l'origine de ce magnifique débat sur l'hystérie" (3)

1. P. Janet, Principles of Psychology, trad. HM and ER Guthrie, London, 1925.  
- - - Psychological Healing, trad. Eden and Cedar Pearl, London, 1925.
2. P. Jaccard. L'inconscient, les rêves. Les complexes. Payot. Paris 1973.
3. A. Breton, Point du Jour, Paris, 1934, p. 225.
4. A. Balakian, André Breton, Paris, 1950, p. 28

He then added why he was interested in Charcot's work and in the research subsequent to it, adding as he did so the name of another distinguished medical man who however did not figure elsewhere in Breton's writings: (1)

"Au Dr. V. Schrenk-Notzing revient l'honneur d'avoir, au Premier Congrès International de Psychologie (Paris 1889) insisté sur la valeur artistique des mouvements d'expression de l'hystérie et de l'hypnose." (1)

Breton shows his awareness of the history of psychology and of the part in its development played by French workers in the field. Hypnosis was one of the earliest techniques developed for controlling the manifestations of what was later called the subconscious, when they came to dominate the conscious functions of the mind in the form of hysteria. However hypnosis was soon recognised as having drawbacks. It required a trained hypnotist. The subject was under his domination and could only recall items suggested to him by the hypnotist. There was a danger that the hypnotist might implant suggestions in the subconscious of the subject rather than free him from his hysterical phobias. When it became clear that new techniques were required which in addition to giving free rein to the subconscious to express itself, would also enable the therapist to record and analyze its workings, then the way was cleared for the development of automatic writing by Janet and the familiar Freudian techniques of free association of ideas, the interpretation of slips of the tongue and the interpretation of dreams as methods of access to subconscious thought. The Surrealists wished to exploit all these techniques in their efforts to plumb the secret depths of the mind.

Breton himself had studied under Babinski (2), a neurologist who had worked with Charcot at la Salpêtrière (3) in 1885 when Freud was also there.

1. Carrouges also ascribes importance to: R. Myers "La personnalité humaine" SLND. Th. Flourney "Des Indes à la planète Mars"; SLND; both before 1924 see Carrouges p. 143-158.
2. Les Entretiens p. 76.
3. The mental hospital in Paris.
4. 'Point du Jour' p 225. From previous page.

Breton's description of Babinski as "un des pires détracteurs de Charcot et de l'école dite de Nancy" indicates that he disagreed with his judgements in respect of Charcot and had little admiration for Babinski himself. On the other hand, in the same passage Breton does acknowledge a debt to R. Myers' book "La Personnalité Humaine" (1), and to Th. Flournoy's work(2) on the medium, Helen Smith, "Des Indes a la Planète Mars" as well as to Charles Richet's "Traité de Métaphysique" (3) thus demonstrating an interest in all types of extra-sensory perception, not only in the subconscious. Although the Surrealists were opposed to organised religion and to the idea of God, they did not deny the existence of the supernatural, so that one can see in the last few pages of "le second Manifeste", the philosophy of Marx juxtaposed with astrology and the occult. Breton made extensive studies of Cabalism, astrology and alchemy, seeing in them aspects of reality which could be brought within the range of man's comprehension by the proper practice of surrealist techniques. However these considerations were derived from the notion that the extension of psychic power was based in understanding and controlling the powers of the subconscious, the knowledge of which was derived from psychiatric practice. Breton stated that he had practised psychiatric techniques as assistant to Dr. Raoul Leroy at St. Dizier in 1917 (5). These techniques included the recall and interpretation of dreams and psychoanalysis by free association. (6).

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1. R. Myers, La Personnalité Humaine. )
  2. TH. Flournoy, Des Indes à la Planète Mars. ) all published before 1924
  3. CH. Richet, Traité de Métaphysique. )
  4. Breton makes similar acknowledgements on p. 225 of "Point du jour". In this instance he mentions FWH. Myers and TH. Flournoy as antedating Freud.
  5. Breton, Les Entretiens, p. 29.
  6. A Technique by which the subject talks continuously and at random, the analyst listening for clues to the subconscious drives of the subject.

iii. A COMPARISON BETWEEN BRETON'S  
AND COCTEAU'S ATTITUDE TO  
FREUDIAN PSYCHOLOGY.

In his 1952 interview with André Parinaud, Breton looked back over the influence which the Surrealists owed to psychoanalysis. He showed his admiration for Freud but also revealed that he had reservations on the validity of certain aspects of his work, recognizing the value of psychiatric research done in France. He does not make it clear whether he was expressing the view of Freud which he held in 1952 or whether he had always held that same viewpoint: (1)

"Mais n'oublions pas qu'il s'agissait avec la psychanalyse, d'une science naissante et toute particulière, en l'occurrence d'un rejeton extrêmement vivace se développant à partir d'une souche qui avait été l'enseignement de la Salpêtrière. Cet enseignement tout erroné qu'il fût sous bien des rapports, devait en favorisant certaines sondages de l'âme humaine, dévoiler la couche souterraine où l'art plonge aussi ses racines. Si l'on songe qu'en 1881 Scherner avait, pour sa part, découvert la symbolique des rêves, Freud avec tout le génie que je n'ai cessé de lui accorder, oeuvrait sur le terrain le mieux préparé pour qu'il pût se faire entendre à la fois des artistes et des écrivains."

Breton sketches the history of psychoanalysis from its origins in the work of Charcot and Scherner to its exploitation by Freud and his school. He shows that he is aware of the technical mistakes made by the early researches, but points out that from the artistic viewpoint such errors may even have contributed to revealing the hidden parts of the mind where inspiration has its root, since the subconscious proved so valuable to Surrealism and also to Cocteau, even though it is now discounted by modern psychologists as a valid theory. The Surrealists were not concerned by the purely therapeutic aspects of the work of the psychoanalysts although

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1. A. Breton, Entretiens, 1952, p. 294.

Breton indicates his interest in the synthesis of the arts and sciences which according to Hegelian dialectic should result in a new concept and have a place in the strange conjunction of ideas which was known as Surrealism. If Breton's actual indebtedness to Freud was smaller than the impression given by the warmth of his gratitude expressed in some of his earlier works, it may be partly due to the fact that at the time of the formation of Surrealism, Breton's knowledge of Freud's work was incomplete and that Freud himself still had a great deal of his research to do. The Surrealists' view of the subconscious was therefore based on the earliest psychoanalytic writings. In 1924 it would seem unlikely that Breton was familiar with Freud's work published after 1910. That is to say that he was probably acquainted with the early psychoanalytic publications between 1893-99, the 'Interpretation of Dreams' (1900), 'Jokes and their relation to the Subconscious' (1905) and 'Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis' (1910)(1) However, with this knowledge added to his medical background, his wartime experience, his revolutionary spirit and his poetic temperament, Breton was particularly qualified to adapt to the arts the new techniques of exploring the subconscious. In "La Clé des Champs" he made some comments on his knowledge of Freud at the time of the formation of Surrealism.(2) After mentioning Freud's 'La Science des Rêves' he said that at the age of twenty he tried to interest Apollinaire, Valéry and Gide in the most important aspects of Freud's work; pansexualism for Apollinaire, the Freudian slip for Valéry and the Oedipus complex for Gide. With such a mixture it is not surprising he was obliged to record his lack of success and can scarcely have been serious in his comments. However, his joke confirms that he had an understanding of Freud's work not only before the foundation of Surrealism but

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1. See appendix for the dates of the publication of Freud's work in French.
  2. A, Breton, La Clé des Champs, (discours aux étudiants Français de Yale 1942) p. 66.

before Dada came to Paris.

Breton was well aware that, in making use of the discoveries of psychiatric research for literary and artistic purposes, that he was effecting a revolution. He was attempting to break away from modes of thought which had become stereotyped. He and his generation could see in the War the product of nineteenth century realism. He was looking not just for a new inspiration but for a new form of thought, intending to give the inner forces of his mind a free range of expression:

"L'imagination est peut-être sur le point de reprendre ses droits." (1)

He conceived that the mind had the power to perceive both the spiritual and the material, which he saw as degrees of the same kind of surreality, provided that the resources of the imagination could be properly organised and fully used.

Differences emerge between Cocteau's purposes in turning the subconscious to the service of poetry and Breton's. These differences are based on completely separate views on the role of poetry, on its basic nature and on the power and role of the poet. The common feature is the tremendous importance accorded to the subconscious by both poets. Cocteau's insistence that there are exterior agencies at work on his mind at once sets him apart from the Surrealists for whom the subconscious is an integral if misunderstood part of the mind. Freud had shown the way and the Surrealists determined to follow it to its logical conclusion:

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1. Manifeste du Surréalisme. p. 19

"Freud..... ne résiste pas à la tentation de déclarer que la nature intime de l'inconscient ..... nous est aussi inconnu que la réalité du monde extérieur. " (1)

Science is at work exploring the real world: the mission of the Surrealists must be to explore the subconscious. Breton indicates how he came to start his explorations and what his immediate objective was:

"Tout occupé que j'étais encore de Freud à cette époque et familiarisé avec ses méthodes d'examen que j'avais eu quelque peu l'occasion de pratiquer sur des malades pendant la guerre, je résolus d'obtenir de moi ce qu'on cherche à obtenir d'eux; soit un monologue de débit aussi rapide que possible, sur lequel l'esprit critique du sujet ne fasse porter aucun jugement ..... et qui soit , aussi exactement que possible, la pensée parlée. " (2)

The Surrealists saw poetry in thought uncontrolled by reason because the subconscious in which these thoughts originated represented feeling and contact with the sources of life itself. They felt that centuries of rational control of conscious faculties had attenuated the perceptive powers of the mind to such an extent that a complete renewal of attitudes based on revival of forgotten and hidden powers was the only way to escape the stultifying effect of history:

"Sous couleur de civilisation, sous prétexte de progrès, on est parvenu à bannir de l'esprit tout ce qui se peut taxer à tort ou à raison de superstition, de chimère: à proscrire tout mode de recherche de la vérité qui n'est pas conforme à l'usage." (3)

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1. A. Breton, Vases Communicants, 1920. p 19.
  2. A. Breton, Manifeste du Surréalisme, 1926. p 33.
  3. A Breton, Manifeste du Surréalisme. P 19.



However they did not perceive the danger, as Cocteau did, of allowing the subconscious complete freedom to pour out an uncontrolled torrent of words, without form or continuity, constituting thoughts of which only some would have genuine poetic inspiration:

"On devine quel contrôle nous devons exercer dans ce demi-sommeil entre la conscience et l'inconscience, contrôle qui risque d'être trop vigilant, ce qui ôterait à l'oeuvre sa transcendance, ou trop faible, ce qui la laisserait au stade du rêve et la priverait du contact humain." (1)

The debt of the Surrealists to Freud is open and avowed. On the other hand Cocteau's attitude is much more difficult to establish. He did owe something to him but always professed to be a little on his guard, perceiving that the subconscious has a greater mystery and potential than that assigned to it by many of his contemporaries.

The poet shows that his function as a medium is not merely to reflect or pass on messages from the outer world but that he also has a positive function. The work must transcend consciousness and be faithful to its inspiration; but it must not be allowed to remain within the subconscious as a dream, just beyond the recall of the waking sleeper. It must be brought deliberately into human contact in poetic form through the poet's effort to transcend the limits of human nature. One reason why Cocteau disapproved of Freud's concept of the subconscious was not that he had discovered it but that he had assigned limits to it:

"La faute de Freud est d'avoir fait de notre nuit un garde-meubles qui la discrédite, de l'avoir ouverte, alors qu'elle est sans fond et ne peut même pas s'entrouvrir."(2)

One can see the conflict between the poet and the scientist, the visionary and the materialist. In contemplating the subconscious they are scarcely looking at the same aspect of human nature. Cocteau's subconscious was a

1. J. Cocteau, Journal d'un Inconnu . p. 26

2. J. Cocteau, Journal d'un Inconnu . p. 42

part of the inner mind which mysteriously linked and communicated outwards with the divine mystery of the universe. Freud's was a secret compartment in which to hide all the elements of man's shame and guilt. Cocteau showed his disrespect also for the value of psychoanalytic ideas to the common man as well as demonstrating his treasuring of his own concept of the subconscious which gave him access to the muses:

"Freud est d'accès facile. Son enfer (son purgatoire) est à la mesure du plus grand nombre. À l'encontre de notre étude, il ne recherche que la visibilité. La nuit dont je m'occupe est différente. Elle est une grotte aux trésors. Un audace l'ouvre et un sésame. Non pas un docteur ni une névrose." (1)

Cocteau's very pointed metaphors show his attitude and indicate a high regard for the subconscious as a source of inspiration. He defines his own idea of the subconscious in different terms from Freud, which excuses the poet opening his own treasure trove but condemns Freud for trying to open a way where none exists for him; for in having inferior terms of reference, Freud excluded himself from the dynamic splendour of the poet's vision. Cocteau does however admit common ground if not complete identity between his NUIT and Freud's subconscious.

The contradiction in the two quotations stems not only from the dual concept of the subconscious but also from the fundamentally opposed viewpoints of the poet and the scientist. Cocteau classes the scientific aspects of the subconscious evident in Freud's studies as for the masses. The mystic world of the poet is a privileged one to which only he has access but which he must describe for the rest of mankind. One of the reasons which Cocteau has for preferring his own poetic NUIT to the concept of the subconscious is that Freud's work was basically medical whereas his own is poetic. If

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1. Journal d'un Inconnu,

the Surrealists saw the gap as a small one, Cocteau saw it as being of considerable moment:

"Il ne faut pas confondre la nuit dont je parle et celle où Freud invitait ses malades à descendre." (1)

The word "malades" reveals the distinction in Cocteau's mind. As a doctor Freud came into contact with the abnormal, the sick minds of society, specifically of the bourgeois society of late nineteenth century Vienna, which had its own set of repressions, fears and tabous. Cocteau's concern was not with healing but with the revelation of absolute truth in poetry; consequently much of Freud's work was either irrelevant to the poet or, when it sought to shed a scientific light into the poetic NUIT, even obnoxious: Cocteau was also distrustful of Freud on account of his obsession with sex:

"La clef des songes de Freud est fort naive. Le simple s'y baptise complexes. Son obsession sexuelle devait <sup>séduire</sup> une société oisive dont le sexe est l'axe." (2)

Here the author pokes at the "complexes" elaborated by Freud and at the same time reveals an attitude of contempt for a society which cannot recognise the poet partly because of its own obsessions. He implies that it is outside his terms of reference as a poet, a conclusion with which the Surrealists did not concur:

"Dans cette perspective, il fallait s'attendre que le désir sexuel, jusqu'alors plus ou moins refoulé dans la conscience trouble ou dans la mauvaise conscience par les tabous, s'avérât, en dernière analyse, l'égarant, le vertigineux et inappréciable "en deça " sur la prolongation sans limites duquel le rêve humain a bâti tous les "au-delà". (3)

1. Journal d'un Inconnu. p. 39

2. ibid p. 40

3. 'Du Surréalisme dans ses oeuvres vives' in Manifestes du Surréalisme, p184<sup>5</sup>.

Whether or not the attitude of the Surrealist towards sexuality may itself have been dictated by the release of a repression caused by their own experiments or whether it was simply a reflexion of the spirit of the times does not alter the fact that it was one of the bases of the disgust which they, in their purity, held for Cocteau. They saw in sexuality an essential function of instinct and intuition properly based in the world of the subconscious and to which creative expression was given through dreams. On the other hand Cocteau's caustic comment on the sex-orientation of Freudian psychology pinpoints a weakness which has been mentioned by others and has led other schools of psychotherapy, notably Jung's to break away from the Freudian tradition. Differences between Cocteau and the Surrealists are often on grounds based in personal rather than literary areas, but Cocteau was far more able than they to make use of similar sources, metaphors and images. In many respects his use of the subconscious has a closer resemblance to Jungian than to Freudian psychology, whereas there is nothing to connect the Surrealists with Jung.

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iv. THE INFLUENCE OF JUNG'S PSYCHOLOGY

Jung's ideas are not entirely new; right at the beginning of the Romantic period, Wordsworth had implied an understanding of what Jung called the 'collective unconscious'. However being more concerned with the finding of God in nature and in the immediate relationships between Man, God and Nature, the Lake Poet did not pursue his intuition to the point of developing a theory of the subconscious or exploring its manifestations in himself or in others:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
 The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
 And cometh from afar;  
 Not in entire forgetfulness,  
 And not in utter nakedness  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
 From God, who is our home." (1)

In another respect Wordsworth foreshadowed the work of both Jung and Freud on the development of the individual, stressing the importance of early childhood in the development of the personality and formulating unwittingly in a poetic figure of speech one of the very earliest statements on the personal unconscious; "The child is father of the Man." (2)

These two extracts foreshadow Cocteau's idea of the power of the poet as a medium to express a divine truth for both occur as a flash of inspiration just a little aside from the theme of the poem in which they occur. The English poet himself did not recognize the full implications of his statements and almost a century was to pass before the evolution of thought permitted psychologists to turn their attention to the question which he had raised.

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1. 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality'; Oxford Book of English Verse, p. 628.
  2. "My Heart Leaps up," *Oxford Book of English Verse*, p. 624.

It would also appear that Wordsworth had evolved a meditative approach to poetry which resembled the half-sleep and trance found in Cocteau as well as in Surrealists, so much so that one wonders if some of his poems might have been produced by means like automatic writing:

"For oft, when on my couch I lie  
 In vacant or in pensive mood,  
 They flash upon that inward eye  
 Which is the bliss of solitude." (1)

There is certainly an inspiration created by the image, which almost amounts to a hallucination and which the writer then expresses in poetic form.

Wordsworth can justly be called a precursor of twentieth century poetry just as much as Baudelaire, with the difference that his work was not well known in France. However his ideas are very similar to some of those put forward by Freud and even more so to those of Jung.

The influence on Cocteau of the theories of Jung is a likelihood which cannot be ignored: French translations of his works were available from 1928 onwards(2)

It is no more than a possibility that he came into contact with some of Jung's ideas around the time of his opium cure in 1928. There remain the two alternative hypotheses that they evolved similar ideas quite independently and that Jung's theories being based on fact, find a natural reflection in Cocteau's work. The ideas were based on:

"la réalisation intérieure de l'androgynisme mythique." (3)

so presenting two aspects which are familiar to readers of Cocteau; myth and dual sexuality. Jung, whose life span ran closely parallel to Cocteau's from 1875 to 1961, was a friend of Freud for some years at the beginning of the

1. 'Daffodils', Oxford book of English Verse, p. 622.

2. See Appendix.

3. Encyclopedia Universalis; article on Jung. Most of this summary is derived from this article. Jung's theories still have supporters but both Jung and Freud are out of favour with current schools of thought in psychiatry and psychology.

century but broke with him just before the Great War on account of different approaches to their work. Although his first major work was published in 1912 (1), he did not really enter his creative phase until 1918. By 1921 he had evolved a concept of psychological types based on a fourfold concept of the spirit involving thought, intuition, mental and physical perception. He considered man as the product of evolution with ages of experience incorporated into his unconscious make-up. He differed radically with Freud in his concept of neurosis which he considered to be connected as much with circumstances obtaining at the time of the onset rather than necessarily to be associated with repressed childhood impressions. He also developed a concept of the archetypes, personifications of primitive urges, represented both in mythology and in the unconscious:

"purs dynamismes qui se présentent sous des formes infiniment variées."(2)

These archetypes are represented in Cocteau by the mythical figures of Dargelos, Oedipe and Orphée.

Among the most important are the parents who first awaken in the infant the concept of sexuality. However, many kinds exist in the "collective unconscious", a deeper level of the mind than the "personal unconscious", where the primitive drives of the human race as a whole are concealed and whence they occasionally emerge, usually in mythical form. The personal unconscious is the more superficial level where an individual's hidden urges remain until the time comes when they need to manifest themselves in order to counterbalance some unhealthy tendency based in the conscious mind. This dark zone is closely connected with the concept of the shadow or ombre which is the real secret personality of a subject as distinct from his persona, the mask or manifest personality which he consciously presents

1. See appendix.

2. Encyclopedia Universalis; article on Jung. Most of this summary is derived from this article.

Jung's theories still have supporters but both Jung and Freud are out of favour with current schools of thought in psychiatry and psychology.



as the aspect of self which he wishes to be known in everyday life. The total personality is reflected in the degree of balance achieved in the role of persona and ombre. Jung personalised various aspects of the unconscious. One of the most important of his personalisations is the notion of the ANIMA which is a feminine composite existing in the subconscious of a man, often reflecting his maternal links, and gulping some of the feminine attributes of personality, especially artistic sensibility and creativity. A woman has a comparable father figure or ANIMUS in her unconscious. Jung sees the anima as:

"la puissance qui arrache l'homme à son univers rationnel - la séductrice."(1)

Jung's psychology thus has association with the ideas of Garcia Lorca (2). In view also of the resemblance which certain of Cocteau's female characters bear with anima manifestations, (3) there are also similarities between Jung's theories and Cocteau's poetic ones:

" The anima is a personification of all feminine psychological traits in a man's psyche such as vague feelings and moods, prophetic hunches, receptiveness to the irrational, capacity for personal love, feeling for nature and last - but not least - his relation to the unconscious."(4)

Here we see some of the attributes of the poems of Opéra (5) with its statues, swans and oracles, which were later to be personalised in the drama and films of "Orphée", "La Machine infernale", "L'Aigle à deux têtes", "les Parents terribles" and the rest of Cocteau's plays. We see another aspect of Cocteau's female characters reflected in Jung's idea of the anima:

1. Encyclopedia Universalis, op.cit.

2. See the chapter on Cocteau and Lorca p.206.

3. See page.... 194.

4. J. Freeman, Man and His Symbols, New York , 1964, 73. p.186.

5. Opéra, Poems by J. Cocteau published in 1924.

"Jung's analytical psychology.. is... concerned with images of woman as devourer and destroyer as well as protector... " (1)

Once more there is an approximation to some of Cocteau's ideas which are also reflected in the work of Lorca (2) This is the clash of interests which appears in the personalities of the Queen in 'L'Aigle à deux têtes', in the Sphinx in 'la Machine Infernale' in Yvonne in 'Les Parents Terribles' and the Princess in 'Orphée'. It is also a theme present in 'L'Éternel retour', 'Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde' and 'Renaud et Armide', virtually in fact in the whole of Cocteau's drama. It sums up too the patchwork of scene which make the film 'Sang d'un Poète'.

Cocteau considered that this film contained his whole self and yet in his preface was concerned that his audience should interpret his film after their own fashion because even the perception of a poet cannot always interpret the messages of the subconscious. (3) Jung's concept of the anima helps to clarify what Cocteau meant by the secrets of the subconscious and how they might be revealed and exploited by the poet:

"Whenever a man's logical mind is incapable of discerning facts that are hidden in his unconscious, the anima helps him to dig them out. Even more vital is the role that the anima plays in putting man's mind in tune with the right inner values and therefore by opening the way into more profound inner depths. It is as if an inner "radio" becomes tuned to a certain wave length that excludes irrelevancies but allows the voice of the Great Man to be heard. In establishing this inner radio reception, the anima takes on the role of guide or mediator, to the world within the Self." (4)

1. Jung, A. Storr, Fontana Press, London, 1973, p. 8.
2. See the chapter on Cocteau and Lorca, p. 128.
3. See section on Sang d'un Poète.
4. Man and his Symbols, op.cit p.193.

This passage calls to mind the talking horse of the first 'Orphée' or its successor, the radio in the car in the film; it also reminds us of the description of Guillaume Apollinaire by Cocteau, tuned into messages from another world.(1) The title of Dr. Bernard's chapter on Cocteau (2) also points to the idea of electricity and waves of inspiration coming from the depths of space. In the same way in which Dante was conducted through his Inferno by Beatrice, Cocteau portrayed Orphée as having the guidance of the Princess. The parallel is all the more striking in that Cocteau used the same myth again in 'Le Testament d'Orphée' which was filmed at Les Baux on the location which is supposed to have given Dante his inspiration for his hell, although Cocteau said that he did not know the connexion at the time. If this is the case, it is surely an instance of the working of the 'inconscient collectif':

"Quand j'ai mis dans la bouche de Yul Brynner la phrase; "Laissez ici toute espérance", j'ai évidemment pensé au Dante, mais je ne savais pas que Dante avait habité Les Baux, le village, et qu'il avait commencé 'L'Enfer' en cet endroit à cause du paysage." (3)

The role of guide was also undertaken by the Sphinx in 'La Machine Infernale' and by Léonie in 'Les Parents Terribles' in their efforts to direct fate the way they wanted it to go rather than allowing it to take its own course. Jung's idea of unconscious guidance by the anima had implications for Cocteau as a poet, for the anima is instrumental in the creative process which produces a work of art. The relationship of Orphée with La Princesse from the realm of death can also be viewed as a manifestation of the anima within the subconscious of the poet, depicting his hidden desire to return to his secret love, to his mother and occasional rebellions against the restraints and disciplines of his art:

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1. See page... 21

2. Dr. S. Bernard op.cit,

3. Entretiens autour du cinématographe, op.cit, p. 113.

"But what does the role of the anima as guide to the inner world mean in practical terms? This positive function occurs when a man takes seriously the feelings, moods, expectations, and fantasies sent by his anima and when he fixes them in some form - for example in writing, painting, sculpture, musical composition or dancing. When he works at this patiently or slowly, other more deeply unconscious material wells up from the depths and connects with the earlier material." (1)

In this manner Cocteau gradually formulated his Dargelos myth into its final shape and perfected his concept of Orphée or allowed 'Sang d'un Poète' to evolve into 'Le Testament d'Orphée'.

One of the reasons why Jung's psychology may throw light on the work of Cocteau, even though his work is no longer all accepted as scientific fact, is Jung's concern with myth and its importance in the establishment of the character of an individual. Whether either of them had an actual influence on the other is not possible to judge but looking at Cocteau through Jung's eyes throws aspects of Cocteau's work into vivid relief as well as serving to exemplify certain points of Jung's theories. The poet had a special place in Jung's mind;

"Jung regarded creative persons, including himself, both as being "ahead of their time" and also as being in touch with a source of superior wisdom which might be variously referred to as the "collective unconscious" or later, quite openly, as God", (2)

1. Man and his symbols, op.cit.p195.
2. A. Storr, Jung, op.cit p. 73.

This view of the poet's role is shared by Cocteau and gives a clue both to his concept of divinity and to the cause of his failure to discern its exact nature, which is beyond mortal knowledge. The poet sought within himself and yet found messages which had their origin in some divine source outside his own self. His concept of the source of his poetry thus has an affinity with the notion of the collective unconscious and with Cocteau's own vague religious feeling based on the conviction of a life outside our own and an impersonal control over the Universe exercised in our concept of God.

"Les entrepôts de la mémoire ne contiennent pas les seuls objets que nous y avons mis. Ils contiennent ceux de nos ancêtres et des ancêtres de nos ancêtres." (1)

In Cocteau's case, he indicated that he felt a responsibility as custodian of this heritage, to guard, preserve and to use it as a source of inspiration. By linking this idea with his concept of angelism and using biblical phraseology he expresses the reverence with which he treats his art and his profession:

"Nous abritons un ange. Nous devons être les gardiens de cet ange." (2)

The angel in Cocteau took shape in both the character and the poem of the same name "Heurtebise" but also finds expression in such personal mythology as Dargelos and in the way in which he made use of myth, legend and folklore to demonstrate the interplay of fundamental human passions in situations where they could be distorted by the weight of our society and its conventions. Although the purpose of using mythology in this way is compatible with the Surrealist ideal of overturning bourgeois literary conventions in order to create a new style in the arts and also suits Surrealist ideals of dealing with

1. J. Cocteau, Journal d'un Inconnu, p. 161.

2. J. Cocteau, Le Rappel à l'ordre, ('Le Coq et L'Arlequin') P. 43.

the basic elements of human thought, never-the-less Cocteau's work in this context bears closer comparison with Jung than with Freud. Perhaps some of the literary ideas of the surrealists themselves in seeking a universal human quality also tend more to Jungian rather than Freudian ideas.

The myths which form so much of Cocteau's work have much in common with the archetypes which Jung identified in the unconscious. The Princesse is an anima figure, Dargelos reveals guilt complexes and secret ambitions. Jung's research into personality and the soul followed lines which had parallels in Cocteau's poetry. Both draw together art, religion and the power both natural and supernatural of the human mind. Both regarded poetry (in the sense of 'all the arts') as a supreme form of expression and accorded a special place to the creative artist. Although their standpoints, as a healer and man of science on the one hand and poet on the other, were quite different, in their attitude to the arts and to mankind they had great similarities.

The likemesses were apparent not only in their approach to metaphysics and the nature of the soul but also in ways of gaining access to the unconscious:

"Jung was..... interested in the kind of fantasy which comes to people when they are neither awake nor asleep, but in a state of rêverie in which judgement is suspended but consciousness is not lost. Those familiar with accounts given by creative people of how they happened on their discoveries will recognize that it is just in this state of rêverie that inspiration is most commonly reputed to occur." (1)

Here we see just the kind of state which Cocteau described in 'Journal d'un Inconnu'(1) and in 'Le Cordon Ombilical':

"Un étrange étranger habite en moi  
 Je le connais mal et il m'arrive à l'improviste  
 D'y penser comme on se réveille ensouriant

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1. See p. 258.

Parfois l'étranger me laisse en paix et somnole

Parfois il se démène dans sa cellule

Mes oeuvres sont ce qui de lui s'évade.." (1)

The poet is a vehicle for ideas which choose their own moment to make their appearance, but when they make themselves manifest, they need considerable restraint. Cocteau shows the same capacity for personalising instincts and feelings as Jung displayed in the exposition of his ideas. Here it is interesting that Cocteau's stranger should take masculine form although his function is what Jung would regard as an anima manifestation. A similar transposition occurs in Musset; "l'étranger vêtu de noir....et qui me ressemble comme un frère."(2)

Perhaps there is the same sort of interchange of sex which is present in "La Corrida du premier mai" (3) or more likely, the stranger is a counterpart to the angels in the film 'Orphée' whose mistress is the death of 'Orphée' and with whom the poet is in love.

However Cocteau does make it clear that in talking about the 'ange' and the 'étranger' he is personalising an aspect of poetic creativity, so that the commentary itself becomes a poetic image. He also reveals that he is in a kind of trance when working, similar to the state of reverie suggested by Jung but that his state of trance may be deeper than Jung had thought:

"Chez le poète, il doit y avoir la muse en œuvre d'un inconscient qui ne laisse pas trop réfléchir. Il doit s'exprimer dans une sorte d'hypnose, dans une sorte de sommeil." (4)

1. J. Cocteau. Le Cordon Ombilical, p. 7 *op.cit.*

2. A. de Musset, Nuit de Décembre, in 'Oeuvres Complètes', Paris, 1963, p 153.

3. See chapter on Cocteau in Spain.

4. J. Cocteau Cinéma, un oeil ouvert sur le monde, Paris, undated.

In Cocteau the unconscious is imbued with a dreadful mysterious attraction for it is an unknown world and it requires courage to penetrate it:

" .....plus je m'efforce de m'introduire dans le monde ténébreux où l'expiration remplace une inspiration qui nous viendrait de quelque ciel moins je démêle la pelote d'un fil qui risque sans cesse de se rompre et de nous laisser aux prises avec les détours du labyrinthe où nous conduisent ensemble la peur du Minotaure et la curiosité de l'apercevoir." (1)

Once one has found one's feet in the labyrinth, the guiding thread is less necessary. The poet develops the confidence to face the monsters. Jung himself identified the appearance of a labyrinth or a maze in dreams with entering into the realm of the unconscious, an image which Cocteau takes up here and where he confronts the male envoy of Death, the Minotaur. It is this image which he developed in 'La Corrida du Premier Mai' in his description of the Spanish bullfight.

The image of the labyrinth is used again in 'Le Testament d'Orphée' in the tribunal scene in which the poet is accused of assuming divine privileges for himself which was also the crime of Oedipe and his parents. It is made clear that the labyrinth is neither of this life nor of the next, but of some intermediate stage which can only be the unconscious itself. Although the poet has defied the laws of the Gods, he has only been able to do so because they willed it. Even the fate of poets is decided for them although the whims of Providence may change even in the lifetime of the poet. The die is not necessarily cast in advance but it is not cast by the poet or by man. Man is not free. Thus the poet has benefited from a dispensation which he would do well to heed. The presence of Cégeste as a guide can be interpreted as divine intervention but since the whole of the scene takes place in the poet's deep

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1. Le Cordon Ombilical p. 14.



unconscious the tribunal and the guardian angel represent the archetypes of the collective unconscious coming to life!

"Je n'ignore pas que les détours de votre itinéraire sont une sorte de labyrinthe fort éloigné du nôtre, bien qu'il s'y mélange et que s'il vous a été possible de découvrir la seule personne apte à corriger vos erreurs et votre désobéissance aux lois terrestres, cet acte ne bénéficiait pas d'une distraction de l'inconnu, mais d'une sorte d'indulgence suprême dont il vous arrive, cher Monsieur, d'abuser, et qui pourrait bien vous manquer un jour."(1)

The poet's purpose in entering the labyrinth is to seek the purpose in life. Jung claims that this type of search is typically begun by people in middle age and lasts until the later years of their life. He characterises it under the name "individuation", suggesting that it is a search which requires a special form of mental endowment; it is not one for the ordinary man but rather for that special type of person whom Cocteau calls the poet. The quest for the realisation and maturing of personality involves bringing the conscious and unconscious together in spiritual exploration of man's mythical past:

"L'individuation est le prix d'un long voyage fertile en péripéties: c'est le trésor gardé par les dragons, la Toison d'or, le Saint-Graal." (2)

Cocteau's own search may have avoided dragons but it took him to the Sphinx, to the Princesse, to the Bull and eventually to the tribunal in "le Testament". In "Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde" he comes to a quest for the Holy Grail as well.(3) The attributes of the personality for whom individuation is a meaningful quest is spelt out by Dr. Jacobi, one of Jung's collaborators:

1. Le Testament d'Orphée, Tribunal Scene.
2. Encyclopédia Universalis. opcit
3. See section on Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde.

"The individuation process.... brings one inevitably to 'acknowledge one's self for what one by nature is, in contrast to that which one would like to be'... This process 'is not available to consciousness without specific psychological knowledge and technique, nor without a special psychological attitude..." (1)

Jung would appear to imply that the poet is one of a number of types specially fitted for this process in which self-knowledge is perfected, in a way which owes not a little to Buddhist and Yoga concepts of self-perfection and contemplation. Storr emphasises the measure of asceticism bound up with the process:

".... takes place in the second half of life... an esoteric process which engages only the few... appropriate only in cases where consciousness has reached an abnormal degree of development and has diverged too far from the unconscious."(2)

At the same time his comment amplifies Jacobi's point of view and shows that the concept of individuation is particularly applicable in the case of Cocteau. The poet shared the view of art as a form of priesthood and stressed the degree of devotion required for its successful prosecution. His best work was all done after his maturity; indeed his maturity as a poet coincided with the period of the foundation of the Surrealist movement. To that extent he was fortunate in that he as well as they, were beneficiaries of the spirit of the age.(3) His poetry was devoted to reconciling himself with the urging of his unconscious and shortly after the film which marked a high degree of accomplishment of his quest, he died. The stages in his quest are marked out from 1922 when he wrote his poem 'Le Poète de trente ans':(4)

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1. J. Jacobi; The psychology of CG Jung, London, 1942. p.124
  2. A. Storr op cit p.81/2.
  3. 'The spirit of the Age' was a Jung concept.
  4. Vocabulaire 1922 in Lannes p. 111.

"Me voici maintenant au milieu de mon âge  
 Je me tiens à cheval sur ma belle maison;  
 Des deux côtés je vois le même paysage.  
 Mais il n'est pas vêtu de la même saison.

.....  
 Je veux bien, tu dis encore que tu m'aimes  
 Vénus, Si je n'avais pourtant parlé de toi,  
 Si ma maison n'était faite avec mes poèmes  
 Je sentirais le vide et tomberais du toit.

Conscious of the crisis point in his life, the poet reviews both past and future, seeing that the hope in the future lies in the poetry, which his muse, love and mother figure in his unconscious has always whispered to him.

He was to spend the next half century dealing with the "Centering processes in the unconscious that mould the personality"(1) developing the theme of his work from myth, legend and history whilst publishing a stream of highly introspective "poésie critique" in which he attempted to come to terms with the mystery within himself. Perhaps he came nearest an appreciation of his personality and achievements in a remark intended for Picasso in the 'Corrida du premier mai'.

"L'essentiel est de sentir et de chercher à pénétrer l'âme et les démarches d'un homme à travers lesquelles les attributs du monde voyagent et adoptent une singularité trompeuse." (2)

The individuation process must necessarily end in death. Indeed Jung saw eventual self-sacrifice as a perfect indication of readiness to rejoin the collective unconscious outside the confines of this life. Death haunted Cocteau throughout his lifetime. At times she appeared as his love, his inspiration and his fate. Although he never fully understood the nature of the power that inspired him, in writing his own Requiem, he finally indicated

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1. J. Jacobi. op.cit p. 124

2. La Corrida du premier mai; 'L'improvisation de Rome' p. 186

his acknowledgement that the time had come for her to win the match:

"Je me suis souvent demandé ce qui m'obligeait à me préoccuper, à mon insu, du sang léger de la Quête du Graal, du sang lourd d'Oedipe et de cet Orphée dont on se demande s'il n'a pas regardé d'express Eurydice et si un destin misogyne ne le mena vers le supplice des Bacchantes." (1)

Yet the powers with which the poet was endowed at times enabled him to lift the veil and penetrate into mysteries of which the normal person remains unaware. The tragedy of the poet as Jung said, in rephrasing the problem of Baudelaire's Albatross, "The possession of the mystery cuts one off from intercourse with the rest of mankind." (2) The loneliness of the poet and his continual courtship with death as he is born and reborn in his work are poignant themes recurring in Cocteau's work. However although he may suffer in the execution of his calling the poet has privileges which are denied the ordinary mortal:

"tout homme est une nuit (abrite une nuit), que le travail de l'artiste sera de mettre cette nuit en plein jour, et que cette nuit séculaire procure à l'homme, si limité, une rallonge de l'illimité qui le soulage. L'homme devient alors pareil à un paralytique rêvant qu'il marche." (3)

Once the poet can bring his conscious into harmony with his unconscious, he can achieve intimate perception of immortality, which one day he may actually aspire to, the secret of the Grail in *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*.<sup>#</sup>

Although Cocteau's ideas may be reflected in Jung's, they owe more to a profound introspection based on his own inward looking nature and his capacity to cut himself off from reality and to enter a fantasy world of his own making. It was

1. Le Cordon Ombilical p. 14. 'Sang-léger' - The poetical life blood which Galahad, Lancelot and Melusine inherited from the fairies opposed to the blind arrogant prejudice which was the heritage of Oedipe.
2. C.G. Jung. The Psychology of the unconscious. London 1922 p.129.
3. Journal d'un Inconnu. p.15.

in consideration of such characteristics that Jung evolved the idea of INTROVERT and EXTRAVERT personalities.(1) There may be something for the view that Cocteau and the Surrealist represent the opposing facets of this concept which would explain why they failed to agree on topics on which their respective ideas had great similarities. Extraverts tend to become overinvolved with objects (or other people), and therefore run the risk of losing their identities as separate persons. Introverts because of their insistence on preserving their identity are underinvolved with objects, and may retreat into an ivory tower of emotional isolation. The extravert is thus seen to be outgoing, candid and accommodating, in ill-health tending to depression and hysteria, whereas the introvert tends to be hesitant, retiring and mistrustful. In the pursuit of power and total independence he undervalues the exterior world to the point of becoming incapable of love, seeing maintenance of his power as more important. In extreme cases, in mental ill-health, he becomes schizophrenic and loses contact with the outside world altogether, retreating into complete isolation. Because of their extravert attitude, the Surrealists found crystalising their thought much more effective in the form of the visual arts where the impact of the impulse of the artist in the mind of the viewer is instantaneous. Cocteau on the other hand needed the power of the word to express the images of his deeply introspective mind, since it was an even more complex matter to depict his thoughts in visual form. He tends towards the introvert whereas in many respects the Surrealists, appearing more extravert in their attitudes to art, expression and communication, were less inclined to analyse in detail their dreams, intuitions and inspirations but rather to act on them. Although the Surrealists had little interest in myth they did develop an interest in alchemy and in the philosopher's stone which has a bearing on the thought of Jung who saw in the philosophers' stone a catalyst releasing unconscious

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1. Most of the material on introversion and extraversion is adapted from Storr.

power rather than a search for a means of turning base metals into gold.

Cocteau's view of alchemy in 'Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde' is of an evil inspiration turning man aside from the truth of poetry. In this context alchemy is like the talking horse in the 'Orphée' play, so that a true inspiration for the Surrealists is seen as a false one by Cocteau.

Cocteau acknowledges that everyone has a different subconscious and that access to it can be obtained by various methods and messengers. Orphée believed his poetry was brought to him to the talking horse and stressed the personal nature of the zone from which it brought its phrases:

"Il me reste la nuit. Et pas la nuit des autres! Ma nuit. Ce cheval rentre dans ma nuit et il en sort comme un plongeur. Il en rapporte des phrases."(1)

The poet thought his 'nuit' belonged to him but that it was separate from himself. The horse made the journey for him into the blackness to wrench what it may from the obscurity and bring it into the light of conscious thought. The animal was revealed as being of the devil, so the inspiration of Orphée was false. Like the card player of 'Le Sang d'un Poète' he had tried to cheat Destiny and was punished for it. He had to go himself into the 'Nuit' through the mirror to find the truth. Cocteau himself tells how he links his inner vision with myth to create new visions shapes and forms in poetry for his public. His act of creativity is shown to be both conscious and spontaneous; his devotion to his task is as exemplary as the rigorously faithful way in which he writes:

"Je ne m'attachais qu'au relief et au détail d'images sortant de la grande nuit du corps humain. Je les adaptais, séance tenante, comme les scènes documentaires d'un autre règne."(2)

1. Orphée , 1926.

2. Postface to Le Sang d'un Poète ; 1946 .

PART 2

THE WORLD OF THE

IMAGINATION

i. MYTHOLOGY: A REPOSITORY OF BASIC EMOTIONS



The Surrealists had little interest in myth inasmuch as it is a stylisation of what is past but they were interested in the instincts which myth represents. Instincts, aggressions and phobias all are rooted in the subconscious and it is for this reason that the Surrealists involved themselves in the study of these aspects of the self. Had they thought a little about Mallarmé's statement:  
 "les mythes grecs.....sont des personnifications vivantes des phénomènes naturels"  
 (1)

they would have had less reason to be contemptuous of Cocteau's route to the subconscious through Greek mythology. Cocteau's perception like that of Mallarmé went deeper than theirs. He saw myths as an essential component of poetry:

"c'est le mythe qui arrive à ouvrir les âmes les plus fermées au poète".(2)

Whilst the Surrealists were contemplating methods of access to the secrets of the subconscious, Cocteau by using mythology, classical, personal or modern had found a way of uncovering them. The Surrealists made some myths of their own, the death of Jacques Vaché for instance; but since they were essentially concerned with power, renewal of mental resources and with the future, they neglected myth as a creative source. Breton reveals that he approved of the magic of fairy tales, only regretting that the adult world had lost the child-like quality of acceptance of the marvelous and hoping that the faculty could be recovered. When that should occur:

"Il ya des contes à écrire pour les grandes personnes". (3)

Cocteau showed with his "Belle et la Bête", "un conte de fées sans fées", (4) that the faculty was not lost and that the adult world could appreciate the marvelous.

1. S.Mallarmé, Complete Works, Les Dieux Antiques, Gallimard, Paris. 1945 p. 1180
2. J. Cocteau, Entretiens avec André Fraigneau. p. 153
3. A. Breton, Manifeste du Surréalisme, p. 26
4. Cocteau's film La Belle et la Bête, 1945. The comment on it is quoted by R Gilson in Jean Cocteau, Cinéma d'aujourd'hui, no. 27. Paris, 1964-69 p.51.

In seeking to penetrate the Self, the Surrealists made use of as many techniques as they could find. Breton makes an inventory of them in "La Clé des Champs" (1). He describes the use of "automatisme comme sonde dialectique". He does not specify whether he means automatic writing or free association of ideas whilst in a state of semi-trance, by "automatisme"; it would seem reasonable to apply the term to both types of expression, since both imply giving freedom to self expression without letting the conscious mind superimpose its will and discipline on the subconscious. In using the word "sonde" Breton demonstrates quite clearly that he is intending to do more than set the subconscious free. The sonde is an exploration; he is attempting to find out how the subconscious works with a view to making use in a rational way of the basic instincts and intuitions which it conceals. The term dialectique in itself implies logic and organisation of thought. It is therefore contradictory to link automatisme with dialectique. Breton makes it clearer that he is intending to establish a kind of control over the subconscious to bring it within the orbit of the conscious. To this end the verbal outpourings of automatism are not relevant; only selected thoughts, indicating how the subconscious works, are in question. He adds to his list of techniques "le hasard objectif" (1) the systematic exploitation of chance or taking advantage of any strange phenomenon of freaks which may occur in order to pursue his aims. Breton's final item has clear connexions with Freud who places considerable stress on the importance of jokes and humour in both revealing and relieving the subconscious:

"Volonté d'incorporation permanente à l'appareil psychique de l'humour noir qui, à une certaine température peut seul jouer le rôle de soupape, préparation d'ordre pratique à une intervention sur la vie mythique".(2)

Breton, like Freud, understands that a joke can relieve the tension of an

1. A. Breton, La Clé des Champs, p. 73.

2. *ibid.*

illicit thought repressed in the subconscious by allowing it an acceptable means of expressing itself. He appears to be saying that myths constitute part of the safety valves of the subconscious and that they are therefore necessary to normal mental health, so that a joke might be the beginning of a new myth. Cocteau is even more perceptive in his view of mythology as a source for stories of elemental emotional confrontation.

Myths have a place in the framework of meditation and, using psychic resources which are only accessible in certain states of consciousness, the poet can use them to put into language his inmost drives, which Jung shows to derive from the basic nature of man and which Clancier links so closely with the creative impulse:

"Le mythe se structure selon les conflits prédominants entre "les objets internes" de la personnalité inconsciente qui s'exprime dans le langage par des situations dramatiques". (1)

Thus in building up his own mythology or adapting that of Greece and Egypt, Cocteau is expressing the images of his poetry in an age old way but one which he brings up to date by the manner of his presentation. Mythology is so ancient and stripped of its stylistic trappings that its pure thought can be adapted in this way and yet be new and meaningful to the modern mind. Cocteau was able to be revolutionary in freeing himself from the style, imagery and social preoccupations of the nineteenth century and was able to present to his public the metaphysical preoccupations of the present century clad in the robes of ancient myth. His technique distinguishes him from the Surrealists both on the grounds of metaphysics and his appeal to the past. His myths are the subconscious of mankind telling eternal truths. With an attitude of this nature, he could not be involved in political action or see poetry as a form of political expression as the Surrealists did. However he did incur the risk of losing contact completely

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1. A. Clancier; Psychanalyse et Critique Littéraire, Toulouse, 1973, p. 211,

with the reality of everyday and to minimise this risk, he presented his myths in the atmosphere of the normality of everyday life; We see the domestic life of Orphée, the strangely earthly Princesse, the very bourgeois wedding on the Eiffel Tower, the personal intimacies of Oedipe, and the fierce conflict in the ordinary family life of "Les parents terribles".

Mythology can do more than give form to the subconscious. It is a unique contact between the divine and the earthly for in its different stereotypes we see the many problems which the flesh is heir to and for which the gods prescribe the solutions or the punishments for the unwary. Full poetic understanding and expression of these problems must cause much anguish so that if the prophecy is misunderstood, unheard or unheeded, the poet must suffer even greater agonies:

"Only by accepting earthly contact and suffering can the human soul be transformed into a mirror in which the divine powers can perceive themselves. But the dreamer runs away to a higher place - ie. into all sorts of reflections by which he can escape the demands of real life."(1)

Cocteau shrank neither from contact nor suffering; the mirror occupied a special place in his mythology as "les portes par lesquelles la Mort va et vient" (2) yet he showed by his mistrust of dreams that he was aware that unless they could be truly fixed in artistic shape, then they could not be accurate representations of the subconscious but were mere transitory fantasies. It is strange that the Surrealists, who placed so much reliance on dreams, should hope - as expressed by their political activity - to be more firmly based in reality than Cocteau who viewed everything in poetical terms. The paradox can only be explained when one remembers that the Surrealists had a very earthly objective in wishing to extend the unknown processes of psychic vision into the realm of ordinary thought. Cocteau's objectives and his powers to express them through poetic

1. Man and his symbols, op.cit. p. 217.

2. Orphée (1926), Blackwell, Oxford 1976. p 27.

intuition were a sharper poetic weapon. The mirror in 'Orphée' fulfils the same role as in 'Sang d'un Poète', as a door to the subconscious, where Orphée could find his Princesse and whence she could emerge to find him as the unconscious became real enough to dominate the conscious and the real world exchanged places with the fantasy. The myths of life after death and the chance of access to it without leaving this life permanently thus become a palpable reality to the mind of the poet:

"In dreams a mirror can symbolize the power of the unconscious to "Mirror" the individual objectively - giving him a view of himself that he never had before." (1)

A mirror can be like the portrait of Dorian Gray and reflect accumulated moral ugliness. This is demonstrated most clearly in 'Belle et la Bête' where the mirror sent by Bête will reflect truly for Belle what her subconscious wants her to see but reflects the moral hideousness of her sisters by showing them as a monkey and an ugly old woman. Cocteau does not however present his stories as a dream but as a special kind of reality in a world only accessible to imagination of the poet by virtue of his power to recreate the images which he has the secret of seeing in his subconscious. The poetic expression of his theme is his main objective, but since the theme comes from the poet 's nuit it also reveals something of his inner self. The consistent nature of the images in Cocteau's mind is indicated in his early poetry in verse in which he conjures with oracles, sets scenes and creates characters which later figure in his plays.

The Surrealists somewhat uncritically, shared the belief of Freud and Jung that dreams were the Royal Road to the subconscious. Cocteau's greater caution was always insisted upon although he did not deny that dreams had some point of reference in his work. However, dreams were not poetry even if dreams could be given a poetic form or poetry could appear in the form of a dream:

"La poésie, s'il lui arrive de se mêler au mécanisme des rêves, me provoque aucune rêverie, ni rêvasserie. Elle apporte parfois aux rêves un relief, une

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1. Man and his symbols, op.cit, p. 217.

violence critique, une superposition de décors dont le souvenir mêlé à des souvenirs de veille ajoute à cette mausée morale qui lui est propre."(1)

What is expressed by the poet is poetry although initially it may be revealed to him in the form of a dream. Nevertheless he must still work with great deliberation on his original inspiration to work it into a suitable form. Poetry is more than a series of chance images thrown out by the subconscious while the conscious mind is off guard. It is a living expression of the spirit in a carefully moulded shape, and the shaping of it may provoke heart searching, anguish and deep unease in the soul of the poet. Cocteau accepts that the impetus to create a poetic work may come to him by chance, surrealistically. Once the ideas are there, alive within him he must seize upon that chance and consciously take advantage of the situation to create his new work:

"Les poètes vivent de miracles. Ils surgissent à propos de toute chose, grande ou petite. Les objets, les désirs, les sympathies se mettent d'eux-mêmes sous leurs mains. L'incohérence du sort se rythme pour leur venir en aide." (2)

At times when he was despondent, he doubted the quality of his perception and the reality of the world around him. Even familiar images may have been hallucinations. At such times the only truth left was poetry. The inspiration may have been miraculous: The poet must then fix the image of his inspiration in poetic form more durable than the visible reality around him!

"J'avais beau tenir la preuve  
Que tout solide est un nuage  
Que fantôme était mon voyage  
Que cette chambre où je me trouve  
Et les chambres de mon enfance  
Ne sont que menteuse apparence." (3)

1. Le Secret Professionnel, p. 54. Also republished in Le Rappel à l'Ordre, p 219.

2. Le Secret Professionnel, p 54 and le Rappel à l'ordre, p. 219,

3. Le Requiem, p. 92.

Here the poet's insecurity takes on a dream-like quality yet he describes well the state of semi-delirium in which he found himself at the beginning of his convalescence which co-incided with the writing of the poem. There is a reality of feeling in this description of the unreality of life which transcends the bounds of normal expression and puts into images the deathly state from which the poet was barely recovering; the poem is a piece of his life consciously, deliberately and artistically fixed for humanity in way similar to that in which Proust fixed time.

The way in which incidents in Cocteau's life were kept for years in his subconscious and at the due moment found new vigour and expression in his work, is indicated in the film version of 'Orphée' (1). Without the command of her unknown masters, the Princess Death orders her assassins to carry off the poet Cégeste. The incident recalls vividly the last lucid phrase which Raymond Radiguet pronounced two or three days before his death in 1923 and which is recorded by Valentine Hugo; "dans deux jours je serai fusillé par les soldats de Dieu." (2) This incident is absent from Cocteau's earlier stage version of 'Orphée' which itself was written not long after Radiguet's death. (3) In the poet's mind, in the dark side of his unconscious, his anima, the Princess, the Death of the Poet Orphée, priest of the Sun, had also carried away another victim who was to assist the Princess in her work and who was also going to join her in defying the Gods and turn back Time itself in order to restore Ophée and Eurydice to their earthly place from which they had been illicitly snatched. One wonders if Radiguet had really meant so much to Cocteau that an indirect tribute could thus be paid so many years later. All that can be said is that Radiguet left an impression on Cocteau's mind, to such a degree that in 1962 in Le Cordon Ombilical, he was still mentioning his memories of him!

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1. Cocteau, Orphée, 1950,

2. V. Hugo; "Il y a trente ans" in La Parisienne, Paris; Dec, 1953. p.1687.

3. J. Cocteau, Orphée, Paris, 1966.

"J'habitais en compagnie de Radjout et d'Auric la pension de famille Bessy à Pramousquiers...." (1)

Such casual memories are unimportant enough on their own but one realises when one comes across a number of them that the memory is always with Cocteau. Such impressions and memories form the basis of much of Cocteau's work. As the images re-crystalise in his mind he sees them as if they are still real to him. The truth of the poem comes from the poet's subconscious but as his thought takes the shape of the poem and the image becomes real, the reality of the familiar becomes more distant:

"...le moi obscur qui me dirige m'éloigne du réalisme." (2)

This inability to perceive rationally, but to see things in a kind of poetic transposition or hallucination causes problems of mental stability.

That Cocteau probably suffered from bouts of depression is indicated by his recourse to opium and his periods of cures. The tone of his work is rarely cheerful and his preoccupation with death often gives a grim note. Love is treated with seriousness, with tragic overtones. These different attitudes concur in the theme of Orphée which is reflected at several periods in his work from the first 'Orphée' play in 1926 to his film of 'Le testament d'Orphée' in 1962. The Jung school of psychoanalysts see the significance of the anima in this which has a particular tendency to manifest itself in dreams, having the potential to reveal some of the subject's unconscious drives. The Princess in Cocteau's 'Orphee' may reveal something of the troubled side of his nature:

"Such dark moods can even lure a man to suicide, in which case the anima becomes a death demon. She appears in this role in Cocteau's 'Orphee'".(3)

If one accepts the thesis that certain of the female characters in Cocteau's work represents aspects of the workings of his unconscious, then hypnosis may

1. J. Cocteau, Le Cordon Ombilical, Paris, 1962. p. 25.

2. Le Cordon Ombilical, p. 24

3. Man and his symbols, p. 187. *op.cit.*



appear, it is completely unverifiable. By its very nature, even the author in his own lifetime could not have verified it; yet as in the case of the Princess, there are occasions when the poetic truth seems to be rising from the unknown of its own volition. The anarchist Queen of 'L'aigle à deux têtes' personifies the contradiction. There is an echo of the rebellion against society seen in 'Le Coq et l'Arlequin', "Un jeune homme ne doit pas acheter de valeurs sûres" (1) about her in one of her speeches;

"Je suis une sauvage. N'abandonne jamais ta révolte. C'est elle, avant tout que j'adore en toi."(2)

The Queen does have points of comparison with Cocteau himself who refused to join a group, refused to accept accepted values, who re-examined things from his own standpoint. She went logically to her end together with her mirror image, Stanislas; for only in death could the subconscious and conscious meet on any plane save the purely poetic. As Cocteau said, with an uncanny poetic intuition for what the Jung School regarded as scientific fact;

"Dans le créateur, il y a nécessairement un homme et une femme, et la femme est presque toujours insupportable." (3)

Although expressed purely as a witty aphorism, the phrase indicates at least the possibility that Cocteau was in sympathy with some aspects of Jung's psychology, or that he was thinking independently along the same lines. It helps to lend credence to the view that in 'L'aigle à deux têtes' we are confronted in the persons of the Queen and Stanislas with the unconscious and conscious sides of Cocteau's mind struggling to unite in poetry. Support is lent to the idea by the title of the story and the explanation that if one head is killed, the other dies. The heraldry of the play thus points simultaneously at its duality and at its fundamental unity. Looking again at Cocteau's aphorism, one is struck by the idea of unbearablemess in the feminine side of

1. Le Coq et l'Arlequin, p. 2.

2. L'aigle à deux têtes, p 354.

3. Le Coq et l'Arlequin, p.22.

the creator. In accordance with Freud's psychology, what is unpleasant, is not retained consciously, but is pushed into the subconscious, constituting a repression. Cocteau may be saying that his anima has been thrust in this way into his subconscious. (1)

If this is so, then either he is vindicating some of the theories of the psychoanalysts or he is showing an awareness and a deliberate cultivation of their ideas for his own purpose in art. The idea of femininity, having been early rejected, emerges at intervals in his work with a tendency to have unfortunate influences on the dominant masculine personality. The theme does run through his work from Antigone in 1922 via Orphée (1926), La Machine Infernale (1934), l'Aigle à deux têtes (1946) to the re-emergence of the Orphée theme in the film of 1950. Elements of a similar idea may be traced in Le Fantôme de Marseille in 1933, L'école des Veuves (1936), Renaud et Armide and L'Éternel Retour (1943). The theme was not completely exhausted until the film 'Le Testament d'Orphée' in 1960 after which time the poet reached a greater peace of mind than at any previous time in his life.

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1. See also Dahomean myth of Mawu-Lissa a woman/man divinity representing the moon and sun, dark and light, in charge of the whole of creation. If Cocteau knew of this myth it could only have been through meeting African soldiers in the trenches during the war, yet it does indicate something of the universality of legend.

ii. PERCEPTION

Although the Surrealists were poets and artists, surrealism was less concerned with the arts than with a form of prophecy. Breton always hoped to use surrealist methods to expand the frontiers of human understanding:

"...le surréalisme n'a cessé de faire valoir l'automatisme, non seulement comme méthode d'expression sur le plan littéraire et artistique, mais encore comme première instance en vue d'une révision générale des modes de connaissance."(1)

Automatism, the main method of access to the subconscious, was more than a literary tool; it had both as its objective and its starting point, a complete overhaul of thought and knowledge. Breton was not clear what such a revision would amount to or what new knowledge would be the result. He did say that he hoped for a closer and more intimate understanding among men and that he was expecting that new developments in physical sciences would bring this about. The role of Surrealism in the development of the sciences has not been explained. Breton had great confidence in the power of surrealism to promote world peace and general understanding, seeing in the subconscious the source of many dangerous myths which give rise to conflict and implying that only by getting to their source by surrealist means can man hope to bring these myths and the emotions which engender them under control:

"..cette immense et sombre région du soi où s'enflent démesurément les mythes en même temps que se fomentent les guerres, mais cette région par où l'aborder? Je dis que le surréalisme seul s'est préoccupé de ce problème." (2)

1. A. Breton, La Clé des Champs, p. 71. op.cit. 1942 lecture to students at Yale University.
2. A. Breton, La Clé des Champs, p. 73.

Breton has a political objective in his investigations almost totally absent in Cocteau who deals in metaphysics whereas Breton is concerned that his method should be of immediate and practical use in the real world and in the life of ordinary men. This may account for their different attitudes to mythology which Cocteau considers of immense value from a poetical viewpoint for the very reasons that Breton rejects it as dangerous; namely that in myth are contained all the basic instincts of man in a shape readily accessible to the poetical mind for representation in the various art forms. Indeed Breton's hopes for surrealism included the sweeping away of the constraint on thought imposed by myth, to get rid of it altogether;

"rendre le verbe humain à son innocence et vertu créatrice originelles".(1)  
 In this respect his view was quite different from that of Cocteau or of many other contemporary writers who used mythology themes as vehicles for their own literary ideas (2). By returning to the primitive pre-mythical state, Breton was hoping that the human mind could recover. "l'appétit du merveilleux", (3) that is to say the childhood state of wonder where everything is new and wonderful.

The surrealistic method which appears so different from Cocteau's does reveal a close comparison in certain respects. It is inward looking, yet in the case of the Surrealists, the intention is to examine the inner workings of the mind, with a view to increasing its ability to comprehend the outside world. Cocteau uses similar language to indicate the interior search but he also shows that he was looking for something in himself which would satisfy his creative impulse, without stating a need to use his poetic power to re-evaluate his understanding of the world around him.

1. *ibid*, Entretiens p. 79

2. For instance Giraudoux' campaign against war in; La Guerre de Troie n'Aura pas Lieu .

3. See note 1.

"Rappelons-nous que l'idée du surréalisme tend simplement à la récupération de notre force psychique par un moyen qui n'est autre que la descente vertigineuse en nous, l'illumination systématique des lieux cachés et l'obscurcissement des autres lieux, la promenade en pleine zone intrerdite."(1)

The Surrealists tended to ignore the part played by the consciousness and so did not obey the desire for balance between conscious and unconscious which was at the heart of Jung's teaching. In seeking to return to the primitive, they also wished to reject anything which man's conscious mind may contain of value. Cocteau also spoke of the inner search but he did not indicate that he wished to reject conscious control of what he might find in his unconscious and also perceived that he was engaged in a task which was delicate and not lacking in emotional difficulty:

" 'Le Sang d'un poète' n'est qu'une descente en soi-même, une manière d'employer le mécanisme du rêve sans dormir, une bougie maladroite, souvent éteinte par quelque souffle promenée dans la nuit du corps humain."(2)

Cocteau thus reveals Surrealistic technique of exploring the subconscious in a state of at least partial wakefulness. However the implication of his phrase "sans dormir" indicates the level of conscious control he wished to maintain over himself. The image of the candle, also found in Bachelard, demonstrates the frailty of this kind of inspiration, which therefore needs careful cultivation. The same image indicates the difficulty of interpreting the unconscious when the conscious links with it are so tenuous.

Both Cocteau and Breton talk of the entry into the realm of the subconscious as "descente" and suggest the need for light, as though one's soul resembled a Dantesque hell in which normal vision was attenuated until the powers of the poet or the training of the surrealist method brought a revelation, but the Surrealists wanted to make personal use of that revelation for purposes

1. A. Breton, Second Manifeste, op.cit p. 92.

2. J. Cocteau in La difficulté d'être quoted in Gilson op.cit, p. 121; see pages 268, 274 for 'Le Sang d'un Poète'.

outside the purely psychic. Cocteau's intention was to fix images as a poetical impression for the education of other people.

Cocteau continued his statement describing the level of conscious control maintained over his actions whilst in the course of examining his subconscious in this way. His apprehension of the mystery which might thus be unveiled is far different from Breton's declared wish to walk through the forbidden zone in the full light of day:

"Les actes s'y enchaînent comme ils le veulent, sous un contrôle si faible qu'on ne saurait l'attribuer à l'esprit. Plutôt à une manière de somnolence aidant à l'éclosion de souvenirs libres de se combiner, de se nouer, de se déformer jusqu'à prendre corps à notre insu et à nous devenir une énigme."(1)

The subconscious had a way of its own, which can be very productive when it seeks out its secrets, selecting and recombining images into new poetic forms, which may even take the shape of living creatures with their own personalities; they may come to have an existence independent of the poet. In this way the characters of Cocteau's plays personify different aspects of his subconscious, of his memory, of his friends and family and give us Antigone, Orphée, Oedipe, Jocaste, Dargelos and all those whom he calls "Ma nombreuse famille."(2)

In 'Le Sang d'un Poète' he had discovered his 'nuit' to be part of his own being. His descent into it is a conscious act, not a dream, yet he reaches hidden thoughts which may otherwise be revealed only in dreams. He stresses the dream-like discontinuity of his thoughts in this trance state and wonders at the enigma which takes shape within him. It was not his wish to incorporate the subconscious into a new style of thinking which would enhance human powers of perception as the Surrealists did. Cocteau was attempting to

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1. Gilson, *ibid.* p. 121.

2. Le Cordon Ombilical, p. 59.

bring the images of the subconscious into a poetic form of life. He claimed he was subservient to the power which dictated his poetry, thus acknowledging that some kind of divinity or spirit is at work in his subconscious in a manner not at all acceptable to the Surrealists!

"Les poèmes de Plain-Chant me furent dictés par une zone d'ombre où règne un maître dont je suis le serviteur." (1)

The shadowy relationship between the author and his characters is derived from his attempt to efface himself during the process of their creation. Yet they are born out of him and to that extent they are part of him, even if the creative impulse has reached him from some very deep level of his subconscious or as a message from the gods themselves. His characters have shape on paper, a permanent shadow which comes to life at every reading or every performance and so a part of the poet and his experience is taken out of time and fixed as a permanent memory. The poet's real existence is in his work:

"À force de m'abolir au bénéfice de leur (ie. his characters) mise au monde, en quelque sorte à force de devenir mûr, à force d'être projeté hors de moi par la difficulté de ma besogne, cette famille pourrait bien n'être que l'ombre nombreuse que je laisserai de moi lorsque je disparaîtrai, victime de l'explosif au ralenti qui nous désintègre." (2)

Through his ability to transcend the subconscious, the poet can fix parts of himself in time. In his role of medium he can move between the realms of the real and the abstract, and, seizing fleeting images, can weld them with his magical power into a new reality.

1. Manuscript facsimile reproduced in A Fraigneau 'Cocteau par lui-même' op.cit. p. 151.
2. Le Cordon Ombilical, p. 23.



'Le Sang d'un Poète' shows Cocteau's ability to blurr the boundary between the real and abstract worlds, an ability which he demonstrated all the more clearly by allowing his characters to move from one to the other in 'Orphée' and 'La Belle et la Bête'. However his secret abstract world is a part of himself so that the question of formulating new mental powers with which to re-examine the real world does not arise. In making a literary revolution Cocteau intended to preserve a sense of order, even to restore one to a chaotic world. He had no sympathy with a desire to return to a state of primitive chaos for its own sake. However his power to create an abstract world was shared by some of the Surrealists as Aragon showed with Broceliande and Miroir sans Tain(1)

Cocteau did not participate in the Surrealist desire to reshape thought and society. His concern was almost exclusively for art and especially for literature. It was not possible for him to place his devotion to poetry as Breton did in 'rang subalterne'.(2) He created a world of personal myth, based on faded even deliberately distorted memories of a childhood world, such as the Dargelos myth of 'Les Enfants Terribles', 'Portraits-Souvenirs', 'Sang d'un Poète' and other works. His film sets and his legends join his myths in a portrayal of the poet's subconscious but at times he was able to penetrate even more deeply and reach the level which Jung had called the collective unconscious. Then he was able to represent in his poetry the secret fears, loves and hates which beset all mankind so that his work is imbued with a universality of appeal which the Surrealists did not achieve. It is ironical that they set to place Surrealism in the service of everyone and managed to form an esoteric group, whereas Cocteau who worked alone and invited nobody to share the creative processes of his work succeeded in achieving wide public acclaim. Cocteau goes further than representing the subconscious in poetry;

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1. L. Aragon: Broceliande and Miroir sans Tain .

2. Entretiens p. 78.

he is less interested in seeking the lost powers in man himself, than in expanding human knowledge through poetry. The poet brings back treasures from the unknown, to shape into art and to present to mankind. A passage from the tribunal scene in 'Le Testament d'Orphée' gives the clue to Cocteau's view of poetry and his concept of the poetic vision:

" -Un film permet de donner l'apparence de la réalité à l'irréel.

-Qu'appellez-vous l'irréel ?

- Ce qui déborde nos pauvres limites." (1)

The 'irréel' appears as a direct contrast with the 'surréal', which is the lost power within the depths of the mind; but Cocteau is seeking the almost unattainable power in the province of the gods, just beyond normal human understanding, but which a poet in moments of inspiration is able to interpret for ordinary mortals, in a priestly manner, provided that they are willing to make the effort to understand his language, his images and his vision and so widen their own perception to something approaching that of the poet. Cocteau's concern is exemplified in 'Le Secret Professionnel':

"Tel doit être le poème, c'est le souci de dire vrai (si peu vrai, hélas! pour le lecteur) cette obsession de réalité irréelle qu'épousera la forme."(2)

The poet is here emphasising his mission to reveal the unknown as it is revealed to him and takes shape in his mind, even though the reader cannot understand the nature of the truth. Yet it is the shape given by the poet's mind to his vision of the 'irréel', which makes it possible for the normal mind to apprehend it. The truth obsesses the poet and must be present in his work; however, it is his misfortune that so many people are not prepared to listen to his message or give the necessary attention to understand it. At each rejection he undergoes a form of death but phoenix-like he must rise up and try

1. Quoted in Gilson, op.cit. p. 133. Tribunal scene in Le Testament d'Orphée . also quoted in J. Brosse: Orphée: Théâtre et Cinéma, op.cit. p. 117.

2. Le Secret Professionnel. op.cit. p. 32 (Poésie critique),

again. Only a small number of people are gifted to be poets and a slightly greater number will hear their message and so be their public. Cocteau's conception of poetry remained astonishingly clear and consistent throughout the years. 'Secret Professionnel' (1) was written in 1922; 'Le Testament d'Orphée'(1) was filmed in 1960. The same elements are present in examples almost forty years apart. That the concept remained constant is evident too in 'Hommage à Gongora' published in 1954:

"La clarté mentait pour demeurer incomprise

....le ciel... céleste d'irréel... Irréel d'une réalisme passant les bornes." (2)

Once again the irréel is beyond normal understanding, the obscurity being a deliberate concealment on the part of the gods. Only a poet could perceive the truth concealed in the glaring lie and make it known to humanity. One reason why Cocteau so much enjoyed the cinema was its potential for presenting thought in the form of a series of flickering images which in the mind of the audience are perceived as real. Moreover the film-maker can destroy time, gravity and perspective, et his images appear still to have a reality which no other medium could preserve. Even television lacks the power of the film to transcend the known and to place a whole audience together in the realm of the unknown:

"On arrive grâce à son (ie. du film) véhicule vulgaire à rendre l'irréalité réaliste. Seulement ce réalisme gagne sur l'irréalité, masque ses chiffres et laisse le spectateur à la porte."(3)

The spectator cannot see where he is being deceived and cannot participate in the mystery. The film is one way communication in which the artist imprints his images briefly in the mind of his audience. The flickering illusion gives no sense of permanency and fails to integrate the artist with his public.

1. op.cit.

2. in Clair-Obscur, pub, Paris, 1954.

3. Journal d'un Inconnu, p. 94, op.cit.

In this sense the film is a dream in which all the audience "rêvent le même rêve ensemble". (1)

Cocteau's ideas form a contrast with those expressed by Carrouges on the attitude of the Surrealist to the surréel and to the unreality although it is possible that he may be thinking of something entirely different from Cocteau when he designates the irréel:

"Le surréel contient en lui toute la réalité terrestre, mais transformée par les rayons d'une lumière fantastique. Le surréel ne se confond pas avec l'irréel, il est la synthèse vivante du réel et de l'irréel, de l'immédiat et du virtuel, du banal et du fantastique." (2)

Although there is none of the glimmering candlelight which Cocteau spoke about (3) there appears to be a parallel with his concept of deceiving light (4) yet Carrouges makes it plain that his 'fantastic light' comes from man's new-found power and that it is used to illuminate the exterior world, thus creating new and poetic visions. On the other hand Cocteau considered the irréel accessible through the medium of his secret inner world. Carrouges sees the Surréel as the fusion of the réel and the irréel whereas for Cocteau, the surréel being exterior and the irréel being interior concepts, the two are at opposite ends of the spectrum of perception and both are outside the scope of the normal perception of reality, though within the orbit of the poetic imagination. The question is greater than one of definition for to accept Cocteau's ideal of the irréel is to accept the concept of spirituality at least, if not that of God. To the Surrealist, nothing is beyond the bounds of comprehension and there is no reason why anything should be allowed to remain so long as man can use hitherto untapped psychic resources to extend his

1. Preface to Le Testament d'Orphée. Section entitled 'Le Cinéaste comme hypnotiste.'

2. M. Carrouges, A. Breton et les données fondamentales du Surréalisme, op cit. p.24.

3. See p. 87.

4. See p. 92.

perception. The Surrealists could not accept Cocteau's notion that there are mysteries which man should accept and not seek to understand.

Nevertheless, there is common ground between Cocteau and the Surrealists; both probe beyond the normal limits of consciousness but the differences arise when they probe into the subconscious on account of their varying philosophies and objectives.

The Surrealists used the word 'imagination' in a special sense; the power to transcend the boundary of the spiritual and material, hence leading to the 'illumination' of reality (1) which is the surreal, both demanding and providing a new scope for the senses and for literary expression. The subconscious is the area in which the imagination is to be so deployed and in which the surrealist illumination can take place. Breton insisted that the forces of the subconscious had to be organised and brought under conscious control for such a consummation to occur:

"Si les profondeurs de notre esprit recèlent d'étranges forces capables d'augmenter celles de la surface ou de lutter victorieusement contre elles, il y a tout intérêt à les capter d'abord, pour les soumettre ensuite au contrôle de notre raison." (2)

It is important that Breton is attempting not only to perceive but also to control the forces of the subconscious. Dr. Bernard suggests that the difference between Breton and Cocteau is in that the former represents deliberation, care and conscious organisation of thought (2) Breton adopted such devices as automatic writing, and free association of ideas because they gave access to the thoughts contained in the subconscious, not because they had any specific validity in themselves:

"Autant la poésie surréaliste est poésie involontaire, dictée de l'inconscient autant celle de Cocteau est volontaire, lucide, construite." (3)

1. A. Balakian, André Breton. p. 37.

2. A. Breton, Manifeste du Surréalisme. p. 23. (Edn. de J.J. Panvert) Paris, S.D.

3. S. Bernard, *op.cit.* p. 693.

His error lay in assuming that access to the subconscious and recording thoughts stemming from it was in fact bringing it under control. It was Cocteau who never lost sight of the value of form, order and selective control of ideas welling up from the subconscious which makes his work so powerful. Yet he has a vision which is larger than the human scale, imposing a poetic scale upon the supernatural:

"Imaginez un texte dont nous ne pourrions connaître la suite, parce qu'il est imprimé à l'envers d'une page que nous ne pouvons lire qu'à l'endroit. Or l'envers et l'endroit, utiles pour s'exprimer à la mode humaine, n'ayant sans doute aucun sens dans le surhumain, ce verso vague, creusé autour de nos actes, de nos paroles, de nos moindres gestes, un vide qui tourne l'âme comme certains parapets tournent le coeur." (1)

Cocteau takes for granted that the poet has access to the superhuman and that his vision can enhance the commonplace onto a poetic level, thus differing from the Surrealists whose efforts were bent towards an objective of simple access to the subconscious which he took to be his birthright and his cross, as poet. He also accepted that poetry was profoundly imbued with a spirituality which transcends normal understanding and that the superhuman, more than the surreal, should be a normal component of his poetry. He identifies superhuman and supernatural both being together beyond the range of ordinary comprehension, in the orbit of the Gods it is the nature of poetry itself which grants the poet the power to transcend normal intelligence and seek the hidden element of divinity in the very depths of ourselves as well as in the universe. The intuition of the poet is to look inward and thus to contemplate the universe which is within ourselves. It is as though the poet's soul contained a fragment of the

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1. Le Secret Professionnel, op.cit. p. 53.

universe, which itself reflected faithfully a model of the entire universe in which we move.

Although poetry springs from the highly developed ability of the poet to perceive the subconscious with his sixth sense, the expression of his perception is accomplished through extremely hard work at the conscious level. It is in the peculiar state of *rêverie* that the poetic inspiration springs to life. The poetic moment is the moment of chaos, when something intrudes upon the conscious which upsets the natural order of things. It then becomes the poet's task to re-establish order by fixing the vision which has disturbed him in a comprehensible form, so that all may appreciate its beauty. Even as early as this, Cocteau was developing his theory of the poet's antennae, which is perfected in the radio of the 'Orphée' film.

Cocteau went beyond the bounds of Surrealist thought, extending his probing through the subconscious into the realms of the life hereafter. In going to the limit which he himself deemed necessary for poetry, he showed a realization of the inadequacy of Surrealism to express his sort of poetry, although he appreciated that the Surrealists were working in the same general field as himself. He did not need to make a formal declaration of faith as the Surrealists did when Breton listed them by name in 1924 (1). He could not join the group on account of his background as a society man from the right bank and because of his sexual deviancy. In any case he was unwilling to submit to the disciplines of any group and was instinctively on his guard against psychoanalysis which he thought of as revealing secrets which were better not understood, as giving 'la part de Dieu'(2) to man, thus making poetry into a science!

1. Manifeste du Surréalisme, p. 38.

2. Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel; Preface.

"La poésie prédispose donc au surnaturel. L'atmosphère hypersensible dont elle nous enveloppe aiguise nos sens secrets et nos antennes plongent dans des profondeurs que nos sens officiels ignorent." (1)

It is true that his attitude modified as he grew older, but he was never able to accord more than a grudging recognition to Freudian psychology even though he found in the subconscious an element of poetry which was of great value to him. He treated the Freudian concept of the subconscious with a measure of respect in 'Le Secret Professionnel', showing that he believed that the poet was born with some notions of poetry brought with him either from the other world or from the mythical past of man, and also that ideas gradually form within him into poetry, so that when they are ready he can express them in an appropriate form:

"Le poète...usera du véritable réalisme, c'est-à-dire qu'il accumulera en lui des visions, des sentiments, (je compte le bagage prénatal) et.... les laissera tranquilles. Ainsi se formera peu à peu un amalgame, un magasin de rapports inattendus." (2)

The poetry thus formed is more than a series of images: anything less than a complete fusion of ideas and images becomes a false reality, unworthy of being called poetry. In true poetry, reality and the subconscious find a meeting point as do so many unexpected elements in the world of the *surréal* and in Cocteau's poetry too but to an even greater extent. He attained some of the objectives towards which the Surrealists strove in vain, giving us a new perspective on life and death through the exercise of his art.

1. Le Secret Professionnel, p. 53.

2. Le Secret Professionnel, p. 45.



iii. REALITY

In showing similarities between Cocteau and the Surrealists, Bernard demonstrates a common theme of revolt against conformism to the idea of a ready-made reality and a form of poetry. (1)

She quotes a comment by R.M. Albérès in support of her contention but without realising that he has summed up the essence of the approach of both Cocteau and the Surrealists to the whole problem of artistic creativity:

"Pour lui (Cocteau), comme pour Valéry, pour Gide, pour les surréalistes, l'art est la découverte - et au besoin l'exploitation - d'un mécanisme non routinier de la réalité ou de l'esprit.(1)

Cocteau's inspiration is founded in his subconscious and turned into poetry by a particular and personal mental process which is only available to people with the peculiar gifts of the poet:

"Abordée sous cet angle nouveau, la réalité devient poétique."(2)

Although this is what Cocteau stated in the preface to 'Les Mariés' de la Tour Eiffel', elsewhere his comments lead us to believe that the reverse is the case and that poetry, as an idea, becomes reality when it is formed by the mind of the poet. In his preface to 'Les Mariés', he expressed his desire to present reality in a new form as poetry:

"Le poète doit sortir objets et sentiments de leurs voiles et de leurs brumes, les montrer soudain, si nus et si vite que l'homme a peine à les reconnaître." (3)

A new reality, a new perception is imparted to an image through the alchemy of poetry, since the mind of the poet is endowed with perceptive powers that the ordinary person does not possess. However because of his greater power of perception the poet has greater power than the normal being.

1. S. Bernard, Le Poème en Prose, p. 690, & R.M. Albérès in Situation de Cocteau in La Table Ronde; October 1955 p. 23. The underlined section is in italics in the text.
2. *ibid.* not quoted by Bernard.
3. Preface to Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel.

His own interpretation of reality then becomes reality itself even though to others it may be the portrayal of a hallucination!

"Voilà le rôle de la poésie. Elle dévoile dans toute la force du terme. Elle montre nues, sous une lumière qui secoue la torpeur, les choses surprenantes qui nous environnent et<sup>que</sup> nos sens enregistrent machinalement."(1)

In moments where the inspiration of poetry is lacking, our senses are insufficiently tuned to appreciate the full values of the signals which they receive from the world around them. The poet can reveal and interpret the familiar in a completely different aspect. This is the power which the Surrealists were seeking to identify and develop in everyone who accepted the disciplines of Surrealism; it is also a power which Cocteau considered to be special, that of the poet. One of the reasons why Cocteau saw the position of the poet in such exalted terms was that he saw poetry as being different from normal forms of expression and considered that it originated in zones of which only the privileged should and could have access, although poetry in whatever artistic form it may be presented (2) can be understood, to a greater or lesser extent, by all who take the trouble to apply themselves and learn how to appreciate poetry. Cocteau sees the potential universal appreciation of poetry in terms similar to those in which the Surrealists see the apprehension of poetic truth itself:

"..au lieu de chercher à me tenir en deça du ridicule de la vie, de l'atténuer,.....je l'accentue au contraire, je le pousse au-delà, et je cherche à peindre plus vrai que le vrai."(3)

1. Le Secret Professionnel p. 49.

2. Cocteau considers poetry may be expressed in any form of the arts, using a classical Greek sense of the word.

3. Preface to Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel.

The action on the stage is ridiculous, yet it is also a facet of life, exaggerated, examined microscopically, with the ridicule taken to such extremes that a deeper truth appears than when the same scene is looked at less critically and taken for granted in its normal setting. There is nothing unbidden, automatic in the expression of such a scene; on the contrary it is carefully contrived and constructed to concentrate the ideas into a most intense economy of action and word. If one looks at the same passage from a metaphysical viewpoint, one can see how the poet wishes to go beyond the confines of life itself, to intensify experience by seeing the ridiculousness of life from a vantage point outside its reality, thus giving truth, illuminated by the poetic imagination, an even greater intensity and impact on the senses. There appears a distinction between the surrealist method which aims at liberating both thought and word from the subconscious in the form of new images and Cocteau's of seeking in the source of poetry for images, which may be simply a new expression of something familiar, in order to transpose them into artistic form by the exercise of his talent. Cocteau stressed that he retained some control over his artistic output, thus distinguishing his work from that of the Surrealists. He also showed that, in spite of certain dream-like characteristics which appeared in some of his works, he did not make habitual use of dreams in his poetry.

"Mais au lieu de perdre tout contrôle comme il arrive dans le rêve je célèbre les noces du concret et de l'inconscience, qui mettent au monde ce monstre terrible et délicieux qu'on appelle Poésie."(1)

The 'concret' represents the will of the poet being imposed on the

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1. Quoted by R. Gilson in Jean Cocteau; series: Cinéma d'aujourd'hui, No.27, Seghers; Paris, 1964. p. 126 from 'Les Lettres Françaises' 8.10.1959.

Compare: Le Requiem .p.162.

Afin qu'encore je fiance  
 Sur l'autel de l'hérésie  
 L'inconscience et le savoir  
 Couple d'où naissent les chimères  
 Que par les muses allaitées  
 Portent ton nom Poésie.

'inconscience', the ideas derived from the subconscious or the zone where poetic ideas are dictated to the poet by unknown forces. No desire was stronger in Cocteau than the impulse to create poetry; he quoted Verlaine's 'Tout le reste est littérature' to show his feeling for any writing which was less than truly inspired poetry. He saw his poetry as emanating from him, rather than being created within him. On some occasions the irréel became real within him, just as the poet's nuit was real to him as a secret almost unknown part of himself. He seems to have a vague idea that his ideas came from a hidden source, yet whether the source was interior or exterior was uncertain. Neither was he sure whether his source was identifiable with the subconscious or whether it was at least partly a manifestation of the divine. He had an intuition that his nuit was in part his own subconscious, wherein lay all his treasure house of memories, some repressed, some half-forgotten, others reduced to mere reminiscences and a few distorted beyond recognition. However he had the advantage over the Surrealists in not being a materialist, and so he was free to consider man, the Gods and their creation in whatever light he chose, which placed the irréel within his reach but beyond theirs. Their philosophy gave them power to look at the real world with a new perception but denied them an intuition of the next. In 'Les chemins de la poésie' he revealed his own confusion, but also his intuitive feeling that he was on the brink of a mystery which was too great for him and that he would therefore have to accept and rejoice in the strange power that gave him his poetic vision:

"Il n'y a pas d'inspiration, il y a de l'expiration...je veux dire que l'inspiration arrive de dehors et il n'y a pas de dehors. C'est notre nuit qui parle, des choses en nous-mêmes que nous ne connaissons pas." (1)

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1. Cinéma; un Oeil ouvert sur le monde; quoted Gilson op.cit.p. 117. See also the chapter on Garcia Lorca for a comparison of ideas in inspiration and expiration.

Expiration has a secondary meaning of death as well as indicating being breathed out from the body. When a work left Cocteau, it was as though he had lost part of himself, given birth so that a little bit of him had died but the poet is a phoenix and can die and recreate himself many times. The method of thinking creatively which Cocteau described is known to psychology under the name of 'Active imagination'. It is considered a process of conscious thinking and has a closer connexion with the methods of Yoga than with the attempts of the Surrealists to make contact with the subconscious through various kinds of automatic expression in which the consciousness is deliberately suppressed:

"Active imagination is a certain way of meditating imaginatively by which one may deliberately enter into contact with the unconscious and make a conscious connexion with psychic phenomena". (1)

This system is closer to Cocteau than to the Surrealists and it appeals more to his independent nature for there is no need to form a group or to accept systematic organisation of what one is doing:

"The meditation becomes the solitary experiment of a free individual which is the reverse of a guided attempt to master the unconscious" (2)

Here is an indication that Cocteau's ideas bear close comparison with those of Jung whereas the Surrealists tend much more to derive their ideas on the subconscious from Freud. However it must be said that there is nothing to show that Cocteau was directly influenced by Jung unless one includes in this category the use by Jung of the example of 'The princess' in 'Orphée' as an anima reflection in the writer's work. Both the Surrealists and Cocteau

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1. Man and his symbols p. 219. *op.cit.*

had ideas which they shared with certain Oriental philosophies but again no direct connexion has been established (1) except inasmuch as both Freud and Jung had read very widely and introduced mythical considerations from other cultures into their works. The problem of the exact nature of the differences between Cocteau and the Surrealists is all the more difficult to resolve when one realises although they were involved in the same type of experience, they were adopting different approaches to phenomena which appeared to them in different ways. In retrospect they appeared so close that even Cocteau himself could not disentangle the threads:

"Ce qui complique les choses, c'est que nous admirions les mêmes valeurs et que nous combattions au même niveau". (2)

In the event it was the lot of Cocteau and the post-war artists to reap the harvest in the newer forms of non-representative art and the modern theatre. What Breton thought that he was achieving by the practice of Surrealistic methods of exploiting the subconscious is described in 'Point du Jour' in terms which place him very close to Cocteau, notwithstanding the vilification of the latter in the same article as 'auteur de poèmes patriotiques infames'.(3)

For Breton the word is all important, having virtually an existence and reality of its own. Hence a method of expression which conjures up images by bringing up torrents of words in a random order from the subconscious, forming new images almost by chance, has a magic of its own which ought to, which does, contain some strange alchemy of its own.

".....nous sommes doués à un certain degré par la parole et que, par elle, quelque chose de grand et d'obscur tend impérieusement à s'exprimer à travers nous...c'est un ordre que nous avons reçu une fois pour toutes et que nous n'avons jamais eu loisir de discuter." (4)

1. See appendix; article on transcendentalism.
2. Entretiens avec André Fraigneau, op.cit, p. 69.
3. A. Breton, Légitime Défense, 1926, in Point du Jour, p. 51.
4. ibid, p.55.

Cocteau does not go so far, seeing the word as a way of expressing poetic intuition and forming images. He sees the word more as an idea whereas Breton perceives it as a thing with a reality of its own. The comparison between Cocteau and Breton here lies in the idea of them both being commanded, Cocteau by some semi-divine muse hidden in the night of his soul and Breton by the word itself having its origin in the subconscious!

"Constater que les mots sont la matière première du style est à peine plus ingénieux que présenter les lettres comme la base de l'alphabet. Les mots sont, en effet, bien autre chose et ils sont même peut-être TOUT." (1)

The word comes before the idea and before style itself. How the mind perceives the reality of the word is the secret and purpose of poetic intuition for Breton; whereas for Cocteau how the mind shapes poetic intuition into verbal form is the secret of poetry itself. Breton's concept of the word's real existence is developed even further in the Second Manifeste, to the point where the word gives reality to the idea itself. The subconscious idea of the Surrealists is given equal status with the conscious ideas produced by traditional thought!

"Et le diable préserve, encore une fois, l'idée surréaliste comme toute autre idée qui tend à prendre une forme concrète." (2)

If automatically produced images from the subconscious have their own identity and reality, the poet would not be justified in trying to impose a form upon them from his conscious mind. Thus Cocteau and Breton draw apart when one examines closely this particular aspect of the nature of poetic creation. Cocteau saw the finished work of art as having an independent existence but neither the word nor the idea were anything but figments until they were formed into the work of art, by the poet acting as a medium:

1. *ibid*, p. 55.

2. Second Manifeste, p. 91.



"Nos livres et nos héros ont tendance à se separer de nous et à prendre le large."(1)

Cocteau thus shows his attitude to a finished work and has a certain paternal regret that his creations should thus escape his control. His idea of himself as a medium, expressing ideas placed in his mind by some unknown power and forging the images into poetic form, is expressed in the same work:

"Mes pages les plus importantes sont, à mon estime, celles où je ne me suis pas mêlé de mon travail, où j'acceptais le rôle subalterne de scribe."(2)

It is important that the poet should allow the images to flow freely through his mind as he gives them form. Cocteau differentiates between images formed and shaped in the conscious mind, which he regards as inferior, and the superior type which he describes here. The nature of Cocteau's inspiration compares with Surrealism but is not identical with it because of a different interpretation of the nature and role of the subconscious. The manner in which images are formed in the subconscious layers of the mind is very close to Surrealism. The level of control which the poet exercises in shaping images is fundamental in deciding to what extent Cocteau practised Surrealism. At times as in Heurtebise and La Machine Infernale, the work appeared to impose its own form and the poet recorded it; at others he describes how he gave form to ideas which appeared spontaneously to him. However the important difference is that Cocteau was preoccupied with poetic form and with the image as a vehicle of poetry. Economy and metaphor were his chief weapons. The Surrealists place their faith in the word as guardian of the image and trusted that the truth would appear of its own volition, without any conscious intervention, amid the torrent of often irrelevant thoughts springing unbidden from the subconscious once

1. Le Cordon Ombilical, p. 21.

2. ibid., p. 19.

the conscious mind and his inhibiting role was rendered inactive. Cocteau showed that he did not fully understand the mystery of artistic creation or the origin and nature of the creatures of his imagination when he described them as "l'énigme des monstres qui naissent des noces mystérieuses du conscient et de l'inconscient." (1) Although content to leave these mysteries as secrets which he should not probe, he does reveal here that in some measure at least his consciousness played a part in the task of writing, which the Surrealists wished to avoid at all costs. In the practice of Surrealism the subconscious was a major factor seen as a force capable of reinvigorating all the powers of the mind including poetic creativity by the exercise of imagination and intuition and even producing a complete mental upheaval which we are witnessing now in many different fields a number of years after the death of André Breton:

"...le surréalisme ne tendit à rien tant qu'à provoquer au point de vue intellectuel et moral, une crise de conscience de l'espèce la plus générale et la plus grave." (2)

In Cocteau this phenomenon occurs naturally he does not have to provide it by special meditative techniques. However for all writers aspects of their created work must be rooted in some personal experience, be it real or visionary. The born poet is able to recreate and transform his experience in a way which the ordinary person cannot achieve other than by deliberately cultivating surrealist techniques:

"An author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience but the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex and attempts to define the process are at best from evidence that are at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous." (3)

1. Le Cordon Ombilical p. 23
2. Second Manifeste p. 76. See page 176: 'Le Secret Professionnel.'
3. J.R. Tolkien; Lord of the Rings; Préface.

In the case of Cocteau we are fortunate that the process of artistic creation is more carefully analysed and chronicled by the author himself than occurs with most writers. Indeed the process itself forms an essential part of his work under the name of 'poésie critique'. There can be few writers who have so carefully exposed their motives and methods in their prefaces, poems, critical works and autobiographical notes. His attitude to poetry was more than that of an artist to his art; it was a way of life, of total dedication. From the days of 'Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel', he was conscious of bringing something new to the theatre by forming a new theatrical genre from an amalgamation of what was best in the old:

"Avec des Serge de Dhiagilew; des Rolf de Maré, nous voyons peu à peu naître en France un genre théâtral qui n'est pas le ballet proprement dit.... C'est là, en marge, que s'ébauche l'avenir....Ce genre nouveau, plus conforme à l'esprit moderne, reste encore un monde inconnu, riche en découvertes."(1)

He was building on his early experience with the Russian Ballet and paying his tribute to Rolf de Maré through whose courtesy 'Les Mariés' was staged. There was nothing in the preface to 'Les Mariés' published in the same year as 'le Manifeste du Surréalisme', to indicate the anarchy and nihilism which had been the cry of Dada and which the Surrealists built upon in their efforts into new paths in their complete literary revolution following the turmoil of the first World War and the upsurge in political rebelliousness consequent on the Russian Revolution. However Cocteau's view of the new theatre was to prove accurate for the style of the theatre of the 1950's and later owes much to 'Les Mariés'. The movement to popularize theatre by taking it to the people, showing plays in unconventional places, happenings, tavern poetry readings, have an impetus which owes at least a little to Cocteau's work in the 1920's, which itself was born out of the music hall and the circus as much as out of the traditional theatre and the ballet. Cocteau's talent for presenting

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1. Preface to 'Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel' op.cit.

action as a visual form of thought is taken from the circus and the ballet and contributed to the psychological drama which he called 'théâtre invisible' in which the dramatic conflict is within the mind in a manner which recalls Racine and Sophocles. By presenting emotional conflict in a limited sphere Cocteau evolved a technique which was eminently suited for viewing on the television screen, in contrast to the large scale spectacle which became a feature of the expensive productions of the American cinema. His films too have that intimate texture in which the emotions of a very few characters are seen in close-up as a microcosm of the universe, so that the poet's love of myth is peculiarly suited as a vehicle for his artistic ideals. He was aware of the contradiction between the ideals of revolution and of order and tried to resolve them by going further back into the past than ordinary tradition permits so as to restore the primitive order which had been disturbed by recent historical events. If the post-war situation was a breeding ground for chaos, then Cocteau wished to prevent it, not to exploit it:

"La France vient d'être secrètement le théâtre d'une révolution poétique, formidable. L'ordre après la crise, voilà l'ordre neuf que je réclame." (1)

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1. J. Cocteau, Lettre à Jacques Maritain p. 48 (Poésie critique 2).

iv. ORDER AND BALANCE

Contrary to the surrealist impulse towards anarchy, Cocteau indicated a conviction that the storm was over, that a new poetic order had been established. The rhythm of order following chaos follows that of his own life; his schooling following the relative calm of his childhood; then the creative period of the Russian Ballet with the turmoil of the war subsequent to it. After the war came his intensely creative period of 'Vocabulaire', 'Opéra', 'Les Mariés', 'Antigone', 'Orphée', 'Le Rappel à l'ordre', then the drug cures and a new decade as a dramatist in the thirties. After the new upheaval of the 1939-45 War, he entered his final period of relative calm, still haunted by the same obsessions of the earlier years and always in search of his true identity, and his real mission and the purpose of life itself. His image of his 'limping gait, one foot in life, one in death' (1) vividly expresses his uneven progress in his quest. 'Les Parents terribles' illustrates his natural tendency to seek out order, to eliminate the elements which tend to cause chaos and to re-establish the balance, even at great personal sacrifice!

"Leo: Une maniaque d'ordre comme vous êtes des maniaques du désordre... En ce monde il y a des enfants et des grandes personnes. Je me compte, hélas, parmi les grandes personnes. Toi, Georges, Mik, vous êtes de la race des enfants qui ne cessent jamais de l'être, qui commettraient des crimes.... Je parlais des crimes qu'on peut commettre par inconscience." (2)

In the play Leo schemes to restore the balance caused by the love of Michael for Marianne, unbeknown to him his own father's mistress, but her plans cause the death of her sister, Michael's mother, thus paving the way for a newer more stable set of relationships. Yet she has no hatred for Yolande; her death is precipitated unintentionally even though it is so convenient for the emotional security of all the other characters. The same tendency to restore order is implicit in the statement at the end of the film of 'Orphée' and return things

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1. See <sup>la</sup> Corrida du premier mai.

2. Les Parents terribles, op.cit. p. 434.

to their original state:

"Il fallait les remettre dans leur eau sale" (1)

On account of his search for order, which can be linked to stability, Cocteau was ready for the influence of Radiguet who urged him to return to classical models. For Cocteau, classical models meant Greece rather than the Grand Siècle or Rome. He had an unwavering admiration for the beauty of Hellenic civilisation, whether expressed in its sculpture, architecture, religion, literature or mythology, all of which found a place in his work:

"Radiguet....disait: « il faut écrire des romans comme tout le monde. Il faut contre-dire l'avant-garde. C'est actuellement la seule position maudite. La seule position valable." (2)

In the general swing towards revolution, the true revolutionary was a reactionary. To swim against the current by reverting to classicism was revolutionary in the 1920's. So Cocteau was able to maintain his stance as an innovator by being among the first to change direction. His statement here again reveals his idea of the isolated position of the poet, who must stand apart and be a butt of society, for the poet has to point a way to others and the way may not be either obvious or easy. He was re-iterating what he had said earlier in revealing that the poet should accept guidance and inspiration from any source which bears the truth. He must learn to distinguish the truth in whatever guise it comes:

"A partir de 1917, Raymond Radiguet, âgé de quatorze ans, m'apprit à me méfier du neuf s'il a l'air du neuf, à prendre le contre-pied des modes de l'avant-garde." (3)

1. 'Orphée' film. concluding scene
2. 'Journal d'un Inconnu' op.cit. p. 33
3. 'La difficulté d'être' op.cit. p. 23

Cocteau had learnt to look beyond the outward appearance of things, as he said in his preface to 'Les Mariés', for the poet's vision clad even the everyday object in a new reality. The intensification of perception was applied well. The poet must question everything, especially the status quo. Like the Sphinx the world puts everything in riddles but reveals the answers to her favoured children, who must be prepared to accept suffering as a penalty for being in the confidence of the Gods. Radiguet's teaching of perception is thus akin to Galahad rendering pure vision back to the enchanted court of Arthur.



V. A SENSE OF ORDER

In 'Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde' Merlin represents a monster in the subconscious of Arthur, poisoning his mind until it is purged clean by the clear vision and purity of the poetic Galahad. As reality gradually dawns, Arthur kills his rival Lancelot in a fit of jealousy, thus forfeiting the love of his Queen, who by her common sense and immunity to enchantment had revealed herself as an anima figure. Lancelot, a projection of Arthur as he would like to be, and the Queen are restored in the images of the children Sagramor and Blandine, by the magic of Galahad and the fairies. The play exemplifies the power of the true poet to vanquish by intuitive use of his powers the surrealistic machinations of the alchemist. The forces of good, working to undo the enchantment are the Queen, Lancelot, Sagramor and Galahad. The victims, Arthur and Gawain are imprisoned at opposite ends of the enchanter's realm. By reuniting the true Gawain with Blandine-Guinivere at the end of the play Cocteau demonstrates that Gawain is a mirror image of Arthur embodying his more noble characteristics which will pass on to the next generation. The forces of evil, the destructive poisonous apoetic powers at work on the poet within, and without are represented by Merlin and Ginifer whose evil influence extends to deceiving the vision of all but the pure poetic Galahad. The play itself is described by Cocteau as a disintoxication in his introduction but it also resembles Jung's individuation process in that by the exercise and influence of virtue the individual puts his senses in balance and finds the Grail:

"aussitôt qu'on est en règle avec soi-même". (1)

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1. Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde, Théâtre Complet, Grasset .opcit. p. 417,

Having restored the sense of order to Camelot the work of Galahad is over and he can depart on his quest of undoing the works of evil wrought by Merlin. In the white armour of Galahad there may be a fleeting reflection of the white coated attendants at the St. Cloud clinic where the poet underwent his opium cure, for subconscious, memory and the character of the individual are interwoven threads in the fate of a man and point the way to the star that is his destiny. Other traces of Cocteau's personal mythology appear in the character of Ginifer, who is an even counterpart to Heurtebise and Cégeste but whose androgynous nature accords well with the images of Cocteau's angels. The poet's limping gait, is also mirrored in the 'cloche-pied' evil spirit, showing that he contains something of the bad side of the poet which he would like to expel from his system, as he did the opium-poisoning which was affecting his creative powers. In the Looking-Glass-Land of the Château-Noir, in which evil rules while Arthur and Guinivere are deceived into voluntarily locking themselves in their own castle, virtue is imprisoned in the person of Gawain. The evil can be overcome only through the purity of Galahad and the magic powers of Lancelot. Sagramor who shares some of Lancelot's magic and Galahad's poetic vision is able to perceive the evil and also to interpret the reason for the death of his falcon, thus playing his part in Merlin's overthrow. The way Merlin made his way to his Château-Noir is similar to the way in which Alice entered Looking -Glass-Land or Orphée entered the realm of the supernatural. It is also typical of Cocteau that horses should provide an alternative means of reaching the land of the supernatural, just as Ludovic and Avenant made their way there on Magnifique in 'Belle et La Bête' or Orphée listened to the messages from the tapping horse in the play. Ginifer as a spirit could move in the enchanted land but in a piece of gross comedy, Merlin had to make him take the form of a horse to carry him back to Camelot, back to the real world in which poetic vision was gradually restoring the sense of order which Cocteau pursued all his life. In this play perhaps more than any other, one can see the way in which deliberate art directs the fleeting surrealist vision of the poet's mind.

In the play characters there may be certain reflections of the author's own personality. Arthur and Lancelot, the human and the ideal may be conflicting parts of his own nature. The Queen has something of the mother-figure about her, by turns guiding and frustrating, similar to the Princesse of 'Orphée'. Phénixologie, the idea of recreation, the 'Eternel Retour' of Nietzsche and 'Tristan and Isolde' is the recreative element in the dénouement in which the children are seen as images of their parents. Galahad is another aspect of Cocteau's character, the poet, the good angel, a strange contrast to the evil Ginifer. It seems as though all the conflicting elements in the poet's subconscious come to life and take an independent shape, as the poet expresses so beautifully in 'Le Cordon Ombilical'. The Germanic image of the 'doppelganger' the mirror image of self, present in a parallel alien world to our own, an image which can nullify one's own existence by coming into contact with oneself, if the barriers between universes breaks down, seems to be a mainstay of this play, but is also present in varying degrees and forms in other of Cocteau's works, notably in 'L'Aigle à Deux Têtes'.

A tendency to order is the driving force in 'L'Aigle à Deux Têtes' in which several of Jung's concepts are worked out. The play itself is a search for individuality on the part of the Queen and Stanislas. When their personalities are fully integrated and matured, the innate death wish overtakes the couple whose love cannot be consummated in life because of the boundaries of fantasy and reality which separate them. Each character is a shadow of the other, a reflection of the anima and animus in the other's dream. The Queen is a royalist who falls in love with an anarchist because he resembles her dead husband. The anarchist poet and would-be assassin falls in love with Queen thus completing the picture of Jung's Earth-mother and the desire to return to the umbrella of her love and also that of the attempt to free oneself from her by killing her. The Queen recognizes Stanislas' fatal role with the phrase:

"Vous êtes Azrael, l'ange de la mort, et c'est le nom que je vous donne." (1)

Stanislas is thus linked with the Princesse in 'Orphée' who is also a personification of the Death of a Poet. The Queen loves Stanislas in a way analogous to the love of Orphée for his Princesse who is equally untrue to her calling as the Queen is to hers. In loving, both have to step outside their true roles and thus defy Fate. In calling Stanislas 'l'ange de la mort' Cocteau draws attention to the mythical and supernatural element in his play, and assimilates him to the long line of angelic characters in his plays; Heurtebise in 'Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel', the Princesse in 'Orphée', the Sphinx in 'La Machine Infernale', Bête in 'Belle et la Bête'. All these characters are outside real life, agents of fate sometimes against their will. They all personify unconscious desires of their other half and even try to warn them of the fatality of their course of action. The presence of Death in a Cocteau play is most vivid in 'L'École des Veuves' where death is represented by the corpse in the tomb. The explicit death wish here is sublimated in transferring the love to the young soldier who is thus himself given an angelic force and is seen to represent another aspect of the unconscious of the veuve; her life force, as Jung would see it. The young soldier plays the same part in freeing the widow from her obsessions with the past as Stanislas does in freeing the Queen from her psychological dependence on the memory of her dead husband. Yet each is a Phoenix-like re-incarnation of the dead man, endowed with poetic powers of persuasion, magnetism and in a given situation, with the power to communicate their love. Both Stanislas and the soldier are creatures from the people, and with their fantastic appearance bring with them a touch of earthy reality, thus lending greater credence to their real existence rather than their

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1. L'Aigle à deux têtes; Grasset edition of Cocteau's theatre, p. 290.

See section on Jung and the Earth-mother in the Chapter on Jung.

being purely shadows in the mind of the Queen or the veuve, representing, Love, Mother, Death and a reflection of self all in one composite character. 'L'aigle à deux tetes' preserves a balance between order and disorder in which the rising forces of disorder are accompanied by signs of storms, associated with the moon and with fate. The Queen by pride is mistress of her fate, in defiance of both time and the Gods:

"La foudre a ses caprices. J'ai les miens. Qu'elle entre, qu'elle entre, Édith. Je la chasserai de ma chambre à coups de cravache." (1)

The Queen, in common with La Princess<sup>e</sup> and the Sphinx is a agent of destiny about to encompass the destruction of Stanislas whom she will attach to her own fate by a bond of love, going contrary to her own concept of her duty. In this she resembles the widow of Ephesus who fell in love with the soldier who guarded the tomb of her husband. However Stanislas is also an agent of the Queen 's fate, for it is his eruption into her private, ordered, little world, which brings about her re-entry into the normality of time in which she cannot live. She feels the insecurity of her position herself and realises that she is linked with the destiny she defies, as much as with the memories to which she clings, and in reality seeks to rejoin her husband:

"J'aime l'orage parce qu'il arrache les étiquettes et que son désordre offense le vieux cérémonial des arbres".(2)

It is therefore the breakdown in appearances caused by the astonishing resemblance of Stanislas to the dead King which causes the initial breach in the Queen's universe and permits Stanislas to gain access to it. The storm has therefore a fundamental role in being the setting for the tragedy which is set in motion as soon as Stanislas appears at the open window of the chateau. With a surrealist change in the meaning of the word etiquette, the Queen shows her anxiety to preserve her universe intact and subconsciously lets slip a hint that she realizes

1. L'Aigle à deux têtes. op.cit, p. 282.

2. ibid.

that her charade cannot continue for ever, that she almost wishes it to come to an end:

"Mon étiquette à moi exige que personne au monde ne pénètre cette nuit dans ma chambre, même si la foudre tombe sur le château."(1)

The tightness of the lonely world into which Cocteau projects his characters is stressed by the Queen, for it is only in this isolated confluence of two dissimilar characters that their love can prosper. The remoteness of the situation contributes to the dream-like atmosphere which envelopes the play, making its closed circle resemble the limbo of forbidden memories and motives which constitute the subconscious, from which all myths emerge to haunt the consciousness of mankind:

"Dici on n'entend rien, on se croirait séparé du monde." (2)

That the moment of love is also a moment of fate is realised by the Queen as she shrinks from breaking down the walls of her universe and entering reality on a new plane:

"Je veux que le soir s'arrête de tomber, que la lune et le soleil arrêtent leur course. Je veux que ce château se fixe à cette minute où nous sommes et vive ainsi frappé par un sort."(3)

In this instance the moon and sun represent the unreal world of the Gods and the real world of everyday life. They are seen in a different universe from the transitory one on which darkness is falling. Even there time cannot be completely suspended and the Queen's pathetic, futile wish for permanent happiness in a moment of love which is but fleeting, cannot be realised.

Stanislas too realises the temporary nature of their relationship, posing an alternative way of making it permanent:

1. *ibid.* p. 283.

2. *ibid.* p. 329.

3. *ibid.* p. 329.

"Les êtres de violence dépérissent dans le calme. J'aurais dû te tuer dans ta chambre la première nuit et me tuer ensuite. Voilà sans doute une façon définitive de faire l'amour." (1)

As in 'La Machine Infernale' fate permits tantalising glimpses of the future which will not be changed. The characters of both Stanislas and the Queen are stormy ones. In the tranquillity of love in a world of the imagination, they are shadows of themselves, yet Stanislas lacked the urge to precipitate fate until he was goaded by the harsh words of the Queen into fulfilling the intention he had originally had on entering the château.

In the twists and turns of the duelling courtship of these two shadowy figures one can see the reflection of the courtship to the death which Cocteau describes in the arena between the torero and the bull in 'La Corrida du 1er Mai'. There are the same hesitations, passes and provocations before the final act. The only question unanswered by the play is whether Death was invoked by the male or female partner in the dance or the Queen really was responsible for the death of both of them. Only with her death could Bavaria be restored to an ordered state in which Baron von Foehn would appear less as a monster and more as a normal agent of government.

The appearance of Stanislas when he made his entrance was more than merely a physical resemblance to the dead King. He was wearing similar clothes and had blood on his knee just as the king had had when he died ten years previously. The King and his bride had been on their way to the castle at Krantz when he had been assassinated. When Stanislas appeared in the same castle on the very evening when the Queen was to commemorate the King with a macabre anniversary meal with place set for her absent husband, she was almost obliged to look upon the outlaw as a re-incarnation of the King. The shock restored her power of action and made

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1. *ibid.* p. 354.



her realise that she could not continue to live as though time had become suspended when the King died, that her fate had appeared to her. This is the point at which conscious mind and subconscious merge, and the conscious image is overwhelmed.

The myth springs to life and becomes real. Stanislas can be compared with the statue of 'Sang d'un Poete' and like her, he returns to oblivion, when his role of angel of death is carried out. Unlike Pygmalion's Galathea, once he has taken shape, he does not become the ideal companion, but the projected image of the subconscious, assumes an independent existence with a character and purpose of his own which apparently is distinct from that of the Queen, yet in the resultant tragedy proves to be on a concurrent path. She wishes to die; he is appointed to be her destiny,

The Queen sees that Stanislas is her fate; she not only names him but shows that she loves him, deliberately hiding him from justice so that her own love and her own death may be consummated together:

"Vous me demandez qui vous êtes? Mais cher Monsieur, vous êtes ma mort. C'est ma mort que je sauve. C'est ma mort que je cache....Moi, je rêve de devenir une tragédie." (1)

The sudden appearance of Stanislas in the storm as the Queen was watching the lightning play through her open window, reinforces the idea that he is a personification of some wish deep inside herself. The window itself is pointed out as looking to the unknown, to the mythical, the unconscious or even at the mystery of life itself:

"Votre Majesté avec cette fenêtre grande ouverte sur l'inconnu". (2)

He is a creature of her imagination sprung to life; her husband and her fate greeting her. His rebellion is symptomatic of her rebellion in not accepting

1. L'Aigle à deux têtes. op.cit p. 295.

2. ibid p. 290.

her husband's death as fact, in shutting herself from the world. He also is an image of the guilt complex which she cannot prevent herself from feeling for her failure to rule her kingdom. Order can only be re-established by the Queen re-asserting her Royal role and ruling as Queen. Yet in re-entering worldly life in this way, she would be forced to leave her love and her imagination behind, which have become more real to her in her fantasy than her real life. Stanislas emphasises the unreal nature of his own existence in the mind of the Queen by his insistence on the mystery of his origin and arrival:

"D'où croyez-vous que je sorte? Des ténèbres, qui sont ce qui n'est pas vous? Et qui m'y a cherché dans des ténèbres, qui m'y a dépêché des ondes plus rapides que des ordres, qui a fait de moi ce somnambule qui rampait, qui s'épuisait, qui n'entendait que les chiens, les balles et les coups frappés par son coeur?... Vous, vous, car vous n'êtes pas de celles que le hasard visite...".(1)

From the unknown he has materialised into a real person with fears and heart-beats; borne on the same wavelength as the Queen's for being derived from her own subconscious, they are part of her as well as of the rebel male image of herself. His arrival is Fate, not chance; he expressly excludes that possibility. Cocteau once again shows that he prefers to believe in fate rather than free will. In spite of his realness as he emerges into the light, as he was making his appearance he was still only a somnambule, alive but in the semi-trance state of half wakefulness in which access to the unconscious is possible. Stanislas shows as he continues talking to the Queen, his awareness of the part that he already plays in her thought. He is what she has made him:

"C'est vous qui sans le savoir m'avez donné une âme de révolte.. ce sont là des choses qu'aucun tribunal ne pourrait admettre mais les poètes le savent et je le dis." (2)\_

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1. L'Aigle à deux têtes; op.cit, p. 314.

2. ibid . p 314 .

In referring to the tribunal, Cocteau reminds us that there are tribunal scenes in the films of 'Orphée' and the 'Testament d'Orphée' after the style of Gestapo and resistance tribunals, in which the poet is accused of exceeding his powers and of betraying secrets, of upsetting the natural order of things by usurping the privileges of the gods. It is to this kind of tribunal that Stanislas is referring rather than those of the Kingdom of Bavaria, for this play takes place simultaneously on two levels. There is the level of real life in which the story is that of a real life tragic love, and the level of the unconscious in which the main characters are the personification of urges and instincts, having an existence in an unreal world, which only becomes real to us when it is illuminated by the power of the poet, or when we make sense of it through seeing it represented in the mythical form in which Jung saw all the drives of the collective unconscious.

Once he has emerged into the unreal world of the court of Bavaria, in which the Queen tried to shut herself from her duties and from contact with reality, so that she could live with her memories, Stanislas becomes the more real of the two. Contrasting his own life with hers, he demonstrated the unreality of the life she lead:

"Où étiez-vous? Dans un nuage. Vous y viviez votre songe."(1)

In continuing the reality of his own life is clearly contrasted, for his emotions are real ones felt by everyone. He shows that the meeting with the Queen is foreordained and that he has to take positive steps towards it. In being stifled, his love is in a similar state to the Queen's own thwarted desires for the love of her husband and his determination to force the issue by seeking love out is an indication that the Queen too was now unconsciously willing to turn her search for it away from the memory of her dead husband towards a real person:

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1. L'Aigle à deux têtes, op.cit. p. 315.

"..depuis mon enfance, j'étouffais d'amour. Je ne l'attendais de personne. A force de le guetter et de ne rien voir venir, J'ai couru à sa rencontre." (1)

The emotions of the Queen are faithfully reflected in those of her would-be assassin. Stanislas now is able to describe his own transition from the world of the unreal to being a real figure in an unreal world.

"Quand je suis entré dans votre chambre, j'étais une idée...Quand je suis revenu à moi, j'étais un homme chez une femme. Et plus cet homme devenait un homme, plus cette femme devenait une idée.." (2)

For a brief moment as he regained consciousness, he and the Queen were on level footing, for she was able to see a vision from her unconscious come to life. In the storm as she looked through the window, she too was in a condition to have access to the powers of her inner mind; so that the appearance of Stanislas in her room in that magic moment was a fulfilment of a dream. As his influence became manifest and as the Queen gradually started to move towards a state of communication with the real world in answer to his promptings, so he was forced back into unreality. When the link between them was broken, it could only be reforged in death. When the Queen became a woman again, then the poet sank back into the shadows.

"A peine avais-je cessé d'être un homme que vous redeveniez une femme."(3)

As the Queen gradually became aware of the change which the encounter with Stanislas was having on her, she dropped her regal manner and became human so that when both were at the same stage of reality, each penetrating the world of the other, then communication and love between them was possible. The significance of this communication was not lost on the Queen who fully

1. L'Aigle à deux têtes; p. 315.

2. ibid. p 315.

3. L'Aigle à deux têtes. p. 315-6.

realised that it was not possible for her to re-enter into possession of her kingdom. The death of the King had placed her too in the power of death and all she had to do was to await its arrival:

"Stanislas: Il me semblait que vous aviez décidé - entre autres choses- d'abolir le protocole et que nous traitions d'égal à égal.

Reine: C'était un pacte entre ma mort en moi". (1)

The Queen could only treat on an equal basis a being with status equal to herself or one which being apart of herself, one of her own wishes personified, could not be of lower status than herself. Thus Stanislas as the representation of her fate had a special place for her, which she proved by opening her heart to him. The manner in which she lived on the edge of fantasy and reality, ready to be swayed by events into one realm or the other is the essence of her description of the effect of his entry into her life:

"Je n'ai plus pensé à l'amour. J'allais vivre. J'allais devenir femme. Je ne le suis pas devenue. Je n'ai pas vécu. Frédéric est mort la veille de ce miracle. Je me suis enterrée vive dans mes châteaux. Un soir d'orage vous êtes entré par ma fenêtre et vous avez bouleversé ce bel équilibre." (2)

To restore the 'équilibre', a break in reality was needed. Since it was not forthcoming, then the only alternative was a tragedy. The balance is now apparent between the Queen who has renounced hopes of love and the rebel who is openly in search of it. However, Stanislas by his descriptions of his youth, by his knowledge of the court, the membership of the group of rebels, by his flight and pursuit by the police, shows that he too is of the real world and has a life in his own right. From his point of view the chateau is his unconscious and the window in the storm is his access to it. He finds hidden there a mother figure remote from him, yet reflecting his desires. He seeks love,

1. *ibid.* p 316.

2. L'Aigle à deux têtes, p. 329.

yet faces the world himself with aggression. To realise his individuality, he must purge the mother figure from his unconscious, in spite of his links with her, his similarities and his love. (1). Only at the moments when the two fantasy worlds merge can his love be expressed. In his conscious world, his aggressiveness is the greater. In his unconscious the love is the stronger. For him too the situation can only be stabilised by the intervention of death. The Queen is his fate too and he is attracted to her as a moth to the candle. He poignantly expressed his realisation that they were isolated on the fringes of reality but could not return together to the real world. Their love was of a world of poetry to which they had to aspire:

"Nous sommes seuls au monde, à la pointe de l'insoluble, à la limite de l'extrême où je croyais respirer à l'aise.. Nous ne savons plus où poser nos âmes, nos regards, nos paroles, nos pieds, nos mains. Éclairez-moi, mon Dieu. Qu'un ange de l'apocalypse apparaisse, qu'il sonne de la trompette, que le monde s'écroule autour de nous." (2)

This 'pointe de l'insoluble' clearly is similar to the Surrealist idea of the 'pointe supreme' but with the difference that in the exercise of his imaginative powers, Cocteau actually claims to have arrived there at the moment in which the Queen added her prayer for divine intervention to Stanislas and committed herself to him. In death they were to achieve the consummation of unity to which they had aspired as unconscious merged into conscious. The Queen replied:

"Délivrez-nous, Stanislas, Je vous aime." (2)

Stanislas' further comment:

"C'est maintenant que je pourrais vous tuer pour ne plus vous perdre." (3) shows his realisation that he must fulfil the role assigned to him to re-establish equilibrium and to fulfil his own love in the self sacrifice of death.

1. Compare with the role of Jocaste in 'La Machine Infernale'.

2. L'Aigle à deux têtes, p. 330.

3. L'Aigle à deux têtes, p. 356.

Yet he could only bring himself to act and kill her when the Queen betrayed him, apparently, and denied her love. At that moment of reality, his own aggression reasserted itself, his reason clarified, he acted and fulfilled his purpose at the moment of his own death. Thus the couple were taken away from the conflict in which they were embroiled and removed to another sphere where there would not be the same barriers between them. There is only one personality which has two faces. The mystery was too great to understand, but in an earlier moment of inspiration the rebel poet had an intuition of the mythical power of the situation;

"Il y a des rêves trop intenses. Ils réveillent ceux qui dorment. Méfions-nous. Nous sommes le rêve d'un dormeur qui dort si profondément qu'il ne sait même pas qu'il nous rêve." (1)

Although Cocteau professed to mistrust dreams, he created in 'L'Aigle à deux têtes' a dream situation in which his characters assumed a reality, born out of their existence in the dreams of each other as well as in the mind of the most profound of dreamers. In reaching, as Stanislas said, the limits of reality and perception, Cocteau proved if proof were needed that he had the instinctive power of a poet on one hand to penetrate Surreality and on the other to act as a divine medium in portraying his visions of it. Stanislas' acceptance of death is like Cocteau's expression of his desire to escape the confines of self and to turn towards the divine, to be able to join in the collective unconscious, as he phrased it in Le Requiem:

"De ce voyage il ne me reste que l'espoir de n'être plus moi". (2)

As the author 'dreams' his play, yet thinks he is expressing a form of reality so the unconscious becomes real and overwhelms the conscious.

1. *ibid*, p. 331.

2. Le Requiem, p. 89.

Perception in poetic terms explains Cocteau's presentation of his characters in *L'Aigle à deux têtes* where he calls them personified ideas. In this case the idea takes a form perceptible in reality and the personages form a relationship with each other which leads to their annihilation on the formula:

Anarchist Queen plus royalist rebel equals zero.

In his preface to the play, Cocteau stressed the poetical nature of his characters whose existence is in the realm only of poetry and who thus seem to have life only to those who enter the realm of poetry, as Alice entered Looking Glass Land.(1)

"Je souligne que la psychologie, en quelque sorte hérauldique des personnages n'a pas plus de rapport avec la psychologie proprement dite que les animaux fabuleux n'offrent de ressemblances avec des animaux véritables." (2)

The poet thus explains the shadowy air of unreality which surrounds his characters and associates them with some of the unreal qualities of a dream which seems real enough at the moment of the dreaming. Stanislas and the Queen are able to form their changing relationships in their courtship of death precisely because they exist as fantasies of the poet's imagination. He is attempting to let his audience perceive a reality which exists only in his mind, totally cut off from any external reality. The poetic quality of his play would be lost if it could be comprehended on the plane of normal perception. Nevertheless his characters being born as figments of the poet's imagination, must represent some aspect hidden within it so that we are led back to the discussion of the characters as symbols of the subconscious. The poet admits the identity of his creatures with aspects of himself, almost regretting that in the new reality of poetry, he no longer has any control over his fantasies:

"Un poème doit perdre une à une toutes les cordes qui le retiennent à ce qui le motive. Chaque fois que le poète en coupe une, son coeur bat. Lorsqu'il

1. *'Through the Looking Glass'*, Lewis Carroll.
2. Preface to *'L'Aigle à deux têtes'*.



coup la dernière, le poème se détache et monte seul comme un ballon, beau en soi et sans autre attache avec la terre." (1)

Another symbol of the beating heart, the life force of the poet, is the hibiscus flower in 'Le Testament d'Orphée', which has the function of indicating the rhythms of the poet's life by alternately withering and blooming:

"Elle est faite de votre sang et elle épouse les syncopes de votre destin." (2)

A parallel can be drawn between the oscillations in the relationship between Stanislas and the Queen and the alternating rhythm of the flower which dies as the poet's destiny fades then springs to life again as it waxes strong. At the end of the film the flower is abandoned, signifying the accomplishment of destiny. There is a likeness between the flower and the poet's idea of the independence of a work of art once created, for the flower remains as a symbol of the permanence of the work of art when the image of the poet fades.

Whatever reality the poem may have, once it has taken shape on paper, the act of creating it is a breathtaking glimpse of the depths of the soul, so that the fantasy creature of the imagination, which may be a character in a play, a poem, a picture or a flower is a revelation of depths normally concealed from mankind, a vision which can be terrifying even for the poet.

1. Le Secret Professionnel. op.cit. p. 53.

2. Le Testament d'Orphée op.cit p. 117.

PART 3

A MIRROR IN SPAIN

i. A COMPARISON WITH SOME SPANIARDS INFLUENCED

BY SURREALISM:-

GARCIA LORCA, DALÍ AND BUÑUEL.

Towards the end of Cocteau's life he published several works with a Spanish note. Of these the most important was 'La Corrida du Premier Mai' (1) but the tone was also there if in a minor key in 'Le Cordon Ombilical' (2) and in 'Cérémonial Espagnol du Phénix' (3) which was dedicated to Concha Garcia Lorca, sister of the poet Federico. Garcia Lorca who had died in the civil war. Cocteau did not go to Spain until 1953, seventeen years after the death of Lorca, but the spirit of Spain was already with him and he readily acknowledged his debt to the Spanish poet;

"Avant de me rendre en Espagne, j'étais déjà son obligé. Les traductions de Gongora et de Lorca m'avaient enseigné une syntaxe qui dirige mon travail actuel de poète." (4)

The inspiration may have started to work any time after the publication of 'Romancero Gitano' in 1927 but almost certainly not before that time. More probably the Lorca came to his attention during the 1930's, after Dali had become established in Paris (before leaving Spain the painter had been a great friend of Lorca.) Although earlier works by Cocteau could not have been so influenced, later ones like 'L'Aigle à deux têtes', 'La Belle et la Bête' and the post-war works could have been.

Since Gongora had died in 1627 his case is obviously different. However there was an important revival of interest in him in 1927 on the tercentenary of his death, so that Cocteau most likely became aware of the importance of his work in the years immediately following. The celebration of the tercentenary shows how his worth was already being recognised and this was emphasized as much by the prevailing interest in poetry written in his manner as to the coincidence of the anniversary. Many of the more obscure features of his work, including

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1. La Corrida du Premier Mai, Paris, 1958.

2. Le Cordon Ombilical, Paris, 1962.

3. Cérémonial Espagnol du Phénix; Paris, 1962.

4. La Corrida du Premier Mai, p. 141.

the use of double metaphors, attracted some of the Surrealists and their Spanish counterparts towards him. Lorca's essay on Gongora was published in 1926 (1) during the formative period of Surrealism. 'Le Mythe del Greco' was Cocteau's first work on Spain, a very penetrating study published in 1943, thus lending credence to the idea that his interest was formulated towards the end of the Civil War when many émigrés entered France and when the holocaust portrayed so vividly in Picasso's 'Guernica' and Cocteau's 'La Fin du Potomak', was about to fall on the rest of Europe. One should not forget however, that the image of Spain is deeply rooted in Cocteau's mind for he knew well Juan Gris, was a great admirer of Picasso from the period of the collaboration over 'Parade' (2) claimed the acquaintance of Francis Picabia and later of Salvador Dalí. It is perhaps surprising then, that Cocteau should have waited so long before his first visit to Spain, rather than that he should have eventually become so very interested. Yet it is clear that he felt that he had found a spiritual home in the Peninsula, particularly appreciating the Sun, the heat and the intensity of life!

"En Espagne....tout est feu".(3)

Thus towards the end of his life he was able to give expression to a desire which had been stirring within him ever since he had written;

"Toledo sera parmi les choses les plus ardentes et les plus tristes du monde. Grenade un des oreillers les plus mols du monde." (4)

In the 'Corrida du Premier Mai', he was to write at length on Toledo and Granada, although at the time of writing 'Le Secret Professionnel', he could not have known of its association with Garcia Lorca, which he came to celebrate many years later. Even the Spanish language appealed to Cocteau, so much so that he claimed an affinity with it in its turns of phrase:

1. El Imagen poetica en Don Luis de Gongora, in 'El defensor de Granada' and in 'Residencia', Madrid, 1932.
2. Parade, Cocteau's ballet first staged in 1917.
3. La Corrida du Premier mai, p. 136.
4. Le Secret Professionnel, p. 26. written in 1922.

"On dirait (paraît-il) que ma langue française retourne à l'espagnole, Les Espagnols sont très sensibles aux nombres, à la précision, aux rapprochements d'objets éloignés les uns des autres formant ce nouvel objet qu'on nomme poésie." (1)

In his appreciation of the language he reveals his own preoccupation with numbers and his love of precision and order. There are also surrealist features for example in the pleasure he takes in the surprising juxtaposition of objects in a series of antitheses which forms a basis for his poetry. Cocteau's poetry on this count bears direct comparison with André Breton's. Breton himself played games with numbers in an attempt to foretell the future. However he held an almost superstitious regard for the french language, being half afraid that his poetical command might be lost if he were to vitiate it with another tongue. For Cocteau the genius of Spain proclaimed itself through the Corrida. His description takes us beyond reality into the world of poetry, for he sees the corrido as poetry in action and also as a metaphor revealing a message from the Goddess of Death. His view of the bullfight as an unfettered expression of the Spanish soul is richly imbued with the surrealist search for truth in the subconscious.

"La Corrida est le spectacle où la poésie espagnole s'exprime sans aucune contrainte. C'est un spectacle et une science." (2)

However he appreciated the control and discipline of the techniques of bullfighting as well as the freedom and show. Once again he reminds of one of his aphorisms;

"L'art est la science faite chair". (3)

In nowhere more than the arena can art and science be more intimately connected with flesh and blood. The dramatic intensity of the spectacle produces a great effect on the spectator and make him emotionally involved with the scene

1. La Corrida du Premier Mai; p. 142.

2. La Corrida du Premier Mai; p. 138.

3. Le Coq et l'Arlequin; opcit. 1918.

before him to an extent which occasionally pushes him to active participation in the corrida, for the death wish is not only in the matador. Cocteau considered the "Spectacle" as a ceremonial which left a permanent effect in the minds of the spectators; it may be considered in the same light as the film which draws the audience together and then hypnotises it into sharing the same dream. There is the difference that the participation in the Corrida is live, vivid and intense. Yet the poet suggests that the Spanish soul is expressed in the ceremony, 'sans aucune contrainte'!

Thus he postulates the poetry acting in the arena as a resource for the expression of the subconscious and indicates that his own use of the corrida as a metaphorical expression for the twists of his own subconscious, is a vehicle deliberately chosen. He sees in Spain a love of language, spectacle and science, considering all three as essential elements in poetry. His view of science tends to be mystic, as though it were occult like poetry with its own band of initiates. In citing the science of the matador he again adopts a ~~✗~~ surrealist attitude, for Breton also denied there was a boundary between the arts and the sciences, which both represent different aspects of perception. Cocteau's penetration of the Spanish soul extends to the rebelliousness of the Spaniard; he explains the ethos of Spain in a characteristic paradox in which the power of Spanish music and the corrida are seen as catalysts of the national spirit:

"L'Espagnol est contre tout ce qui est espagnol, sauf contre l'Espagne. Cet état d'âme anarchique cesse lorsque le flamenco ou la corrida les empoignent et forment un lien national où l'intensité profonde l'emporte sur celles des parties".(1)

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1. La Corrida du Premier Mai, p. 136.

Here Cocteau was unsurrealistic; Breton had no love for music and very little for nationalism which he saw as dividing peoples when the spirit of the Internationale was to unite them. Yet the ideas of individualism and revolt are at the very core of Surrealist thinking, so that even here the distance between Cocteau and Surrealism is less than it seems.

Cocteau took especial pleasure in the music of the Spanish Gypsies with its uneven rhythm, which lead him to rhapsodize on their cultivation of asymetry even in dress. He greatly appreciated their vitality, the very masculinity which was their appeal for Lorca, showing how much the Frenchman and the Andalusian had in common!

"Cette science infuse du rythme boiteux est un des secrets de leur incroyable vitalité. Elle rejoint celle des grands poètes, entre autres Gongora et Lorca." (1)

Cocteau's appreciation of Lorca's gypsies lead him to attempt to link them with his own interest in Egyptology, which he had previously revealed in the character of Anubis in 'La Machine Infernale' as well as in his travelogues. He was in fact trying to link Lorca's work with his own by pointing to origins in the same mythological sources. His difficulty, that the myth of the gypsies seems to originate in the East or in India, is overcome by suggesting that before coming to Spain they had wandered as far afield as Egypt:

"Le fleuve gitan a dû prendre sa source aux Indes. Peut-être a-t-il fait une boucle en Egypte." (2)

Cocteau's descriptions of a bullfight in 'La Corrida' are cleverly interwoven with references to Granada the home of the gypsies and the spirit of the assassinated poet, so that he shows his fellow feeling with Lorca, a

1. La Corrida du Premier Mai; p. 133.

2. ibid. p. 134.



fine appreciation of the essence of his poetry and delight in the masculinity of its source;

"A Grenade, les Gitans, chantés par Lorca, habitent des caves creusées dans la montagne." (1)

Many critics, among them Cobb, Higginbotham, Angel del Rio, Guillermo de Torre, agree that, although not a Surrealist himself, Garcia Lorca was greatly influenced by Surrealism and that in some respects his writing was a degree beyond Surrealism. Comparing Cocteau with Lorca is thus useful in establishing certain Surrealist traits of the former as well as leading to a greater understanding of both. Cobb, Higginbotham and Angel del Rio quote examples showing that Lorca had read Lautréamont and was influenced by him. The latter also influenced Breton and the other Surrealists, especially on account of his wild lack of conformism, his taste for the macabre and his antagonism to religious ideals. Breton had even copied in manuscript the Bibliothèque Nationale copy of Lautréamont's 'Chants de Maldoror', in the absence of a published version. Angel del Rio also mentions that Lorca often spoke of Lautréamont during 1929 when he was in New York. (2) The Surrealist influence in Lorca's work is most apparent in; 'Romancero Gitano' (1927), 'Poeta en Nueva York' (1929), 'Así que pasen cinco años' and 'El Público', both published in 1930. His themes indicate a fellow feeling with Cocteau, for he had an obsession with death, evident in his many funeral odes and poems in dedication to such illustrious predecessors as Góngora and El Greco, by his predilection for the bullfight rendered in verse in his poem on Ignacio Sánchez Mejías. In addition to the macabre side to his nature he wrote a series of 'Sonetos de Amor Oscuro' in which the significance is recondite but is generally thought to indicate homosexual tendencies. It is worth noting that Lorca's 'Canciones' published in 1924, are also thought to contain Surrealistic

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1. La Corrida du premier mai, p. 135.

2. Angel del Rio, Estudios sobre literatura contemporanea española, Gredos, Madrid, 1966, p. 287.

influences although Lorca's first contact with French Surrealism is often given as 1925. This would point to Lorca being inspired in a similar way to the Surrealists but from entirely personal sources, at least in the early stages of his work. However in the student circles in Madrid in which Lorca moved shortly after the First World War, there was discussion about literary movements in France. Lorca's friends at the University were Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel. Cocteau may therefore have come into contact with Lorca's work through his acquaintance with these two latter artists. His brief mention of Dalí's work shows no particular appreciation at the time of writing 'Essai de Critique Indirecte' in 1932, shortly after the flamboyant Catalan had come to Paris and joined the Surrealists for a shortlived conjunction. (1) However, Cocteau does thereby show that he knew of Dalí and had taken an interest in him. Perhaps this had a connexion with Dalí's introduction to Picasso which he described in his autobiography as occurring about 1928, at a time when relationships between Cocteau and Picasso were in abeyance, although Cocteau's admiration was in no way diminished. Cocteau greatly admired Buñuel's films, 'Le Chien Andalou' the scenario of which was by Dalí, and 'L'Âge d'Or' which was financed by Étienne de Beaumont simultaneously with 'Le Sang d'un poète'. So indirect lines between Cocteau and Lorca were clearly in existence, even if they were not exploited during Lorca's lifetime.

Angel del Rio is of the opinion that Lorca first encountered French Surrealism at a lecture given by Louis Aragon in Madrid in 1925. The substance of the lecture is printed in 'La Révolution Surréaliste' No. 4 of 1925 (2) and deals mostly with the destructive nature of the new movement. Like Cocteau, Lorca remained aloof from the political involvement and such a lecture was not likely to prove a great inspiration for him. Angel del Rio's own description of the

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1. 'Salvador Dalí n'a pas le Choix; il habite<sup>un</sup> monde fermé' Essai de Critique Indirecte p. 179.

2. La Révolution Surréaliste no. 4; 1925. 'Fragments d'une Conférence'.

ways in which Lorca was influenced by Surrealism indicates contact through means other than Aragon's lecture;

"Lorca devoró toda la utileria del surrealismo, se llenó la boca con ella y, luego como obedeciendo a un conjuro, la echó fuera en forma de poemas: pero esto lo hizo con todas las otras cosas de que se alimentaba." (1)

The way in which the poet absorbed his subject matter over a long period digested it or processed it in his subconscious, and then produced his poems at a due moment is strikingly like Cocteau's own method. The similarity extends even further for both poets had other sources of inspiration than those suggested by the Surrealism. For Cocteau classical Greek and medieval French legends played a similar role to the traditions of Spain and Andalusia for Lorca. Both of them took from Surrealism only that which appealed to their personalities. The first of Lorca's works to be translated into French was the edition published in Tunis in 1935, the versions being written by A. Guibert, M. Pomès, J. Prévost and J. Supervielle. (2) After the poet's death, 'Le Chant Funèbre pour Ignacio Sánchez Mejías' and 'L'Ode à Walt Whitman' were published by the Editions GLM in 1938: in the same year Louis Parrot and Paul Eluard translated 'L'Ode à Salvador Dalí'. The play 'Bodas de Sangre' received wide acclaim in 1933 and a French performance took place at the 'Atelier' theatre in 1938 under the name of 'Noces de Sang'. (3) During Lorca's stay in New York, he wrote a film-script which is roughly contemporary with 'Le Chien Andalou', 'L'Âge d'Or' and 'Le Sang d'un Poète'. The scenario entitled 'Viaje a la Luna' has never been published in the original but only in English. The Spanish script is in the hands of a friend of the poet who refuses to release it. However it has recently been the subject of an article by Miss. V. Higginbotham of the University of Texas (4), who shows similarities

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1. Angel del Rio. *op.cit.* p.284. Lorca devoured all that was useful in Surrealism, he filled his mouth with it and then as though obeying an oath, expressed it in the form of poetry, but he did this with everything on which he nourished himself.
  2. Lorca A. Belamich. Gallimard, Paris, 1962. p. 241.
  3. 'Lorca'. Marie Laffranque: Seghers. Paris 1966. p. 128.
  4. 'La Viaje a la Luna de Federico Garcia Lorca' in Ínsula no. 254. Jan 1968.

between Lorca's work and the early films by Buñuel. From 1945 onwards many other versions of Lorca's works appeared in French and in many other languages, so Cocteau would have had no difficulty in finding copies after the War; it is just possible that he read some of the earlier editions, particularly those which were published under the names of writers well known to him such as Eluard, Prévoost and Supervielle. It is most improbable that he had any knowledge of Lorca's 'trip to the Moon'.

Cobb is of the opinion that Lorca's work can be distinguished from Surrealism by its preservation of 'a consistent thematic development' (1). Here is a parallel of Cocteau's sense of order which he endeavours to present in his work, both poets refusing to allow their subconscious to catch them unawares, and preserving that vital element of conscious control over their output. However, Cobb also shows how close Lorca is to Surrealism by emphasising a dream element which appears in his work; 'The outstanding feature of his surrealist poems is that they seem to have come from a dream state.' (2)

He did not analyze the precise nature of the state, whether it was literally a dream state and the poems of the type associated with automatic writing or whether it was more a question of the 'half-sleep' which Cocteau described as his own method of gaining access to the secrets of his subconscious. It seems that with the possible exception of 'Poeta en Nueva York' which has at times nightmarish qualities, that Lorca's dream state is not unlike the rêverie or meditation of Cocteau. Angel del Río supports Cobb's view that Lorca is on the fringe of the Surrealist movement and yet managed to produce work which is very Surrealistic in nature;

"Lorca se inclinaba hacia el surrealismo y se puede decir que es la suya la primera obra importante que produce el movimiento en España." (3)

1. Carl W. Cobb, Federico Garcia Lorca, Twayne, New York, 1967, p. 43.

2. *ibid.*

3. Angel del Rio. *op.cit.* p. 284. 'Lorca was inclined towards surrealism and it may be said that his is the first important work which that movement produced in Spain'.

In representing Lorca's work as the earliest Spanish efforts in the Surrealist field, del Rio shows how relatively small was the impact of Surrealism in the Peninsula although such artists as Picasso, Dalí, Buñuel and Miró were all at work in France. They may have felt obliged by the intellectual climate to work in France rather than Spain, for Spain had not been involved in the First World War and its chaotic aftermath whereas after the Civil War the atmosphere was repressive to avant-garde movements. Nevertheless, the staid climate of Spain did not inhibit intense poetic feeling as Auclair recalls:

"Lorca, si avide de passion que sa propre passion ne lui suffisait pas; il s'intégrait jusqu'au désespoir toute passion humaine." (1)

Cocteau shares with Lorca a Narcissistic ability to feel the emotion of others within himself and to contemplate it in moods of poetic introspection. Passion thus feeds poetry, but the poet has a need to be a focus of the attention of the public; for if the poetry is formed within the subconscious, its expression is none the less incomplete unless it can find a public. Cocteau and Baudelaire both found that poetry involved laying one's deepest secrets bare in public in an effort to share and integrate their own passion with that of their public. In his description of the Corrida, Cocteau states how he lived it rather than witnessed it. In thus subsuming the passion and experience of others possibly to compensate for deficiencies in his own personality, he demonstrates the same deep sense of poetry as Lorca. The nature and power of this feeling are elaborated in 'La Corrida':

"Une faculté de non-moi que je possède, une aptitude à devenir le spectacle auquel j'assiste, au point de n'exister plus que par rapport à ce spectacle que, dis-je, par anéantissement total d'un moi ne donnant le change (...) que par le phénomène d'automatisme qu'on n'observe que chez le bétail décapité des abattoirs." (2)

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1. M. Auclair, Enfances et Mort de Garcia Lorca, Seuil, Paris, 1968. p. 100.

2. La Corrida du premier mai, p. 13.

Such intense absorption of self into a spectacle through the power of passion and imagination is a Surrealistic act which breaks the bounds of reality. The "automatisme" is the physical state of the poet when the self has transcended reality to participate in the spectacle. Although it is possible that in such a state the poet's subconscious may be able to express itself freely, this is not the concern of the poet who is attuned to the passionate vibrant experience of the spectacle before him. However the intensity, power and conviction which mark Cocteau's description of the bullfight in a series of sustained metaphors contribute to a vivid poetry and an unreal perception of the scene before him, in a manner which suggests that the poet's subconscious has found a way to express some of his hidden fears and desires. Higginbotham shows how Lorca considered himself different from the Surrealists, giving a reason which could also be applied to Cocteau since he was always just as conscious of the need to impose a form on the images which composed his poetry?(1)

"Whilst working on the magazine 'Gallo', Lorca wrote two more tales, 'Nadadora Sumergida' and 'Suicídio en Alejandría'. He sent copies of them to Sebastian Gasch, explaining that these two prose pieces 'responden a mi nueva manera espiritualista, emoción pura....desligada de control lógico... pero con una tremenda lógica poetica. No es surrealismo ! ojo!. la consciencia mas clara los ilumina...' (2)

So Lorca intended to have a logic of its own, illuminated by something beyond conscious thinking. This is a concept resembling the one prescribed by Cocteau in his idea of the forces in the poet's 'nuit' which give him his orders. Lorca distinguishes his work from that of the Surrealists by showing

1. V. Higginbotham, 'Lorca's apprenticeship in Surrealism' in 'Romanic Review' vol. 61, 1970. The quotation from Lorca is from his correspondence with Gasch.
2. They correspond with any new spiritual style, pure emotion - freed from logical control, but with a tremendous poetic logic. It's not Surrealism, though! a clearer consciousness illuminates them. *ibid.*

that he was not concerned with automatic production from the subconscious but in a constructed poetic form in which the power is derived from the greater perception and intuition of the poet. Moreover the Spanish poet links spiritual power with purity of emotion and suggests that it is by the exercise of these same forces that he is able to free his mind from logical control. He thus associates two forces, one which the Surrealists tried to reject and one which they valued highly. For the poet, imbued with spirituality, they were compatible; for the Surrealist seeking to expand his mind and its power, they were not. However Lorca's bid to transcend the material by exercising the power of his imagination in the creation of his poetry was in some degree more successful than many of the Surrealist attempts and is probably due to wider range of the universe which he, and Cocteau too, accorded to the poetic imagination than the Surrealists granted to theirs, which they fixed firmly in man and in the material universe. They made for themselves a major barrier in stressing materialism yet wishing to synthesize it into a new form of consciousness which needed the help of a spirituality which they could not accept. The poets did not even consider whether there were any boundaries to be placed on the scope of the imagination but having established the potential for exceeding normal limits, explored the freedom without putting further bounds on it.

During his career, Cocteau encountered other Spaniards, many of them associated with the visual arts rather than the verbal ones. Among these was Buñuel who became known on account of his Surrealist experiments with film around 1930. He was a friend of both Lorca and Dalí; all three of them had belonged to the same film club in Madrid University. Indeed Dalí wrote the scenario for Bunuel's first film, 'Un Chien Andalou' in 1929. His second film, 'L'Age d'Or', has a connexion with Cocteau, for it was filmed almost simultaneously

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with 'Le Sang D'un Poète', both films being sponsored by Étienne de Beaumont. Cocteau was aware of his rival's work for he passed appreciative comment on it as he revised the text of 'Opium';

"En relisant ces notes (octobre 1929), j'ajoute 'Un Chien Andalou' de Buñuel. Le voilà le style de l'âme." (1)

If obscure, his comment is none-the-less indicative of an appreciation of the Surrealist element in Buñuel's film, for the film is essentially an expression of the soul in a dream like medium. Perhaps it is the unreality of the film, its existence purely as a shadow on a screen yet with the power to inspire new thoughts in the audience which induced Cocteau to add a comment in praise of Buñuel's second film:

"L'Âge d'Or le premier chef d'oeuvre antiplastique."(2)

These comments imply that Cocteau had at that time both seen the films and met the director, the impression being confirmed by a remark made to André Fraigneau in 1955:

"J'étais brouillé à cette époque avec les surréalistes. Je ne l'étais pas avec Buñuel. Je croyais que mon film s'opposait aux surréalistes..."(3)

He shows by his statement that although there was a breach between himself and the Surrealists, he was not principally responsible for it and he was able to maintain contacts with individuals associated with them. It is well to remember that this remark was passed many years after the event and that Cocteau may have been presenting his quarrel with the Surrealists as being rather less violent and bitter than it appeared at the time. He did not specify the ways in which his film was different from the Surrealist ideas. He may have felt in 1930 that his familiar personal myths of Dargelos, the many guises of death, the appearance of

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1. J. Cocteau. Opium, op.cit. p. 202.

2. ibid.

3. J. Cocteau, Entretiens avec André Fraigneau, Paris, 1955, p. 91.



angels and defiance of the laws of time and space were in themselves opposed to Surrealism. The passage of time has shown that the public of today consider these elements to be a part of Surrealism. Cocteau himself accepts the state of affairs almost with regret;

"On appelle 'Le Sang d'un Poète,' film surréaliste, alors qu'il s'apposait aux films de ce mouvement...et Buñuel m' disait avant-hier, qu'à l'étranger il arrive qu'on lui attribue 'Le sang d'un poète' et qu'on m'attribue 'le Chien Andalou!'" (1)

He was at pains to disclaim any influence that Buñuel may have had on his work in those early years, at least as far as the films themselves were concerned. The question is still open as to whether they had discussed film techniques at that time.

"Le film de Buñuel, L'Âge d'or', commencé en même temps que le 'Sang', se tournant d'un côté pendant que je tournais le mien de l'autre. Nous ne vîmes nos films respectifs qu'après les avoir finis. Et je ne devais connaître 'Le Chien andalou' tourné avant 'L'Âge d'or', que dans la suite. C'est donc une erreur de chercher des influences de Buñuel dans mon film." (2)

From Cocteau's note of 1929 (3), it would seem that he is in error here and that he had already seen 'Le Chien Andalou' before making his own first film, but that he wishes to preserve the idea that his work had not been influenced by Buñuel at that time. The slip of memory can also be excused both by the time lapse and the fact that he was writing this memoir while he was tired and on a long flight home from New York. In subconsciously boosting his own ego by disclaiming any debt to an acknowledged master he was also paying Buñuel a peculiar kind of compliment for his admiration for Buñuel was sincere. He continued by explaining reasons for some of the similarities between 'Le Sang d'un Poète'

1. J. Cocteau, Entretiens avec Andre Faigneau, op.cit, p. 38.
2. J. Cocteau, Lettre aux Américains, in Fallimard, 'Poésies Critiques', Paris, 1955.p. 81 The essay originally dating from 1948.
3. See note 1. previous page.

and those early films by Buñuel, which show that he places himself on a level with him and that he acknowledged in retrospect that similarities are present and are explicable that both of them were taking ideas from common sources. Thus if the one had Surrealist associations, then some of these ideas are also present in the other's film.

"Il importe de comprendre que des ondes analogues sont enregistrées par certains esprits à la même période et que ces ondes excusent la confusion qui risquent de s'établir entre des oeuvres qui s'opposaient assez féroce<sup>ment</sup> à l'époque et qui paraissent parentes avec le recul." (1)

In returning to his familiar image of electric waves of poetry, Cocteau suggests that they do bring inspiration from outside the limits of self and that the possibility is sufficient to explain likenesses in the works of various writers of the same period. In so saying he leaves aside the question of whether any writer can avoid being representative of the age in which he lives, other than by conscious imitation of the styles of other eras. The mystic side of Cocteau asserts itself, for he is referring to the concept of the poet's night and the role of the poet as interpreter or ambassador to mankind from the occult forces controlling man's destiny. This view that man had a need of a poet-priest is a Catholic concept of the Surreal whereas the idea held by Breton that anyone could achieve direct perception of the secrets of the universe, is a protestant view, consistent with his democratic and political ideas. Cocteau

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1. Lettre aux Américains. *ibid.*

is thus able to place in the same framework some of Buñuel's ideas as well as his own, suggesting that they share a common heritage to which each gives a personal expression in his early films. These personal differences tend to lose importance with the passage of time, and the more universal elements of their work assume greater significance. He concluded his discussion with a paradox which implied he was not certain what Surrealism was and yet hinting that in his opinion it was something greater than the limits within which Breton had put it:

"Chaque fois qu'on me parle du 'Sang d'un Poète' on emploie le terme 'Surréaliste'. Il est peut-être commode mais il est faux. A cette époque le surréalisme n'existait pas, ou bien il existait depuis toujours et n'était pas nommé encore." (1)

It is almost as though Cocteau, in retrospect, were placing the making of 'Sang d'un Poete' at an earlier date than it was, even as early as 1924. It is true that some of the ideas which are presented in the film appeared in some of his earlier works; the Dargelos episode from 'Les Enfants Terribles' (2) the card game from 'Opéra' (3). The statue which came to life is also to be found in this work (4) as is the idea of the child learning to fly in a poem which puns on the meanings of 'Voler' 'to fly' and 'to steal' (5). This serves to vindicate his concept of poetry as being accumulated in his person, ready to be reformed and take new shape as the moment arises. Another interpretation of Cocteau's paradox is that he was very deliberately examining the subconscious and expressing poetically and with a careful attention to form and detail the ideas which he found there, in opposition to the Surrealists' method of automatic writing and other forms of access to the subconscious in which the will of the poet plays little if any part. It is possible that as the poet looked back on

1. Lettre aux Américains; *ibid.*

2. *op.cit.*

3. *op.cit.*, 'Joueurs dormant à l'ombre', p. 24.

4. *op.cit.*, 'Danger d'écrire sur les statues', p. 92.

5. *op.cit.*, 'Les Voleurs d'enfants', p. 82.

the making of his film, during the course of his flight home, he was unable to situate it precisely in the past because it did contain elements drawn from his earlier life and was in fact many years in the making. Hence he was able to close his mind to the likelihood that the techniques and methods of Surrealism had played a part in his film, whether such was the case or not.

In considering the interest of Cocteau and Buñuel in the cinema, it is well to remember that their earliest films were among the pioneers of sound filming. In 1930, interest was generally focussed on the silent cinema, where Valentino, Keaton and Chaplin were still heroes. The development of 'talkies' was a little scorned by cinema purists, so that the initiators of the new style were rebels as well as pioneers, using a new technology to explore a new dimension of thought, making a surrealist use of the new medium. The first sound film on general release in Britain, was 'the Singing Fool' with Al Jolson in 1926.(1) There was no language barrier in Britain to interfere with the introduction of the new films from America but in France there was a longer lapse of time before the talking film entered general circulation. Silent films were made commercially until well into the 1930's. Both Cocteau and the Surrealists admired such stars of the silent screen as Chaplin and Keaton so that there is a possible common origin for some of the techniques and ideas used in film by Cocteau and Buñuel, in the silent cinema. In 1932 Cocteau indicated his appreciation as well as his regret for an art form that was already passing by saying:

"Les premiers films de Charlie Chaplin ou de Buster Keaton ne se transmettent plus que par des bandes introuvables." (2)

Although 'Le Chien Andalou' was a silent film it is interesting that in the following year with 'Sang d'un Poète' Cocteau was already experimenting with sound, if not dialogue.

1. According to Mr. E.W. Cook from a personal memory.
2. J. Cocteau; Postface of 'Sang d'un Poète'.

Salvador Dalí was a close friend of Garcia Lorca and Buñuel, at least in their student days. His relationship with Bunuel continued rather longer than that with Garcia Lorca both on account of his closer association with French culture and of his interest in Surrealism. Cocteau mentions his work on several occasions although that does not show any association. Moreover Dalí knew Picasso fairly well and shared his Catalonian origin. Higginbotham affirms that he helped Lorca on the road to Surrealism, although there is no evidence in his autobiography or in his sister's biography (1) that he became a practising Surrealist before 1929 by which time his links with Garcia Lorca were all but severed. However as an art student he was certainly more attentive to cultural movements in France than Lorca; even before his student days he was aware of avant-garde ideas in art and received French Magazines on art:

"From 1925 to 1927 Lorca's association with Dalí was constant. These were the years of Lorca's surrealist experiments and his knowledge of surrealist imagery was undoubtedly enriched by Dalí." (2)

In the preface to his book on Lorca, Cobb takes a broader view of the period in which Dalí influenced him suggesting the years 1921-28. He assesses the influence of Dalí, even in that period as being Surrealistic:

"The central impulse was towards freedom, freedom to throw off all the shackles binding total expression of the personality including even scatological and sexual taboos. Dalí came to represent for Lorca the influence of the Catalonian group which from Barcelona attempted to import and develop Freudian and Surrealist ideas from France and the rest of Europe." (3)

1. Salvador Dalí visto por su hermana, op.cit.
2. V. Higginbotham, Lorca and Surrealism.op.cit.
3. C. Cobb, op.cit. (preface).

If Cobb is correct, then a link is established between Lorca and the Surrealists and perhaps with wider aspects of French culture. This same link could have brought knowledge of the work of Lorca to Cocteau. However before 1929, Dalí spent much of his time in Madrid and when he was at home near Barcelona he appeared to work in relative isolation, although he did put on exhibitions and had an appreciation by that time of Cubist techniques. He adopted Surrealist techniques some considerable time before his brief adoption of Surrealism as a philosophy which is instanced by his signature of the manifesto in the first issue of 'Le Surrealisme au service de la Révolution' (1), where among his co-signatories were to be found other artists who have been linked at different times with Cocteau; Aragon, Buñuel, Eluard and Tzara. Dalí was introduced to Picasso in 1928 by a cubist friend;

"I was introduced to Picasso (before the making of 'Le Chien Andalou') by Manuel Angelo Ortiz, a cubist painter of Granada, who followed Picasso's work to within a centimetre. Ortiz was a friend of Lorca's and this is how I happened to know him." (2)

Both Lorca and Dalí therefore were in touch with artists with contacts with the French avant-garde and with the Surrealists both before Dalí went to live in France and before Lorca's journey to New York. Whilst this fact may have little significance in the case of Dalí whose links with France are well documented, it may throw a little light on the work of Lorca who is thought to have been subject to relatively few influences outside Spain and to have had little knowledge of French culture.

Cocteau's writing on Dalí is not extensive but it does reveal that he had an understanding of his work and his worth. He first mentions him in 1932 when he was already drifting away from the Surrealists;

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1. Manifestes du Surréalisme; op.cit. p. 146, 1930.

2. S. Dalí, The Secret life of Salvador Dali, op.cit. p. 206.

"Salvador Dalí n'a pas de choix; il habite un monde fermé... Son or n'a cours que chez lui..... il habite un monde où il gouverne." (1)

By using his own poetic intuition, Cocteau penetrates Dalí's mind and his method of creation. Dalí worked in a personal world in which his own imagination superimposed into images on external reality. This secret world which fits the description of 'un monde fermé' is entirely subject to the artist's will. If Cocteau failed in his assessment of Dalí it was in not realising the scope of his artistic potential in the early years of his career and yet at some points Dalí's method resembles Cocteau's. Dalí implies by the title of his autobiography that he has a secret, personal life which others enter only at the invitation of the artist, a secret life which he strangely makes public just as Cocteau bared his own artistic conscience in 'Le Secret Professionnel'. (2) Cocteau referred in 'Le Cordon Umbilical' to phantasy elements constituting a family created in his own mind and a universe in which his family have their own existence (3) and thus reveals an element of fellow feeling with Dalí, borne out by his comment :

"Un peintre fait toujours son propre portrait". (4),

which indicated a belief that everything done by an artist represents a reforming of the thoughts impulses and memories contained in the most hidden parts of his mind. Whereas Cocteau claimed special poetic powers which enabled him to bring these thoughts into his consciousness, Dalí evolved his critical paranoic method. He himself shows that his method is based on a form of deliberate hallucinations for which he makes extraordinary claims:

"Activité paranoïque-critique; méthode spontanée de connaissance irrationnelle basée sur l'association interprétative-critique des phénomènes délirants." (5)

1. Essai de Critique Indirecte, op.cit, p. 179 (Gallimard Edition of Poésie Critique).
2. The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí, op.cit; and Le Secret Professionnel, op.cit,
3. Le Cordon Umbilical, op.cit; see page. 88, 89 of the present work.
4. Le Testament d'Orphée, op.cit, p.. 36.
5. S. Dalí, Oui, p. 19.

While such a technique may be considered as a means of reaching into the subconscious for inspiration in art, Dalí's concern for form and his conscious interpretation of his visions place him outside the mainstream of pure Surrealist thought, where the essential was that access to the subconscious should be without the intervention of the inhibiting consciousness. Both Dalí and Cocteau saw that if the consciousness were properly trained and alert to the signals from the subconscious then it functioned as a help in the exploration and realisation of the potential of the subconscious; rather than produce art directly from the subconscious, they brought the images from the subconscious into the consideration and focus of the conscious mind and at that level turned their thoughts into art. Dalí's comment indicates that he painted hallucinations. Sometimes he populated his Catalan landscape with fantastic figures, at others he painted a sitter - his wife for instance - in a fantasy background. There is often in his painting a dream-like mingling of the real and unreal or of a number of dissociated aspects of reality as in the painting where five medallion heads of Lenin are depicted on the keyboard of a piano, as though the artist had both in focus at the same time. Dalí claimed that he had trained himself to produce these visions at will, although he did not always know what he was going to see in a vision or what the meaning of the vision would be:

"Le fait que moi-même, au moment de peindre, je ne comprenne pas la signification de mes tableaux, ne veut pas dire que mes tableaux n'ont aucune signification: au contraire, leur signification est tellement profonde complexe, cohérente, involontaire qu'elle échappe à la simple analyse de l'intuition logique." (1)

Here Dalí gets to the heart of the Surrealist search. He finds truth deep inside himself, in the subconscious, and is able to find an artistic expression for it. If he cannot entirely understand it, that is not important for someone

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1. S. Dalí ; op. cit, p.15. Oui...



else may, just as a member of the audience of 'Sang d'un Poète' is invited by the poet to see in it ideas and visions which are hidden from the artist himself (1). Dalí reveals a method which has many similarities with Cocteau's since both artists use their powers of poetic intuition to draw on images from the secret reaches of the mind which Cocteau calls the poet's night. Dalí was well aware of the nature of his technique if he was sometimes less sure of the import of his results. Indeed he was as willing to stress the irrational nature of his work as he was at pains to emphasize that once his ideas had become art, they had become real and even solidly real:

"Tout mon ambition sur le plan pictorial consiste à matérialiser avec la plus impérialiste rage de précision les images de l'irrationalité concrète." (2)

He is 'impérialiste', not politically but in the sense that he is the sole ruler of the isolated world of his imagination. His art consists in making this irrational world become real. It is with this special meaning that he uses the word 'paranoia' rather than in its medical context where the victim of the illness suffers from delusions that the world is a conspiracy against him. The link between the two states is the realisation of thoughts or superimposing one's visions upon the real world and arriving at a state in which one can no longer tell the real world from the imaginary, so that both merge into the one. In the case of the mental patient the result is madness and suffering, for the artist it results in a kind of artistic mysticism closely akin to Surrealism and also to the view of poetry held by Cocteau. The power of Dalí's imagination to recapture every detail of an image stored away in his memory or in his subconscious is the cornerstone of his technique about which he boasted in a Surrealist article in which he attempted to explain his methods:

"C'est par un processus nettement paranpique qu'il a été possible d'obtenir une image double; c'est-à-dire la représentation d'un objet qui sans la moindre

1. See section on 'Sang d'un Poète' p. 268

2. S. Dalí, Oui, op.cit., p. 16.

modification figurative ou anatomique, soit en même temps la représentation d'un autre objet absolument différent, dénuée elle aussi de tout genre de déformation ou anormalité que pourrait déceler quelque arrangement." (1)

A well known example of this kind of double image is a picture which from one angle is three heads, but when rotated through ninety degrees is a picture of three African huts. In this case he is not superimposing one image on another but seeing the same picture as two totally different ones in the light of different perspectives. There is never-the-less a terrible rigour in the fidelity which he applies to his interpretation of his visions. In this insistence on artistic integrity he is drawing away again from Surrealism but he is very close to the ideas and standards of Lorca and Cocteau. The linking of different, even astonishing images in Dali's work, of different interpretations of a single image, is achieved by an intuitive process; yet once the link is established and pointed out through the art of the painter, then its reality is established:

"Il suffit que le délire de l'interprétation soit arrivé à lier le sens des images des tableaux hétérogènes qui couvrent un mur pour que déjà personne ne puisse nier l'existence réelle de ce lien." (2)

Whereas Cocteau attributes any special powers he may have to his essential nature as a poet, Dali does not make a claim to be different, as an artist, from other men but he does intimate that his personality is dominated by a psychic abnormality which enables him to have a greater perception than the ordinary person. He also prefers to believe that his intuitions are based on events in the real world, at times even future events, so that he is outside the scope of normal scientific investigation. He thus goes beyond Surrealism into a realm of unreality in which only the artist himself may achieve full perception:

"Tous les médecins sont d'accord pour reconnaître la vitesse et l'inconcevable

1. S. Dalí in 'L'Âne Pourri' in 'Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution'.

2. *ibid.*

subtilité fréquentes chez le paranoïaque lequel, se prévalant des motifs et faits d'une finesse telle qu'ils échappent aux gens normaux, atteint à des conclusions souvent impossibles à contredire ou à rejeter et qui en tout cas défient presque toujours à l'analyse psychologique." (1)

Dalí appears to recognize the thinness of the barrier between madness and genius but prefers to place himself on the side of genius. In suggesting a closeness between the two states, Dalí may once more be compared to Cocteau whose unstable temperament occasionally needed the steadying influence of opium which sometimes helped him with his creative work; Cocteau too needed just as much as Dalí the refuge and inspiration of art to exorcise the fantasies which haunted and at times tormented him. By retreating into a world of his own, Dalí was able to come to terms with the real world;

"La réalité du monde extérieur sert comme illustration et preuve, et est mise au service de la réalité de votre esprit." (2)

Both artists reached a stage where the real world and their imaginary ones impinged on the other. If Dalí needed the presence of the wife Gala, to enable him to establish the difference, Cocteau was in a more difficult situation, for as Brosse shows, the mainspring behind Cocteau's work was a difficult relationship with his mother and a vain search for identity with his absent father. (3)

Only in his very last works written under the influence of his Spanish friends did he achieve the kind of peace within himself which enabled him to accept both life and death at their face value. However he never lost his faith in the existence of a reality beyond the limit of normal comprehension to which the poet had access and which he had the power to present to his fellow men in artistic form. Only a convinced orthodox Surrealist could believe that Cocteau's search for such concealed

1. *ibid.*

2. *ibid.*

3. J. Brosse, *Orphée, Théâtre et Cinéma*, Paris, 1973, p. 126.

powers in the human mind was something other than the object of his own quest. Breton could accept Dalí, Picasso and even may have admitted Lorca. Only his deeply felt personal animosity and contempt for his personal weaknesses prevented him accepting Cocteau too.

Clearly there is a parallel between Dalí's critical paranoia whereby he systematically built up associations between 'delirious phenomena and elements'(1) for creative reasons and Rimbaud's conscious cultivation of hallucinations, of describing visions and sights and events remote in time from their actual occurrence. Higginbotham thinks that Dalí communicated something of his technique to Lorca:

"Rimbaud's formula of 'systematic derangement of the senses', borrowed by the Surrealists, was a way of seeing reality with a heightened perception of order and chaos. This formula, perhaps communicated to Lorca by Dalí, provided the poet with the language to express the profound dislocation that he felt long before he encountered New York." (2)

If Higginbotham is correct in her assertion, then Dalí must have been practising Surrealist techniques before going to Paris and before meeting Gala around 1931, although he himself attributes his paranoic method to her presence:

"...this activity can only be set into motion by a soft motor of divine origin, a living nucleus - in short, a Gala - and there is only one Gala." (3)

Lorca had already been to New York and had published his major poetical works, though not all his plays before the period in which Dalí and Gala met. We are thus left with a possibility that this Spanish group was in earlier and closer touch with Surrealism than is generally supposed which makes all the more intriguing that Cocteau should acknowledge a debt to them whereas he had so little in common with the acknowledged leader of the Surrealists in France.

One can deduce that Lorca was profoundly imbued with Surrealist principles where his relationship with Dalí was ended by the latter's departure for Paris.

1. The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí, op.cit. p. 405.

2. V. Higginbotham, Surrealism in Lorca, op.cit.

3. The Secret Life of S. Dalí. p. 405.

There is a continuous current of thought running through from Baudelaire through Rimbaud to the Surrealists which takes in both Dalí and Lorca. This same current affected Cocteau in the 1920's and returned to him in his post-war work after he made his sojourn in Spain. Maybe Ortiz had spoken of Picasso's work as well as of that of other Surrealists with Lorca. Evidently Lorca had knowledge of the work of his friends Dalí and Buñuel on 'Le Chien andalou' before going to New York and before writing his own (unpublished in Spanish) scenario 'Viaje a la Luna'. Equally Cocteau was in a position to know something about 'Le Chien andalou' even before it was released and he certainly either saw it or read reviews of it before making 'Le Sang d'un Poète'. Whilst 'L'Age d'or' and 'Le Sang d'un poète' are connected only through the accident of being simultaneously sponsored by the same backer, both may owe something to 'Le Chien Andalou' in which Dalí describes his own part:

"The scenario was written. I received a telegram from Buñuel announcing that he was coming to Figueras...Together we worked out several secondary ideas and also the title - it was going to be called 'Le Chien Andalou'.. Some time later I went to Paris myself and was able to keep in close touch with the progress of the film." (1)

The visit to which Dalí refers here was the one in which he met Picasso, the Surrealists and Gala, so that Buñuel's first film was closely bound up with the Surrealist movement and under its influence at all stages in its production. The respect which Cocteau avered for Buñuel thus places him again close to the centre of the Surrealist mode of thinking.

The escape from reality which is an inherent quality of film forms a link not only between Cocteau and Buñuel but also between Cocteau and Lorca. Yet the link is more extensively expressed in the metaphors abounding in their poetry which themselves have fascinating affiliations with Góngora. Although the subjects

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1. The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí; op.cit, p. 206.

of the two poets were taken from such widely different sources, there is nevertheless common ground in their concepts of the essential nature of poetry and in the manner of its production. Garcia Lorca's comments on Góngora (1) could almost have been written about Cocteau or even by him, so well do they at times reveal a Coctelian respect for metaphor in poetry and a desire to bring the work of the poet to the attention of new generations:

" Y Góngora ha estado solo ... con la rama novísima en las manos esperando las nuevas generaciones que recogieran su herencia objetiva y su sentido de la metáfora." (2)

In paying this tribute to a sixteenth century writer on the occasion of his tercentenary in 1927, Lorca was seeking inspiration in the work of an author unknown to the Surrealists but who none-the-less was endowed with the poetical qualities which they appreciated in Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Shakespeare or Dante. He was true to himself. It is therefore appropriate that Lorca should have made his tribute to Góngora his own 'art poétique', for almost incidentally in this essay, the ideas which emerge are the ones which Lorca endeavoured to incorporate into his own work and the principles he enunciated are the ones on which he built. In 1954 Cocteau paid his own tribute to Góngora in which he too admired the quality of the poet to transpose reality. However he does seem to have confused a Cervantes image with one of Góngora's for he wrote:

"... ..... le ciel  
Battue par les moulins espagnols d'une crise  
Une attaque de nerfs céleste d'irréel  
Irréel d'un réalisme passant les bornes

..... " (3)

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1. F. Garcia Lorca. 'La imagen poética en don Luis de Góngora.' Obras, p66.

2. *ibid.* p 69. ' And Góngora was alone- with the newest branch in his hands waiting for new generations to recognize his objective heritage and his feeling for metaphor.

3. 'Homage à Góngora', Clair-obscur, 1954. Also ; Lannes, Poètes d'aujourd'hui, *op.cit.* p176.

Nevertheless his highly characteristically Spanish image catches at the new and greater reality of the image fixed by the imagination as the essence of poetic inspiration. Cocteau's system for creating poetry can thus be compared closely with Lorca's for it germinates in the mind and takes its poetic form in a very similar way. Lorca's essay of 1930 'Imaginación, inspiración, evasión' (1), in which he explores the genesis of poetry, also sums up Cocteau's method of working. On one occasion Cocteau made a statement which could be taken to show a divergence of opinion from the view held by Lorca, but even here closer examination shows that they have a basically similar idea of the need of the poet to be completely in the power of his poetic force before magic can begin to work. It is the totality of Lorca's concept which reveals a parallel to Cocteau and not simply his concept, of 'evasion':

"L'évasion n'a rien à faire avec la poésie véritable. C'est l'invasion qui compte, c'est-à-dire que l'âme soit envahie par des termes et par des objets qui ne présentaient pas un aspect féerique ou un aspect qui permettrait d'évader." (2)

In thus opposing the idea of 'evasion' with that of 'Invasion' Cocteau goes to the heart of Lorca's own ideas, placing greater importance on the creation of the poetic thought than on its expression. The comparison serves to show that Cocteau's method of working has something in common with that of a poet who is acknowledged to be a practitioner of some forms of Surrealist expression albeit one not fully integrated into the Surrealist group, and that Cocteau himself can be shown to be inspired by a similar motive force, allowing the image, once conceived in a special state of mind, to find its own way to express itself in poetic form. A certain similarity of vocabulary also points to a direct link or to a common source for these ideas. In the case of a direct,

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1. F. Garcia Lorca, Imaginación, Inspiración, evasión; Obras, 1543.

2. Conversations avec A. Fraigneau, op.cit. p. 155.

connexion, it is unlikely to be the one referred to by Cocteau as late as 1954 in which he describes Lorca as guiding his way as a poet (1), although there is no other obvious link. In discussing the function of the poet, Lorca distinguished between imagination and inspiration yet indicated as Cocteau did, the poet's need for both the ability to conceive an idea and the capability of putting himself in the proper mental state which can be likened to the trance of the Surrealists:

"Pasa de la 'imaginación' que es un hecho del alma, a la 'inspiración', que es un estado del alma". (2)

However it is in the next stage of the creative process in which Lorca reveals how he is influenced by the ideas which the Surrealists held concerning the vital importance of the subconscious in formulating imaginative concepts. In the final process of evasion, as the work takes on its poetic form, the work conceived in the imagination takes on its new existence through Surrealistic modes of expression:

"...llevar la poesía a un último plano de pureza y sencillez.... 'Evasión' de la realidad por el camino del sueño, por el camino del subconsciente por el camino que dicte un hecho inólito que regale la inspiración". (3)

Thus the play of chance and the unknown have their part to play in the birth of a poem. Lorca here calls to mind the image described by Cocteau of Apollinaire listening to the sound waves of the subconscious and writing down the thoughts he received,<sup>(4)</sup> just as Orphée in the play listened to the talking horse (5) and in the film to the radio in the Princess' car. (6) For Lorca, poetry formed in this way has the Surrealist virtues of purity and simplicity which Cocteau too admired as well as the transformation, power, of the poetic

1. See present work p. 128...

2. F. Garcia Lorca; 'Imaginación, inspiración, evasión', Obras, p. 1545.

'(he) passes from imagination, which is a fact of the soul to inspiration which is a state of the soul'.

3. ibid. p. 1546.

'to take poetry to an ultimate level of purity and simplicity.....  
cont'd.....



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Cont'd....

'Evasion' from reality by the way of the dream, by the way of the subconscious, by the way dictated by an unexpected fact which is a gift of the inspiration.'

It is difficult to decide whether 'de la realidad' should be translated as 'of' or 'from' reality, although 'from' would be a more usual translation in the context.

4. Present work see p. ...21.....
5. J. Cocteau, Orphée 1926.
6. J. Cocteau, Orphée 1949.

metaphor to see things in a new light. In 'Opéra', written when his poetic ideas were barely formed, Cocteau reveals his debt to chance and the unknown:

"Accidents du mystère et fautes de calculs  
Célestes, j'ai profité d'eux, je l'avoue.  
Toute ma poésie est là..... (1)

Lorca also sought his poetry in the twilight zones of the subconscious mind where ideas seem to appear by accident but which may have been placed there by some outer agency seeking to present a new mystery in poetic form. Whatever the source of the ideas it is the role of the poet to work on them whilst in his special exalted state of inspiration and to transform them through the power of his imagination:

"Imaginar, descubrir, llevar nuestro poco de luz, a la penumbra viva donde existen todas las infinitas posibilidades, formas y números. La imaginación fija y da vida clara a fragmentos de la realidad invisible donde se mueve el hombre." (2)

Lorca sees poetry being fixed by the imagination in the twilight zone on the edge of the poet's night in which all poetry is concealed and conceived. In the subconscious the elements of poetry are processed to become the poem while the poet is in his state of inspiration. Finally the poem is expressed in words in the process of 'evasion'. In describing how he wrote 'L'Ange Heurtebise' Cocteau used almost the same image:

"Ce qui s'échappait de moi, ce qui s'inscrivait sur les feuilles....." (3)  
but in this case, the thing from the subconscious became a bit of reality in becoming a poem. Lorca's description of the poem itself as a crystallisation of the invisible reality in which man moves is close to the idea which Cocteau

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1. Opéra, 'Par lui-même', 1922. (edition; Livre de poche, 1967.)

2. F. Garcia Lorca, Obras; p. 1543.

'To imagine, discover, to carry our little light, to the live half shade in which all the infinite possibilities forms and numbers exist. Imagination fixes and gives clear life to fragments of invisible reality in which man moves.'

3. J. Cocteau, Journal d'un Inconnu, p. 50 op.cit.

formulated of bringing the irréel into the world of réalité (1) although the parallel between the two poets goes farther still for Lorca propounded a poetic theory which linked the idea of the subconscious with that of external inspiration, (2) describing how an artist needs a spirit to fire him at the moment of creation. The Spanish word for such a spirit is 'el duende'. In fact Lorca distinguishes three spirits, each with a distinctive role. El duende has some of the duties of Cocteau's angel in setting the poet to work and firing his enthusiasm for the task. This is the spirit, which like L'Ange Heurtebise, takes possession of the poet and gives him demoniac energy:

"Le septième jour l'ange Heurtebise devint poème et me délivra" (3)

The other two spirits come from without and compare with Cocteau's idea of external inspiration of the muse or angel. Lorca has a muse which brings the idea, the imaginación and an angel bringing inspiración, the special state of mind to the poet:

"Ángel y musa vienen de fuera; el ángel da luces y la musa da formas....

al duende hay que despertarlo en las últimas habitaciones del sangre." (4)

Cocteau described his angel performing a similar function to Lorca's three guiding spirits but also indicates the cruel compulsion which his guiding spirit drives him to work almost against his will, certainly without the poet's personal will playing any part in the matter:

"Chaque fois que je m'amuse

On ne souffre pas par lui,

Mon ange, espèce de muse,

Me replonge dans la nuit.

1. See page 101 of the present work

2. F. Garcia Lorca; Teoria y Juego del Duende, Obras, p. 36.

3. J. Cocteau, Journal d'un Inconnu, p. 52.

4. F. Garcia Lorca, Obras, p. 38. 'The angel and the muse come from without; the angel gives light and the muse gives forms.... the task of the 'duende' is to awaken them in the remotest vessels of the blood.'

.....

Cet ange, ce monstre informe,  
 Ne dort jamais un moment  
 Et non plus il ne m'informe  
 De quoi je suis l'instrument. " (1)

Whereas Cocteau dwells on the violence of his muse and seems almost to regret its hold over him, Lorca indicates his debt to the spirits and appears to welcome their appearance in his life. In the same poem however, Cocteau shows that his resentment is vain, that he is a poet and must accept the presence of his angel:

"Je me sens mal partout, sauf en tes bras tenu." (2)

Both poets thus acknowledge a kind of spirituality in which the subconscious becomes almost a part of the soul in which unknown life forces from another universe can be encountered and where time and space are without meaning. This metaphysical viewpoint is a long way from the determination of the Surrealists to penetrate objective reality by the exercise of the special powers of the mind which they deemed to exist in the subconscious. The Spanish poet explains the role of the muse more fully, how it inspires and even provides ideas taking as an example a poet already quoted by Cocteau:

"Los poetas de musa oyen voces y no saben dónde, pero son de la musa que los alienta y a veces se los merienda. Como en el caso de Apollinaire, gran poeta destruida por la horrible musa con que lo pintó el divino angélico Rousseau."  
 (3)

Clearly, he is here referring to Le Douanier Rousseau's well known painting of Apollinaire and Marie Laurencin, called 'Le Poète et sa muse'. Although he had

1. J. Cocteau; Plain-Échant (1922) in Livre de Poche 'Opéra' opcit p. 120,

2. ibid. p. 141.

3. F. Garcia Lorca; Obras p. 36. 'Poets of muses hear voices and they do not know from where, but they are from the muse which feeds them and at times makes a meal of them herself. As in the case of Apollinaire, a great poet destroyed by the horrible muse with whom the divine angelic Rousseau painted him.'

obviously seen at least a copy of the painting, it would seem that he was not too well acquainted with the work of Apollinaire or the part which Marie Laurencin played in it. He may even not have realised that the 'muse' was the poet's current mistress, on the other hand he may feel that love of a woman destroys inspiration. By the reference he indicates that he was, like Cocteau, aware of events and personalities in France including some of those artists and writers who may be referred to as harbingers of Surrealism.

Poetry is thus the child of the muse, born in the subconscious and brought painfully to light by the poet's arts:

'La hija directa de la imaginación es la metáfora, nascida a veces al golpe rápido de la intuición, alumbrada por la lente angustia del presentimiento".(1)

Lorca's brilliant series of contrasting, living images, indicate the origin of his work in the subconscious and the notion that they lie long before being crystalised into poetry is shared by Cocteau who hoped to create poetry by accumulating images from his experience and allowing in due course a spontaneous recreation, a new vision as different images become strangely juxtaposed:

"Ainsi se formera, peu à peu, un amalgame, un magasin de rapports inattendus".  
(2)

The metaphor is the new reality formed into poetry in the poet's 'night' where it waits to be converted into poetry, in the case of Lorca through the imagination but in Cocteau more through those electric waves which the muses bring with them and through which they communicate to the poet:

"Un orage, d'ailleurs, avec elles habite  
une haute cité.

Les voilà, les voilà! Dans mon âme crépète

Leur électricité." (3)

1. F. Garcia Lorca; Obras p. 1543. 'The direct child of the imagination is the metaphor, born at times in the rapid heat of intuition, illuminated by the slow agony of premonition.'
2. J. Cocteau, Le Rappel à L'Ordre, op.cit. p. 210 (Le Secret Professionnel).
3. J. Cocteau, Plain-Chant, in Livre de Poche Opéra, op.cit. p. 151.

Both Cocteau and Lorca derive their poetry from their muse. Such a concept which presupposes the existence of agencies exterior to the human mind are opposed to the spirit of Surrealism which would deny the existence of such agencies but seek to achieve new creation by the development of the unused potential of the mind itself. However in a poetic sense, the difference is less than might appear for the concept of the muse is a brilliant personification, a poetic image, of the subconscious, of the powers which the Surrealists themselves sought. Not even the poet can say whether his guiding spirits are real or whether they are figments of his imagination. For him the subconscious has become<sup>o</sup> real that his perception reaches to visions more real and more intense than the normally perceived reality around him. In this respect Cocteau and Lorca were true heirs to the heritage of Baudelaire and Rimbaud. The latter knew they were seeing visions, dreams and hallucinations; the former had reached a point where the real and unreal were neither separable nor distinguishable, which was an objective of the Surrealists and even a definition of the surreal. Perception on this plane has its own logic, a poetic logic which is capable of the strangest transformations but which are entirely consistent within their own universe;

"Así como la imaginación poetica tiene una lógica humana, la inspiración poetica tiene una lógica poetica." (1)

The idea lies in the imagination and is capable only of being envisaged in ordinary terms until in that special trance-like, electric state of poetic inspiration, the concept is capable of poetic transformation. Possibly Lorca had his own notion of the meaning of 'poetic logic' as being synonymous with the preservation of a logical poetic form but in the instance quoted here he is clearly thinking in terms of a particular type and style of perception in which the poetic mind is more finely attuned than the ordinary.

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1. F. Garcia Lorca, Obras p. 1546.

"Just as poetic imagination has a human logic, poetic inspiration has a poetic logic."

As an example of what Lorca understood by the arresting and beautiful power of the poetic image he quoted one of Gongora's metaphors in which the abstract suddenly becomes totally visible and real:

"Las horas ya de números vestidos". (1)

(The hours now in numbers clad) is the poet's way of describing a clock face which is commensurate with Cocteau's vision of the power of a poetic image:

"Un coup de baguette fait revivre le lieu commun.....L'espace d'un éclair, nous VOYONS un chien, un fiacre, une maison, POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS." (2)

The imagination takes an idea from the muse in purely human terms but it requires the special poetic power of Lorca's angel to turn it into the metaphorical reality that is poetry. In Cocteau's case, the muses not only bring the idea, but provide him with his electrifying poetic power to transform it into a new image. All he has to do is to allow himself to enter a poetic state of reverie. This poetic logic, which Dubourg called 'poetic necessity' (3) is apparent throughout Cocteau's work; Belle's necklace became a rope in the hands of her sister because it reflected the nature of the one who was holding it just as the Bête's enchanted mirror showed a reflection of one sister as a monkey and the other as an ugly old woman (4).

Similarly, in 'La Machine Infernale' (5) the Sphinx had to be sure that Oedipe could answer her riddle, because the success of the infernal machine of the Gods in destroying Oedipe and his family turned on encouraging his pride by granting him enough success to allow him to fulfill the prophecies that he would murder his father and marry his mother. He had already unwittingly done the one crime and was about to allow himself to be precipitated into the trap of committing the

1. F. Garcia Lorca; Obras p. 76.

2. J. Cocteau, Le Rappel à l'Ordre (Le Secret Professionnel), P. 215.

3. Pierre Dubourg; Dramaturgie de Jean Cocteau, Grasset, Paris, 1954. title of chapter on 'La Machine Infernale'; 'La Machine Infernale ou la nécessité... du théâtre'. See also the introductory section; 'La Nécessité...cette rigueur

4 dans l'action qui lui fait choisir toujours l'essentiel et l'utile.'  
La Belle et la Bête, Cocteau film. op.cit.

5. J. Cocteau, La Machine Infernale, Act 2. op.cit.

second one. Moreover the Sphinx was bivalent; she had human weaknesses to accompany her human disguise. Only her godly subconscious was implacable and so drove her to the action which would eventually destroy Oedipe. By falling in love with him and having sufficient mercy to whisper to him the answer to the riddle, she played her own part in the working of the machine of the Gods. The Classical situation of tragedy in which an irredeemable sin or crime already committed casts a shadow over the whole work is thus highly suited to Cocteau's style of drama. In works such as 'Orphée' or 'La Machine Infernale' the situation of inevitability has to be created during the play itself and has to carry the action forward although it is not in dispute that Orphée, carried onward by his own nature, had no more choice in his fate than Antigone. Oedipe or Renaud and Armide who all figure in Cocteau's best known works. In 'l'Aigle à deux têtes' the poetic logic is the attraction of opposites in a fatal love whereas in 'Belle et la Bête', the dual nature of man and beast in Bête cannot be repressed before the enchantment is lifted. The gentle loving nature of Belle herself leads inevitably to the lifting of the enchantment which is the logical outcome of the story. Cocteau's works derive an inner dynamism from the necessity which the characters feel to pursue their natural impulses to their logical conclusions; but not even the poet can know if those impulses are innate or if they are whispered to him by spirits from an unknown universe.

That there is a measure of confusion in Cocteau's mind on the matter of the source of his poetry is shown. In his introduction to 'Orphée' he makes a statement which apparently runs counter to much of what he has said elsewhere:

"On ne devrait pas dire inspiration mais expiration. Ce qu'on nomme l'inspiration vient de nous, de notre nuit et non du dehors, d'une autre nuit soi-disant divine. C'est lorsque 'Orphée renonce à son propre message et accepte de recevoir des messages de l'extérieur que tout se gâte." (1)

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1. J. Cocteau, Orphée, (1926) introduction, op.cit. Compare and contrast with page 155 and 156.



Here Cocteau is stating a belief that poetry is in the subconscious waiting for that special moment in which the poet can exercise his power of access to the thoughts lying deep within his being. However he does not deny that messages may come from without; he does suggest that they are unlikely to be true poetry. The statement is made at a time when the orthodox Surrealists were in full cry and <sup>it</sup> may be a case of the poet pandering a little to them. This is unlikely to be so for Cocteau was not the man to alter his own artistic views to suit a prevailing literary fashion. One might also explain this apparent aberration by noting that the affirmation was made at a quite different time from the poet's other statements and with reference to a specific work. In view of the general consistency of his ideas over the years it would be unwise to do so. Moreover there is a certain parallel with the idea from 'Le Secret Professionnel';

"il accumulera en lui des visions...." (1)

From the reference to the 'message' of Orphée it would seem that Cocteau is referring to an idea when he uses the word 'inspiration' and not a state of mind as was the case with Lorca. Cocteau's term for the state of mind was 'invasion' (2). One is left with the thought that Cocteau saw himself driven to work by his muse, his 'ange', but that poems such as 'Heurtebise' or works like 'Orphée', 'Antigone', 'La Machine Infernale', 'Les Enfants Terribles' are the forming into reality of thoughts deeply concealed in the subconscious, that before being works of art, they are abstractions already in existence in his mind. If this is so, Cocteau's achievement as a Surrealist is on a par not only with that of Lorca, but he is also to be considered along with Eluard, Aragon, Desnos and the rest of Breton's group. If his Orphée series shows that he has a belief in a life after or beyond this one, his other works show that the occasions

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1. J. Cocteau, Le Rappel à l'ordre, op.cit. p. 210,

2. See p. 155 and 156, 280

when this other universe impinges on our own are but rare and fleeting. For the most part the poet reveals to the rest of mankind a beauty which they could see if they had only the vision of the poet.

ii. MOON SYMBOLISM IN THE  
SUBCONSCIOUS

THE VIEWPOINTS OF LORCA AND  
COCTEAU.

Sometimes in Cocteau's poetry, the exploitation of the subconscious appears deliberate. During the tribunal scene of 'Le Testament d'Orphée' there is a short witty exchange between the Princesse and Heurtebise in which Cocteau makes use of the Freudian slip, the analytical method which consists of examining mistakes and slips of the tongue to see if they reveal any subconscious thoughts crowding out the conscious:

"La Princesse: Vous perdez la tête!

Heurtebise: Pardon. Il m'arrive aussi d'être dans la lune.

La Princesse: Je vous conseille de ne pas plaisanter sottement et  
Sourdement avec les choses qui risquent d'éclairer les  
hommes sur la vanité de leurs entreprises. (1)

In this instance the wild comment of Heurtebise attracts a rebuke. The rebuke shows that Cocteau treats the question of the moon seriously and that he connects it with the workings of fate, for both the Princesse and Heurtebise are agents of death. Thus a comment about the moon, prefaced by a decapitation comment, serves as a pointer to some of the poet's most intimate pre-occupations with death and the futility of human life when contrasted with the vaster scope given to the unknown powers which control it. The Princesse demonstrates her awareness of the potential of the unguarded comment of Heurtebise to throw light upon the secrets which the dark powers of the mind prefer not to reveal. She thus hints that those dark powers have a common identity with those unknown controlling forces of destiny, which should not be revealed to human intelligence. At this point her role is more than that of the death of 'Orphée' which was hers in the earlier film but here she represents the vigilant force of the poet's subconscious doing her best to thwart his intuitive penetration of her secrets.

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1. From 'Le Testament d'Orphée': quoted in Gilson, Jean Cocteau, op.cit, p. 135.

Heurtebise's flippant reference to being 'dans la lune' is a reminder that Orphée was a priest of the Sun and that in the realm of Death, the poet is out of his true element. The poet's messages from that other realm come from his 'nuit' in which illumination is by moonlight. The images he presents in his waking moments tend therefore to be shadowy ones, silhouettes showing only the essential outlines of the truth and much of it still veiled in mystery.

Essentially this is the case in 'L'aigle à deux têtes' in which the main characters are 'deux idées qui s'affrontent' (1). The mystery of the final scene is an enigma known only to those who have been present at the unfolding of the drama. The other witnesses have disappeared - and even they did not know the whole truth. The play is presented on a level of unreality on which only the principal outlines are clear. The details remain obscured in the shadows (2).

Moonlight in Cocteau appears mysteriously linked with fate and darkness as a counterbalance to Sunlight and the life-force. This is not to presuppose a moral judgement in the balance of light and shade, life and death, order and disorder; for evil and virtue are strangely absent qualities in Cocteau's drama, death being seen as inevitable and merely as the opposite face of the mirror from life. The morality of Oedipe is scarcely questioned: his fate is to be involved as an unnatural marriage, as a punishment for his parent's efforts to penetrate too far into divine mysteries. If any morality is questioned it is that of the Gods, which is also the case of Orphée's love affair with the Princesse:

"C'est justement par la trahison du Sphinx que je souligne combien le drame reste extérieur à Oedipe dans l'idée grecque, idée que je développe dans Orphée. Les deux soufflent à la Mort d'Orphée de se perdre pour rendre Orphée immortel et pour le priver de sa muse!"(3)

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1. Preface to 'L'Aigle à deux têtes'.

2. "La psychologie proprement dite y céderait la place à une psychologie héroïque ou héraldique", from 'La Difficulté d'Être', op.cit. p. 179.

3. 'Journal d'un inconnu', p. 42. op.cit.

Fate, the Gods, the dark face of the mirror are part of the mythology of the subconscious which the poet develops and underlines in the unreal qualities of his poetry. In preserving the rigour and form of his classical models, he evades the need to resort to Surrealist methods of reaching the subconscious for he intuitively perceives that the mythology, especially of the Greeks, is the subconscious in a raw state, as certain of the Surrealists saw that a new view of certain everyday manufactured articles constitutes a new view of art, ready made, which still incorporates all the artistic qualities of the imagination without the dress which accompanied the poetical phrases of automatic writing.

The incident in the tribunal scene of 'Le Testament' is a moment of surprise in which the unreal for an instant obtrudes into the level of the reality of the film. This presentation from outside the normal span of the conscious is surrealistic but the aspect of Cocteau's mysticism which it reveals is far from surrealistic being directly involved with exterior forces and communication with other worlds.

Other examples in Cocteau's work of moonlight or references to the moon, prefigure events in which the supernatural plays an important part. The function of the moon as a background to tragedy appears clearly in 'La Machine Infernale':

"Un lieu désert, sur une éminence que domine Thèbes, au clair de lune." (1)

The persistence of moonlight on scenes in which man confronts the supernatural is significant, although Cocteau often claimed to abjure the use of symbols. Nevertheless, in looking back over some of his film work, he accepted that there were symbols and added that it was up to the audience to interpret them after their own fashion.(2)

1. 'La Machine Infernale', op.cit. Stage direction introducing Act 2.

2. See section on 'Sang d'un Poète'.

In a story which may be seen as a satire on the classical Freudian ideas of dreams and the subconscious, where the desires of the subconscious assume a terrible urgent reality greater than that of the conscious, Cocteau uses a background of moonlight to interpret the most terrible parts of his narrative. He describes the ordinary garden transformed into something awesome by the light of the moon:

"La lune anesthésiait ce jardin. Sa familiarité, sa simplicité de brave jardin devenait une stupeur méchante.....à voir ce jardin, on le sentait au bord de quelque mauvais coup." (1)

A feeling of foreboding is explicit in this incident. Such a building up of atmosphere preceding a violent climax is a feature of the style of some of the best short story writers, of which H.G. Wells and E.A. Poe were noted exponents. Cocteau's powerful imagery here contributes to the intensity of the effect, while the medical terminology helps to remind the reader that a serious therapeutic method is involved in the story. Emotional overtones from the word 'stupeur' serve as a reminder that one is dealing with the borderline between sanity and insanity, conscious and subconscious here embroiled in conflict. The use of such words is thrown into stark contrast by the moonlight and the everyday homely image of the garden in its more normal setting. All these elements are subtly blended by the poet, so that individually some of them reach the reader's subconscious, while the whole picture is presented in a light of cruel reality. Intensity of feeling is heightened in the following page when one realises that it is the reality itself which is terrible. Hidden behind the reality is a psychological truth which is<sup>no</sup> less dreadful than the apparent madness of the girl:

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1. Journal d'un inconnu, p. 61 et seq. op.cit; Chapter entitled, 'De l'innocence criminelle...une histoire freudienne.'

"La lune ne transformait pas les choux en autre chose de terrible. Pour la petite fille le terrible était qu'ils fussent des choux. Elle les reconnaissait à merveille sculptés et magnifiés par la lune." (1)

The image of the moon implies not only ill-omen and the crossing into the forbidden zone of the mysterious but also conveys the more banal image of the madness of the cold, determined, vicious, terrified little girl about to commit the murder of a bed of cabbages, because she had been lead to think that that was where her new little brother would come from.

This story reveals how Cocteau had arrived at an extremely accurate knowledge of the workings of Freudian psychology. Only the ironic twist at the end of his story carries a hint that Cocteau felt that Freud had failed to penetrate a mystery which man could never more than partly comprehend.

Moonlight, however, is not always a question of mystery or atmosphere: it illuminated one of the more horrid episodes of his life - his spell at Nieuport during the war, with the marines. Self-disgust exemplified in Cocteau's description of this episode, must be an unpleasant feeling for such a narcissistic person as Cocteau. Yet the cause of his emotion appears not so much that he was flirting with death, but that he was flirting with the death of others. The role of the Princesse in love with Orphée suggests that the poet may court only his own death:

"J'ai quitté la guerre lorsque j'ai compris, une nuit à Nieuport, que je m'amusais. Cela me dégoûte. J'avais oublié la haine, la justice, et autres balançoires. Je me laissais porter par les amitiés, les dangers, les surprises, un séjour dans la lune....."(2)

1. *ibid*, p. 64.

2. *Opium*, *op.cit* p. 113.



The scene at Nieuport is not unlike the zone of half-death which the poet re-created for the film of 'Orphée' thirty years later. Like Nieuport it is a zone of ill-omen, the kingdom of the moon. In breaking away from what he regarded as an immoral situation at Nieuport, the poet did precisely what Orphée did; he returned to the realm of the living. Yet the break was a surrealist poetical action in that it was an act of revolt, not only against society, but as Cocteau described it, against his own inclination and nature. However, in withdrawing from a zone which was later to feature as poetry, his action was a kind of surrealism in reverse, coming back through the mirror into the world of men and leaving behind him his nuit of terror, fear, death; the subconscious. This instance of lunar influence differs from others in his work in that the poet is taking an incident from his own life. Elsewhere he deals in literary creations and myths. The difference is important for in the latter field, through exercising the imagination he is able to return to and explore the subconscious which at Nieuport he had experienced physically. The point at which subconscious and conscious meet and blend into each other is itself blurred by the strange perspectives of the imagination and of time.

A further reflection of Cocteau's war experiences appears in Le Requiem written at the very end of his life. The poet takes a Dantesque or Orphistic journey through a hell which could be a further re-creation of the front in Flanders as he lies convalescing from a serious illness, having cheated death once more. Moonlight is mentioned as part of the atmosphere in the prelude to his descent:

"Sous les maléfices d'un ciel  
Orné de nombreuses lunes." (1)

Once again there is the significance of imminent contact with the supernatural in a poem written when the poet himself is still close under death's shadow.

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1. 'Le Requiem', op.cit p. 82.

The moon plays a more important part in 'La Belle et la Bête' than is generally the case in others of Cocteau's works. It is shining when the merchant arrives at Bête's enchanted castle, when Belle leaves him to go to the castle and when she arrives. Moon-light illuminates Belle's walk with Bête in the park and the same in which she cups water in her hand for him to drink. After Bête has been hunting he returns to the château to Belle's room which is bathed in moonlight. Ludovic and Avenant leave home for the château on Magnifique, Bête's enchanted horse, by the light of the moon. The moon shines on Belle's return to the château and sheds its beams over her attempt to revive Bête whom she finds near to death. It still shines as she declares her love and brings about the magical transformation as the spell is broken. There is a distinct difference between these scenes and the ones which take place at night. Most of the moonlight scenes precede someone falling under the power of Bête's spell. The three exceptions are notable; when Belle gives Bête a drink from the spring, when she attempts to revive Bête after her late return from her visit home and <sup>when</sup> she declares her love for Bête. Belle is already under the spell when Bête comes in from hunting but he is also in the power of her beauty and is becoming more ashamed of his animal nature.

These incidents all mark stages in the breaking of the spell as Belle matures, growing away from dependence on her father and gradually coming to love Bête. The breaking of the spell also coincides with Avenant's falling under it, the cutting from one scene to the other in the film being particularly striking. However the Prince who rises up is another poetical incarnation of Avenant, so in a dream world Belle has fixed her love upon the one who in her subconscious had been her beast, a symbol of her animality, the animus of Jung.

We are at the heart of the mystery in the scenes in which the night is dark and the moon is absent. For this reason it is night when Belle returns from her visit home and in the scene of Belle with the Prince. The implication of night

when the sisters steal the golden key is that this incident too is deep in the mystery whether they wish it so or not. Inside the château is a darkness which is an integral part of the same impenetrable mystery. In striking contrast are the scenes of broad daylight and sunshine of most of the scenes at the merchant's house, the realm of everyday reality. Thus we are obliged to consider anew the implications of the merchant's departure from the port as the storm raged and the merchant entered the realm of the mysteries by undertaking his journey which lead him through the misty forest to the moonlit château. All the prelude of the story depicts Fate gradually and relentlessly turning the steps of the merchant towards the chateau, wherein grew the rose, the theft of which was the sign that Fate had closed the trap.

Most strange and most important is that the mystery is not frightening in itself and is treated perfectly naturally by the characters concerned. The everyday nature of the magic makes it grow in wonder; it is to be accepted but cannot be understood.

"La Belle et la Bête" viewed in a psychoanalytical light, has something in common with the attitudes to death and poetry, which Cocteau exploits in 'La Corrida du Premier Mai'. Moreover Carlos Feal Deibe (1) shows that Lorca's attitude to death springs from deep personal disturbance which is compatible with the obsessions of Cocteau. The Beast in his ugliness is an emissary of death. Those who steal the beauty of the rose are in his power; yet Belle herself personifies Beauty in full bloom. She asked her father to bring the flower. In so doing she placed her father in the power of Bête and could only bring him back by sacrificing herself. Belle thus performs a role analogous to that of Orphée in his quest of Eurydice. As a heroine, full of womanly power Belle is able to enslave the source of the power and beauty of the rose. Orphée needed the help

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1. Carlos Feal Deibe, Eros y Lorca, Barcelona, 1973.

of the Gods to achieve even partial success. Belle's self-sacrifice is no sacrifice at all because for Cocteau, beauty is an ally of death. As soon as she came to the château, Bête was her creature: he surrendered the symbols of his power to her. The purpose of the spell was not to ensnare Belle, but to encompass the destruction of the merchant and of Ludovic. The father was driven into the snare by his misfortunes, the storm and Belle. If the merchant could not be destroyed through Belle's sacrifice, he would die of grief at the loss of his daughter. The secondary object of the spell was to destroy Ludovic and Avenant, who had already fallen under the charm of Belle's beauty. Their resolution was strengthened by her story and the greed of her sisters whilst their fears were also allayed; so that they placed themselves easily within the power of Bête. At that point the unexpected occurred as Belle declared her love for Bête and broke the spell, just as he was on the point of death. At that moment Avenant was pierced by the shaft of Diana, to be reincarnated as the Prince released from the spell. On one plane this sudden change represents the subconscious love of Belle for Avenant becoming real as her personality matures and she is able to leave her brother and sisters in their own world of reality to enter the world of love and the subconscious, which has suddenly become real to her, with her Prince. On another plane the Gods are bound to release Belle, her father and the Prince. The fate of Ludovic remains unknown for he belongs to the normality of the everyday world which is of no further concern to the poet. Having played their part the two sisters also cease to be of interest. They had enticed Belle back to the real world, thus causing Bete to wither away and die, and they had encouraged Avenant and Ludovic in their enterprise of seeking the treasure of Bête, which was guarded by the Gods. The fatal attraction of Beauty and the consuming power of the female to win even the unknown to her cause are both demonstrated. So is the power of fate to relent, sure of its eventual victory. Sacrifice, purity and love bring the unexpected reward of breaking the spell, but the reward is the privilege of a special magical

realm which only the chosen may enter. If Belle's initial pledge of herself placed her in the position of Orphée in search of Eurydice the subsequent development of her relationship with Bête and the eventual descent into the unknown with the Bête-Prince-Avenant, successive incarnations of the poet, along with her father all place her in a position more like that of Orphée's Princesse. Just as in 'Le Testament d'Orphée' the hibiscus flower was a measure of the poet's destiny (1) so in 'Belle et la Bête' was the rose the symbol of Belle's entry into the dream world of the mysterious 'nuit' of the poet. As representative of 'Le Sexe surnaturel de la beauté', Belle has the power of a Dargelos and is able to overcome completely the enchanted ugliness of Bête. His moral beauty is symbolised in the rose itself which he could not allow to be stolen without payment in kind. The poetical nature of Belle thus reveals her as an anima figure of the poet, whilst Bête, twice reincarnate in the film, derives from the phoenix nature of the poet himself. When the shaft of Diana killed Avenant, it forced a direct link between the multiple fates of the poet in 'Le Sang d'un Poète' and his death from Diana's spear, subsequently to be reborn in his world of poetry in 'Le Testament d'Orphée'. There is a touching, possessive link between Belle and her father which reflects the relationship between Cocteau and his own parents, particularly the search for his absent father which Brosse mentions in the conclusion of his edition of Orphée:

"Son père - l'Inspirateur - l'absent dont toute sa vie, il chercha à travers ses amis la présence." (2)

If, in 'La Belle et la Bête' the play of light and shade does not carry the more traditional connotation of good and evil, but rather indicates an opposition between conscious and subconscious, life and death, the known world

1. See page.....127...

2. J. Cocteau, 'Orphée, théâtre et cinéma', ULB/Bordas, Paris, 1973  
(ed J. Brosse.) p. 126.

and the unknown, the same is true elsewhere in Cocteau, for example in the Orphee film where the 'earth scenes' are in the light and the 'zone' scenes are in subdued light. This tendency is explicit in 'Antigone' (1), his first play in the Greek tradition. When the chorus cries out:

"Toi couronné de mille noms: Bacchus! habitant de Thèbes, la métropole de Bacchus, tu fais danser les étoiles et chanter la nuit" (2)

the appeal is to the God of Fertility and Drama who enters into possession of his worshippers, enabling them to see into their night. It is a joyful cry yet follows Tirésias' prophecy of the death of Hémon and precedes the moment at which Créon agrees to save Antigone. The victory of the world of darkness is assured for the destiny of Créon is now rapidly being overtaken by events. In the closing lines of the play Cocteau reaffirms his belief in exterior fate and in the malice of the Gods, proving once again that his faith in the Gods and the supernatural means more to him than a belief in materialism and the powers of the subconscious:

"Il faut craindre d'injurier les dieux" (3)

In Cocteau's treatment of the moon, where death and femininity are linked with storms and occasionally with a cycle of creativity, a death and rebirth, there are points at which his ideas are extremely close to Lorca's. In 'Thamar and Amnon' the concluding poem of Lorca's 'Romancero Gitano' collection of 1927. There appears the couplet in the stanza before the rape of Thamar: (4)

"La luna gira en el cielo  
sobre las tierras sin agua". (5)

1. J. Cocteau, Antigone, 1922.
2. *ibid.* p. 47 (Grasset).
3. *ibid.* page 49 (Concluding words of the play).
4. M. Auclair, Enfances et Mort de Garcia Lorca, Paris, 1968.
5. 'The moon turns in the sky over the waterless earth'.

The stark, barren moonlight is a witness to the crime, shining on the hostile land over which the criminal would take his flight. By appearing to throw a malevolent light on the scene, the moon here has a function very like that in Cocteau's story in 'Journal d'un Inconnu' (1) and appears as the baleful glare of the Gods watching a mortal bring about his own fate but entering illicitly into a union with the Lady of Death. However in Jung's vision Ammon is full of self love, portrayed in a violent passion for his own anima figure in the personality of his sister, whereas a Freudian interpretation is of a criminal subconscious urge to a passion turned towards those closest to himself. In this sense Lorca came very close to the theme of Oedipus which so dominates Cocteau's thinking. From the parallel with Lorca there emerges the idea of a connexion at the subconscious level between Cocteau's use of the Oedipus myth and the appearance in certain of his works of close brother-sister relationships. Thus Paul and Elizabeth of 'Les Enfants Terribles' represent an aspect of the relationship between Oedipe and Jocaste whilst the concern of Antigone for the fate of her brother's soul reflects the continuing strength of the tie of mother-love, the feeling of guilt at the sinful conception of the family of Oedipe prolonged into the new generation and associated with ideas of expiation by suffering and purity through pain which restores the natural order and assuages the wrath of the Gods.

Deibe's study of Lorca (2) with its psychoanalytical approach which resembles that of Bachelard (3) shows that the significance of the moon in Lorca's case is even greater than in Cocteau's. He is able to associate Lorca's treatment of the moon with sexual symbolism which in Lorca's poetry is not

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1. See p. 170 - 171.
  2. C.F. Deibe. op.cit.
  3. G. Bachelard, La Psychanalyse du feu.

difficult to establish:

"La presencia de la luna es obsesiva en la obra de Lorca: Su simbolismo es complejo pero presidiendolo está para mí, la significación de la luna como figura materna."

La luna vino a la fragua  
 Con su polisión de nardos  
 El niño la mira, mira  
 El niño la está mirando." (1)

Psychoanalysts used to believe that symbols in the subconscious have the same meaning for everyone, that the collective unconscious of Jung is a reality, although the point is now in dispute. However if they were correct, then some of Deibe's observations on Lorca are also applicable to Cocteau and to assume that this is the case takes one into some fascinating byways of the poet's mind. Deibe links Lorca's treatment of the moon with death and hence associates death with femininity. The psychoanalytical method enables him to compare the moon's other manifestations of rain and the tides, the monthly cycle of birth and rebirth, and death and femininity and with the poet's attitudes to the moon. Lorca's obsessions appear to have lead him to seek death in an identification with love, thus accounting for his fondness for the bullfight as well as the fatal nature of some of the voluptuous aspects of his work. It may even explain why he went home to Nationalist held Granada at the beginning of the Civil War rather than taking advantage of opportunities to escape to Cuba:

"Para Lorca, seducción por la mujer y muerte son dos aspectos de lo mismo."(2)

1. Eros y Lorca, op.cit. p. 129. The quotation from Lorca is from the 'Romance de la luna' in Obras completas p. 353. from the Romancero Gitano. 'The presence of the moon is an obsession in Lorca's work. Its symbolism is complex but most important for me is the role of the moon as a maternal figure.'  
 The moon came to the forge/with her bustle of nard/.The boy looks at her/he is looking at her).
2. Eros y Lorca, op.cit. p. 130. 'For Lorca, seduction by the woman and death are two aspects of the same thing'.



A similar attitude can be found in Cocteau, in 'Orphée', 'La Machine Infernale' 'L'Aigle à deux têtes' and 'Bacchus'. The lover of Orphée is the Princess Death herself so that in this play which antedates any possible influence by Lorca on Cocteau, the parallel lines of thought of the two poets are already well developed. In 'La Machine Infernale' the Princess is replaced by the Sphinx who fulfills a role of destroying angel, yet falls in love with Oedipe and binds him tightly to herself before releasing him and taking a savage joy as Anubis reveals the fate to which she is sending him. Even at this stage the theme is not exhausted for in marrying Jocaste, Oedipe enters the arms of death. The fate of Oedipe in thus confronting destiny and the Gods bears a resemblance to that of Orphée who also plunged into his own origins and destiny, seeking to defy time by obliging it to return Eurydice to him. In the film version his success was more complete than in the play for film is a medium which permits such tricks with time. However one may also consider that the poet was coming to terms in the later version of 'Orphée' with the contradictions between his muse and his destiny, in a way which was closed to him in the earlier play. Jacques Brosse considers that the Princesse in both versions represents the influence of the poet's mother on his life and her attitude to his work, the difference being explained by her death shortly before the making of the film.(1)

In "L'aigle à deux têtes" the confrontation of two opposing natures personified in the characters of Stanislas and the Queen, leads in a Lorca-like manner to the seduction of Stanislas and to the death of both.

Even in Cocteau's last play, 'Bacchus', the theme of the fatal nature of a woman's attraction is not entirely left alone, for Christine plays an important part in forming the attitudes in Hans which lead to his death.

Deibe shows that in Lorca's case the conflict between man and woman is often

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1. J. Brosse, Cocteau: Orphée, théâtre et Cinéma, Paris, 1973. op.cit. p.124-126.

expressed in terms of a mother-child relationship:

"El niño (hombre visto en su estado de indefension, como el hijo, sin poder frente a la mujer, la madre) amenaza a la luna con los gitanos, es decir, la virilidad, el hombre adulto. Frente a ellos, el maleficio lunar se quebrará, resultará el poder del hombre." (1)

In considering the powerlessness of the child vis-à-vis the mother, we are impelled to think of the ubiquitous Christian image of the Madonna and Child, with the moon-like halos, and hence of Cocteau's treatment of Oedipe, torn between the power of the Sphinx and Jocaste in her dual roles of protectress and devourer, creator and destroyer. In this sense the Sphinx is a mother figure in an environment which is on a cosmic scale as well as on a dream one; for the Sphinx is an agent of divine power, as well as a driving force in Oedipe's subconscious, whereas Jocaste is very much a creature of the real world whose destiny was to be swallowed up by the powers of the imaginary and the subconscious, released by the criminal action of Oedipe, willed in him by the Gods in their desire for vengeance. Cocteau thus differs from Lorca in that he is unable to represent the forces of masculinity as being victorious over the consuming power of the woman. Although in childhood, Oedipe was defenceless, in manhood he grew to dominate, and yet he was deceived, for he was attracted to and destroyed by that same maternal force which created him. However that force itself was a cosmic one, directed by the Gods in those moments when they deigned to take an interest in the affairs of men. The theme of the fatal influence of the female is a mainspring of Cocteau's novel, 'Les Enfants Terribles' (1929), (2) where Elisabeth plays a role which is maternal as well as sisterly and in which the fierce obsessive jealousy which characterises her is a trait found in some mothers,

1. Eros y Lorca, op. cit p. 130. 'The child (man seen in his defenceless state, like the son, powerless before the woman, the mother) threatens the moon with the gypsies, that is to say with the virility of the adult man. In front of them, the evil power of the moon will break down, the power of the male will triumph.
2. J. Cocteau, Les Enfants Terribles, Paris, 1929.

possibly in Mme. Cocteau herself; it is this possessive jealousy which destroys in the end both Paul and Elisabeth. The manner in which Cocteau's works, such as 'Les Enfants Terribles', 'les Parents Terribles', (1) 'L'Aigle à Deux Têtes'(2) tend to function within a very limited and closed space into which only the initiated may penetrate, in itself suggests that the poet is unveiling in an obscure way some of the secrets of his subconscious so that these works take on an intensely personal nature, perhaps his own anguish. The poet looks forward to death as a release from his struggles and an integration into the divinely controlled universe of which he already feels that he is a part. Deibe himself takes his case further by saying that in the subconscious, the moon is linked with rain and death (3) emphasizing his point by taking examples from the Rig Veda and the Aitareya Brâhmana quoted by Mircea Eliade.(4):

"La trabazón de motivos sube de punto al advertir el lazo que une a la luna con la lluvia y la muerte: 'et parce qu'elles sont soumises aux rythmes (pluie, marée), et parce qu'elles sont germinatives, les eaux sont commandées par la lune. La lune est dans les eaux (Rig Veda 1.105,1.) et de la lune vient la pluie (Aitareya Brâhmana viii.28.15.) tels sont les deux leitmotifs de la spéculation indienne! Para la religiosidad primitiva y arcaica la luna contiene en sí la muerte, la sufre y la trasciende. Luna y muerte son inseparables; la luna es su dueño y su símbolo." (5)

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1. Les Parents Terribles. op.cit.

2. L'Aigle à Deux Têtes. op.cit.

3. Eros y Lorca. op.cit p. 139.

4. Mircea Eliade; Traité de l'histoire des religions; Paris 1968. p.41

5. Deibe; op.cit p. 139 quoting Mircea Eliade; 'Traité de l'histoire des religions'; Paris 1968 with Eliade's examples from the Rig Veda and the Brahmana Aitareya. Deibe then uses a quotation from Alvarez de Miranda; La metáfora y el mito (Metaphor and Myth) Madrid, 1963, to complete his statement.

'The conjunction of motives grows on taking into account the bond which links the moon with rain and death...'-'For ancient, primitive religions the moon contains death within itself, suffers it and transcends it. The moon and death are inseparable; the moon is its lord and symbol.'

Thus Deibe brings together diverse speculations on the themes of the moon, femininity, death and rain and, linking them into a single theory, applies it as an explanation of the working of Lorca's mind. If his assumption based in the collective unconscious propounded by Jung are valid for Lorca, in some measure they should also apply to Cocteau who revealed points of similarity with Lorca on so many details and who admitted a debt to Lorca. Linking the moon with storms and fatality occurs in 'La Belle et la Bête' (1), where the storm heralds the influence which Bete was to cast over the merchant's family. The significance of the moon is also apparent in 'L'Aigle à Deux Têtes' (2) which opens with a storm as Stanislas places himself in the power of the Queen. Since he is lacking in the virility of Lorca's gitanos to counteract feminine power, the fatality is inevitable from that moment onward, in a true classical style.

Deibe compares aspects of Lorca's treatment of the moon, with another passage by Eliade, in which regeneration, another theme favoured by Cocteau, is given an importance stemming from the speculations of primitive religions:

"Les défunts passent dans la lune ou reviennent sous terre afin de se régénérer et d'assimiler les forces nécessaires à une nouvelle existence" (3),

From this passage one can reinterpret Cocteau's treatment of the Orpheus myth. Orphée, a sun-priest, fought against the influence of the moon, personified in Eurydice, his wife whom he loved. He needed both his love and his calling. The struggle within him weakened him and placed him in the power of the devil who appeared in the form of the talking horse. When Eurydice died the horse died too, leaving Orphée bereft of love and inspiration either true or false. He was able to regenerate himself by his journey to the realm of death to recover his love, yet could not regain the full power of an inspiration originally derived

1. J. Cocteau: La Belle et la Bête. film 1945. (scenario published 1970. New York in b/-lingual edition edited by R.M. Hammond).
2. L'Aigle à deux têtes, op.cit.
3. Eliade, Traité de l'histoire des religions: op.cit p. 152.

from the Sun, which now appears to have masculine characteristics. In despair he deliberately sought to place himself in the power of death, where he might recover his love by looking at his wife, even if his poetic power were taken from him, forever. In the later film version, Death played a more alluring role in the person of the Princess, deliberately seeking out Eurydice and later Orphée, but later repenting entirely of her break of the rules of her kingdom and restoring the lovers to their earthbound state. The Princess is different from either Eurydice or Aglaonice in the earlier version. Unlike Aglaonice, she is attracted towards Orphée and in taking him into her kingdom, she is trying to win him for herself. The role of Eurydice is much more passive in the film. In the earlier play she had been of Aglaonice's party and unwittingly her ally. Jacques Brosse interprets this change in emphasis in the light of Cocteau's relationship with his mother:

"L'ultime sentiment éprouvé par Orphée-Cocteau avant de disparaître est donc pour cette mère tant aimée qu'il va maintenant rejoindre...." (1)

Cocteau's feelings are transposed into dramatic form and later into a visual presentation by the alchemy of the poet as he makes the ancient myths live again:

"Ainsi les relations du couple Orphée-Eurydice, dans Orphée 1 ressemblent d'assez près à celles de Jean Cocteau et de sa mère..... Mme Cocteau morte, la situation a changé. La mère ne peut plus être représentée par Eurydice, puisque celle-ci revient de chez les morts, mais par la Princesse qui aime le poète et ne peut supporter de le voir encore chez les vivants." (2)

Cocteau's work abounds with examples indicating his belief in the poet's need to suffer death and to be reborn with new inspiration. His word 'Phénixologie' derives from Greek myth but the concept is essentially surrealist in that he was

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1. J. Brosse, Cocteau: - Orphée: Théâtre et cinéma, Bordas, Paris, 1973.

2. *ibid.*

expressing his desire to abandon reality and plunge to the very roots of his subconscious in his search for poetic inspiration. His pursuit reached a climax in 'Cérémonial Espagnol du Phénix' one of his last poetic works, which he dedicated to Concha Garcia Lorca, sister of the Andalusian poet whom he admired so much.

"Ma flèche en route vers la cible du dormeur  
Larmes de la chandelle et vieux cri d'une porte  
Furent n'en doutez pas les pièges de la mort." (1)

In sleep as in death the arrow of the poet can reach its target, bringing back beauty as its trophy. Even the sexual allusion underlying the opening of the poem serves to emphasize the cyclic nature of the life cycle for even in creation there is death and in death there is a new life. The poet's life is a long flirtation with death who has the secret of all the mysteries:

"La mort m'est douce-amère et son amour m'évite  
Phénix l'ennui mortel de l'immortalité." (2)

The poet's concept of resurrection is nowhere better exemplified than in his exploitation of the Oedipus theme, although scenes from such films as 'Le Sang d'un Poète' (3) and 'La Belle et la Bête' (4) also explore the theme in depth. In his own life he sought re-creations of Radiguet in such people as Jean Desbordes, Jean Marais and Edward Dermit in much the same way as Stanislas in 'L'Aigle à deux Têtes' (5) is an exact image of the dead King. In a sense the new personalities are both real and are images of the dead, for they awaken the phantoms of memory in the poet's subconscious. Cocteau reveals in 'La Corrida du Premier Mai' that Deibe's analysis of Lorca fits his own case very closely for he exposes his fear of the moon as part of the realm of death, perhaps without associating it with the

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1. J. Cocteau, Cérémonial Espagnol du Phénix, Gallimard, Paris, 1961. p.9.

2. *ibid.* p. 24.

3. Le Sang d'un Poète, See pp. 268 et seq.

4. La Belle et la Bête, See pp. 174 et seq.

5. L'Aigle à deux Têtes, See pp. 114 et seq.

cycle of re-creation. His distrust of the moon appears to have grown over the years, although the origin of his fears is hidden in the mists of the distant past:

"Avant de connaître les théories de Hoerbiger, combien j'avais raison depuis mon enfance, de me méfier de la lune, d'en ressentir de la crainte et de ne pas m'associer à ceux qui la chantent. Elle m'avait fait toujours peur avant même que j'observasse au télescope et que j'apprisse la manière dont elle nous bombarde de cycle en cycle." (1)

Hoerbiger was an astronomer who founded a research institute in Vienna to promulgate his pseudo-scientific theories about the nature of the universe. Cocteau's speculations on Hoerbiger's ideas lead into areas which the astronomer did not intend, for he made no mention of supernatural or psychic influences; however incorrect his theories may have been, they were an attempt at a scientific explanation of the universe.(2) Cocteau's extrapolations from them thus reflect his own pre-occupations. That he had read Hoerbiger's book, reflects on the strange turns his mind took at times in his search for his own private vision of the truth of the nature of the universe. He continues his exposition of the nature of the moon in a way which indicates that he considered the baleful influence of the moon as a continuing phenomenon, affecting anyone who looked at it through the very act of looking which in itself formed a link between the viewer and the object:

"Hoerbiger m'enseigne que la lune n'est pas un astre aimable, mais un engin funeste, et que mon tour d'esprit ne me permet jamais d'envisager un spectacle sous l'angle de la distraction, tout spectacle m'étant un cérémonial ou ce qui en subsiste, dans un univers que Bergson dit être -(une machine à faire des Dieux) - et qui en fabrique de moins en moins faute de main d'oeuvre." (3).

1. J. Cocteau, La Corrida du Premier Mai, op.cit, p. 22.

2. H. Hoerbiger: Cosmologie: Système Unitaire de la physique du cosmos et de la terre, 1933, Editions de l'En-Dehors, Paris.

3. La Corrida du Premier Mai, op.cit, p. 23.

In insisting on a deeper significance for 'spectacle', Cocteau is preparing the ground for his subsequent description of a bullfight. The reference to Bergson indicates an influence by a philosopher who gave a lead to some of the Surrealist thinking on intuition and the independent nature of consciousness. Cocteau's attitude in this part of his work appears pessimistically inclined to the view that even the Gods are on the losing side in the struggle with the femininity of the moon; however, he makes no attempt to provide an answer to the eternal problem of what 'main d'oeuvre' is required in the Universe for the making of Gods. This is one of the unknowable mysteries which the poet may express but not explain. Awareness by Cocteau of the importance of the moon to Lorca appears in 'La Corrida du Premier Mai' in the evocation in poignant poetic terms of Granada, the once Moorish city, now famous for its gypsies, in which Lorca was born and executed:-

"Grenade la pâle, qui sèche ses linges au clair de lune, une grenade entr'ouverte, saignant et pleurant son poète (par la bouche de sa blessure)." (1)

With the image of 'linges', the poet immediately implies the femininity of the moon and he emphasizes the connexion by his reference to the sepulchral whiteness of the scene which imbues the phrase with an atmosphere of ill-omen as the city of Granada surrealistically is revealed as its fruit, the red juicy pomegranate, opened, deathly as a grenade, bleeding tears through the aperture in lament for the murdered poet. 'Grenade' with its double meaning of fruit and bomb is a typically Lorcan and Surrealist double metaphor imbued with implicit qualities of violence in explosiveness and blood in the dripping red sap. Cocteau's addition in the parentheses to his quotation, is taken from 'Le Sang d'un Poète' since both for Cocteau and Lorca, poetry is an expression of anguish as well as a product of love. This is why Cocteau can talk of giving birth to a poem and be fascinated

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1. La Corrida du Premier Mai, op.cit. p. 37.



by Nietzsche's concept of 'L'Homme-mère' or by Apollinaire's play 'Les Mères de Tirésias' in which the men of Zanzibar are able to reproduce alone. (1) The same idea reappears when Cocteau describes the characters in his plays as 'ma nombreuse famille' (2) in the book of reminiscence which he intriguingly called 'Le Cordon Ombilical' (3) thus showing the link between the characters of his creation and their creator. A further association between Cocteau and Lorca is revealed as Cocteau talks about Granada: it is considered a possibility that the Golden Apples in the legend of Atlanta, which Aphrodite plucked in a field in Cyprus were pomegranates. There is therefore an association of the 'Grenade' with a Greek legend well known to the poet who used it in his poem 'Atlanta Courant à sa Perte' (4) The apples placed the female in the power of the male, although Hippomenes himself owed his shortlived success to Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, who made the gift of the fruit which enabled her to avenge herself on Atlanta: (5)

'Par la bouche de sa blessure' is also used as a refrain in Cocteau's 'Lettre d'adieu à Frédéric' (6). In a brief prose poem he laments the death of Granada's poet, revealing many of the traits which they share and an awareness of Lorca's obsessions which precedes Deibe's study by several years. The poem has a hauntingly beautiful, sad, repetitive rhythm which is only equalled in Ravel's 'Bolero':

"Par le rire atroce du dentier d'un cheval de picador au soleil de la blessure"  
(7)

1. See 'La Corrida', p. 98, 'Dans le dernier (monde des préadamites) les Hommes se reproduisaient sans femmes', Cocteau cites the Kabbala as his authority.
2. See p. 88 and 105
3. Le Cordon Ombilical, op.cit. p. 20
4. Poem by Cocteau.
5. Myths of Greece and Rome. H.A. Guerber, Harrap, London, 1952. reprint of 1938 edition.
6. 'Lettre d'Adieu à Frédéric' in La Corrida du Premier Mai, Op.cit. p. 155.
7. *ibid.*

is taken from Cocteau's concept of the Corrida. The picador, aide of the torero, is also fighting against death. The image of the sun in the heart of the wound emphasizes the source of poetry in suffering, whilst it also represents the influence of the male, as a priest and prophet through the power of poetry. Cocteau then continues his lament in a series of phrases repeating each time the prosody of the former but introducing a new idea most expressive of the poetry of Lorca. The unreal and terrible atmosphere induced by this technique is somnolent yet awe inspiring and surrealistic especially in the strange conjunction of images in the poem. From the image of the horse, the poet turns to the poet himself in a naked new-born state:

"Par le lait sombre des lèvres du nouveau-né<sup>de</sup> ta blessure" (1)

portrays the poet in his helpless infantile state. The phrase is apparently contradictory for milk is white and the newborn do not speak. Granada's wound is the death of its poet; in its suffering it gave birth to his poetry which nourished him as he created it. Yet the poetry had a dark, fatal side to it for it is a revelation from another world. By his death in Granada, the poet made a great poetic sacrifice and ensured that he would not be forgotten. There is a biblical ring in the prophetic tone of this phrase, comparing for example with:

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby!" (2)

Here the idea of suffering is absent. It is the power of the word to feed and the potential of the newborn to learn which is stressed. The Psalmist implied struggle and regeneration in suffering in a way which Cocteau regarded poetry for he described babes as giving utterance as well as taking sustenance and in defiance of unappreciative enemies:-

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies." (3)

1. Lettre d'Adieu à Frédéric op cit.

2. I Peter 2,2.

3. Psalm 8.

The next image is a total change for Cocteau cloaks his verse with sexual allusions:

"Par les muqueuses de l'oursin ouvert de ta blessure." (1)

The sea urchin is often used as a sexual symbol; Cocteau here uses it to refer to Lorca's capacity to produce poetry, giving himself new life in his artistic creation. The imagery now changes to the masculine, reflecting the virility of Lorca as well as his love for the gypsies of Granada. The reference to a cave shows the hidden source of Lorca's poetry in his subconscious, dark, and secret except when it is revealed by the power and artistry of the poet:

"Par la caverne où se réveille en sursaut le gitan de sa blessure." (1)

In the last line, the pent up power of Cocteau's feeling is released as he reveals that the red flow of Lorca's blood is itself poetry, still spurting from his executed body:

"Par l'encre rouge du dernier poème de ta blessure." (1)

As a whole, the series of Gogonesque oblique metaphors, pays a powerful Surrealist tribute to the inspiration which Cocteau himself owed to Lorca. Looking back on the title of his film 'Le Sang d'un Poète' (2) of 1930, he felt that there was something prophetic in it, and also significant, affirming his conviction that the poet's life is expressed in his creation, that poetry is an act, living at the moment in which it takes place and is fossilized for others in artistic form.

Although 'par la bouche de sa blessure' is a phrase which Cocteau took as the leitmotif for his eulogy of Lorca, is best known in its context of 'Sang d'un Poète' (2) it has a connexion with his interest with Spain. It first appeared in 'Opium' (3) as a title of one of the illustrations. For some reason, Cocteau

1. Lettre d'Adieu à Frédéric.

2. Le Sang d'un Poète. op.cit.

3. Opium. op.cit.

entitled his drawing in Spanish; but there is a vocabulary mistake, for he wrote 'Per la boca de su herida' The word Per should read por . Per is Catalan, thus suggesting that the phrase may have come to him from Picasso or some other Catalan source. The inscription also suggests that Cocteau had a knowledge of Spanish, albeit poor, even in 1929. It hints not only at an interest in Spain but also in an appreciation of the poetic qualities of suffering expressed in the Spanish soul and made real to him in the anguished paintings of Picasso, the work of Piccabia and eventually of Dalí and Buñuel, as well as Garcia Lorca.

In the 'Cérémonial Espagnol du Phénix' Cocteau also evoked the image of Granada, describing the fatal whiteness of the city, contrasted with the mourning clothes of widowhood which become a city deprived of its poet:

"Grenade m'attendait sous ses voiles de veuve.

Ta nuit Federico ne battait plus des mains

Mais cette pleine lune où ton ame s'abreuve

Evoque Malaga vos boules de jasmin." (1)

Even the clapping rhythm of the flamenco is stilled in sadness. The fatal light of the moon bathes the deathly scene. The jasmin flower is white like the moon and a reference in J.E. Flecker's poem 'Hassan's Grenade' indicates a possible legendary association with death:

"Or when the wind beneath the moon

Is dazzling like a soul aswoon

And harping planets talk love's tune

With milky wings outspread, Jasmin,

Shine down thy love, O Burning bright!

For one night or the other night

Will come the Gardener in white,

And gathered flowers are dead, Jasmin." (2)

1. Cérémonial Espagnol du Phénix op.cit. p. 18.

2, J.E.Flecker: Hassan's Serenade. Oxford Book of English Verse p. 1130 (1949 reprint)

The whiteness of the flower and its feminine association with perfume make it easy for the poet to associate it with La Dame Blanche who momentarily unveiled herself to Cocteau in the arena at Málaga. The colour which Garcia Lorca saw is violent full-blooded red, redolent with ill-omen, bitterness and struggle. The substance of surrealism is clearly present in a poem which antedates any possible contact which the poet may have had with Surrealism and provides an indication that Cocteau, Lorca and the Surrealists were heirs to the attitudes of the period in which they grew up:

"Mas la granada es la sangre,  
 Sangre del cielo sagrado,  
 Sangre de la tierra herida,  
 Por la aguja del regato.  
 Sangre del viento que viene  
 Del rudo monte arañado.  
 Sangre de la mar tranquila,  
 Sangre del dormido lago.  
 La granada es la prehistoria  
 Del sangre que llevamos,  
 La idea de sangre, encerrada  
 En glóbulo duro y agrio,  
 Que tiene una vaga forma  
 De corazón y craneo.

(But the pomegranate is the blood,  
 Blood of blessed heaven  
 Blood of earth wounded  
 By the needle of the stream.  
 Blood of the wind that comes  
 From the rough and rugged mountains

Blood from the quiet sea,

Blood of the sleeping lake.

The pomegranate is the prehistory

Of the blood we bear.

The idea of blood, locked

In a bitter, hard globule

Which has the vague shape

Of a heart and a skull.) (1) F. Garcia Lorca; Libro de Poemas 1921.

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1. E. Honig, García Lorca, London, (Cape), 1968. p. 49.

iii. SENSUALITY AND DEATH IN LORCA AND IN COCTEAU

GUILT IN ILLICIT LOVE

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF LOVE

Since Cocteau sees the moon as an emblem of death, it is not difficult for him to transpose the image to the arena. In 'La Corrida du Premier Mai' (1) he develops at length the image of the bullfight as a courtship between fear and death, with <sup>the</sup> huge male bulk of the bull as the emissary of 'La Dame Blanche' representing the female element of Death and the matador as the male element of Fear steeling itself in the face of Death.

"La haine est absente d'une corrida. N'y règnent que la peur et l'amour. J'admets fort bien qu'une femme amoureuse d'un torero devienne, sans le savoir, jalouse de la bête, c'est-à-dire de la Dame Blanche." (2)

The poet thus establishes in psychoanalytical terms a single identity for the moon and the Dame Blanche, who is the same Princess of Death who appeared in the film of 'Orphée'.

The subconscious association of the moon, death and the bull is a traditional one, perhaps even older than the Minoan legend to which Cocteau refers. The horns of the bull are likened to the waxing and waning moon which can represent the complete life cycle (3). However the bull is only one of the many metamorphoses of the white lady:

"Tantôt duchesse invisible et nonne à l'orgue jouant Fleuve du Tage, tantôt Pastora, tantôt en robe d'infirmière au pied de mon lit, La Dame Blanche dans les sables mouvants du sommeil m'enlise vers ton faux Mont St Michel, Tolède, auréolé de foudres blêmes." (4)

The Lady appears in many guises; Cocteau, writing whilst in hospital, even saw her in the form of a nurse as well as in more exotic forms. The reference to 'Pastora' remains unexplained although it recurs in 'La Corrida' and is also to be found in 'Le Requiem' and in 'Cérémonial Espagnol du Phénix'. It would

1. op.cit.

2. ibid p. 87.

3. see; M. Eliade; Traité de l'histoire des religions ; Paris, 1948.

4. La Corrida du Premier Mai, P. 31.



seem that Cocteau was writing in one of his trance-like dream states in which past and future, reality and unreality all combine for this passage has all these qualities about it. It is in such a state that he finds himself transported to Toledo which in El Greco's famous painting bears a resemblance to Mont St. Michel, standing on a hill overlooking the Tagus Valley. (1) The word 'auréolé' describing the city watched over by the White Lady implies the moon. Toledo was the centre of especially fierce fighting and tragic scenes in the Civil War, which accounts for Cocteau describing it as a city of death and illuminating it with 'foudres blêmes'. (2) For these reasons the poet could be transposed there in his reverie. The passage is taken from a section in which Cocteau evokes in a dream sequence the different parts of Spain which he knew, before continuing his description of the bullfight at the Seville Feria on the first of May 1954. If here he only implies the fatal associations of the moon, there is no such hesitancy in the passage where he identifies the White Lady with the Bull:

"C'est de la Dame Blanche que je parle lorsque je parle du taureau, puisqu'elle lui délègue ses pouvoirs et n'épousera que le torero que le taureau tue." (3)

1. There remains a possibility that Cocteau is referring to a legend associated with Mont St. Michel as a home or staging post for the souls of the dead although no such legend is known to us.
2. Paleness is also a quality ascribed by Cocteau to Granada; see p. 191
3. 'La Corrida du Premier Mai' opcit p.69. cf La Dame Blanche with Spanish 15th century ballad, 'El enamorado y el muerte' (The Lover and Death) in which Death is portrayed as a white-clad lady come to snatch him from his love:

'Vi entrar señora tan blanca  
 muy mas que la nieve fria  
 - - - - -  
 No soy el amor amante:  
 La muerte que dios te envía'.

(I saw a lady going in, so white,  
 whiter even than the cold snow,  
 I am not love, oh lover, but death, whom God is sending to you.)

E. Honig; Garcia Lorca London (Cape) 1968.p. 26.

In spite of his fears the matador faces a mystic embrace with death. His is the fascination of the moth for light. Victory for the matador is an anti-climax. The real climax, final and irreversible would be victory for the bull:

"L'espoir mêlé de regret que cette dame se refuse, l'attire qu'elle exerce et la crainte de lui plaire, accompagnent le torero." (1)

It is among these hesitations that one can see the morbid fascination which death had for Cocteau, even though their strength appears in his poetry subconsciously rather than with the volition of the poet. Yet it is this very quality of unconscious poetic composition which is the hallmark of the Surrealist who may not necessarily be aware of the full implication of what he has created any more than Dracula realised the potential of the monster which he unleashed. In Cocteau's work, Death is always feminine and is often a beautiful woman who has moments of weakness when she can love the poet and even grant him a temporary respite from her thrall as in the case of Orphée and Oedipe. Yet the poet cannot evade the total masculine power of Death's emissary, the Bull. Consequently his analogy is weakened as he lets the matador appear androgynous, turn by turn masculine and feminine, until his masculinity asserts itself in the final estocade as the courtship becomes a marriage:

"Car si le torero porte les brillantes couleurs du mâle et le taureau la robe modeste des femelles dans le règne animal, à la fin de l'acte de l'amour il faudra que le mâle change de sexe et par sa grâce et son uniforme de danseur, redevienne la femelle qui tue." (2)

In the arena, the matador wins and asserts his masculinity over his fear. Cocteau reveals by a mistranslation that his concept of the corrida is of a kind of sacrament; the bullfighter's costume, his 'traje de luces', is called not

1. La Corrida du Premier Mai; op.cit, p. 72.

2. *ibid.* p. 91.

'suit of lights' but habits de noces' (1). Such a slip can be made as a matter of deliberate artistry or a Freudian slip; it is most unlikely to be through an inaccurate knowledge of the language for the term is too well known amongst aficionados. If sacrament is to be properly solemnized, then logically, victory should go to the bull and the torero thus be brought into the spell of the 'Dame Blanche'. This is both the bullfighter's fear and the fate which he accepts;

"Il sait fort bien que la véritable victoire est de perdre" (2).

Cocteau can thus be ecstatic over the death of Manolete at Linares, which fulfilled his concept of a complete union, for both torero and bull perished.

"A Linares il y eut d'amour un rendez-vous d'allure clandestine / à Linares la dame sur un billet rose en caractère d'imprimerie / à Linares lui donnait rendez-vous pour danser avec elle...." (3).

Although the image here is banal, the line flows with the uneven grace of a Spanish dance; the repetition of the words à Linares accords a pause and lends an atmosphere of stateliness matching the bullfighters' turns in the 'faena' or final series of passes in the combat. He still preserves his courtship metaphor in considering the corrida as a dance with Death. Indeed he feels the femininity of Death and the masculinity of life so strongly and as firmly polarized as the moon and the Sun, that even in the supreme moment of the corrida he is unable to evade the issue. At the moment of death 'the moment of truth', the metaphor weakens as the protagonists reverse roles and momentarily change sex:

1. La Corrida du Premier Mai, pp 71 and 119.

2. *ibid*, p. 70.

3. *ibid* 'Hommage à Manolete ; p. 119.

"Les noces se poursuivent selon un code immémorial et puisque l'ambassadeur n'a pas tué, il doit mourir par l'époux devenu épouse grâce à un sortilège de la Dame Blanche." (1)

Cocteau seems unable to appreciate the Spanish ideal of machismo and bravery which Montherlant described in 'Les Bestiaires' (2) and is deeply absorbed in a sexual phantasy which detracts a little from the poetry and the intense observation almost amounting to involvement which his own description embodies. He showed that his concept of the corrida is embedded in his subconscious by linking his intuitive perception of the bullfight with something at the back of his memory:

"...mon intuition (qui n'est peut-être, après tout, qu'une forme inconnue de la mémoire)".(3)

Much of what he had to say about the Corrida belongs to the realm of the poetry of the surreal for in his complete absorption with the spectacle he is revealing, unawares, parts of his personal philosophy which are buried deep within him. Although his images are sustained very intensely Cocteau was not able to make them stand up to the realities of the situation in the arena. It is probable that that was not his intention for what he presents is a piece of pure imagination based on a waking dream about a spectacle enacted before him. The curious distorted nature of his imagery is the attempt of his subconscious to bridge the space between the real world and the infinitely greater and more terrible world of the imaginary. Not even the poet knows what reality lies behind the images of this unreal world, so his readers can only guess; guessing they participate in a poetic act, they too, entering the realm of the imagination, the subconscious and the

1. La Corrida du Premier Mai, p. 92

2. H. de Montherlant, Les Bestiaires, Paris, 1926. Cocteau pays his tribute on p.67 of 'La Corrida du Premier Mai': 'Ne suffit-il pas de lire Montherlant'.

3. La Corrida du Premier Mai, p.28.

surreal in which their own imaginations are unchained. In the experience of the poet himself, the problem of reality and the imaginary ceases to exist, for they merge into one in the heat of the poetic vision in front of him and the mingling of his own personality with it:

"Mon corps...n'existait plus. Mon esprit devint le couple et pénétra des secrets que j'eusse été bien incapable de surprendre sans le phénomène qui me métamorphosait en acte." (1)

In his dream-state, the poet's mind and imagination function surrealistically, for he moves from image to image in a rapid and apparently unconnected manner. In the name of mystery he is able to justify his juxtaposition of the contrary images of death and love, of killing and procreation although the feminine presence is purely imaginary:

"Ici ne fonctionne plus que la loi des insectes lorsque la femelle s'accouple avec le mâle et le mange. Mais quel est le mâle? Apparemment deux mâles se trouvent face à face; aucun contact de l'amour ne les joute et cependant certains toreros avouèrent que l'estocade provoquait chez eux l'éjaculation. ....C'est que le grand mystère de la Fiesta consiste dans ce paradoxe d'adversaires qui tour à tour se féminisent et reprennent les prérogatives de la virilité." (2)

There is a power in the perception of the torero in his different guises at various stages of the combat which reveals the qualities of the poet and takes the reader into a realm not of the blood and sand of the arena but into that of mystery and religious celebration of the Fiesta in which the imagination reaches an entirely new and surrealist dimension beyond the reach of normal experience.

1. La Corrida du Premier Mai; p. 97.

2. La Corrida du Premier Mai, pp 89/90.

On this level the reader is able to appreciate some of the poet's most deep seated emotions and to sympathise with him at certain points where loneliness and suffering show, as well as to feel relief at finding that the fear of death is a problem which all men share and which can be transcended. Phoenix-like, the quality of poetry arises from the death in the arena.

The obsession with death is revealed in differing ways by Cocteau and Lorca, yet in each case it forms part of a cult of sensuality. Cocteau's Freudian fantasies in praise of 'La Dame Blanche' or 'La Princesse' in which ecstasy is balanced against fear, can be compared with Lorca's 'Niña ahogada en el pozo', 'La degollación del Bautista', 'Poema del Cante Jondo' or 'Romancero Gitano' in which a delight in death becomes a lyrical theme. However fatality in Cocteau remains in the power of the unseen agencies which control human destiny; it is exterior to man's nature and not implicit in it. Although our end is pre-determined we are guided towards it, just as Oedipe went step by step through the ritual prescribed by the oracles of killing his father and marrying his mother before his desperate attempt to seek salvation in suffering and self-sacrifice. The exterior nature of death is the force behind the drama in 'Orphée'. In the play it appeared in the form of the talking horse; in the film even more explicitly La Princesse, the death of Orphée, contrives first the disappearance of Eurydice and then the seizure of the poet within her power before relenting in awe of the vengeance threatening at the hands of destiny for whom she laboured, on account of carrying out these acts for her own gratification. Fate must remain inscrutable, though it plays a less evident role in 'L'Aigle à deux Têtes' because here Cocteau is dealing with 'Deux idées qui s'affrontent' (1). He is at grips not with personalities in myth or in real life, but with shadowy dream figures

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1. Preface to L'Aigle à deux Têtes; see p. 114 et seq. and 180.

representing the most elemental powers of the soul. Not only is Fate exterior but even the main characters are animations of the primitive forces buried in the subconscious, so that they themselves are exterior, outside the limits of normal existence and only recognizable through the exercise of the power of the poetic imagination. Nevertheless the play is characterised by an accelerated progress through timelessness to the inevitable death.

Besides comparing Cocteau and Lorca in their attitude to poetic inspiration certain details of their work are worth close study; in particular they both describe decapitation at several points. In revealing this macabre side of their imagination, they expose some of the disturbed nature of their subconscious which is also apparent in the work of orthodox Surrealists and is given expression by various descriptions or representations of physical distortion and dislocation. Higginbotham draws attention to these characteristics in 'Nadadora Sumergida' and 'Suicídio en Alejandría':

"In these prose pieces, as well as in the later poems, fragments of animal and human bodies symbolize spiritual dislocation. In 'Suicídio en Alejandría', the poet, searching for shocking images, describes a severed head upon an office desk; 'Cuando pusieron la cabeza cortada sobre la mesa del despacho, se rompieron todos los cristales de la ciudad.'<sup>(1)</sup> For Lorca as well as Cocteau the breaking of glass is associated with death and the descriptions here can be compared with the one in 'La Belle et la Bête' where the mirror shatters after Bête has reflected his last appeal to Belle through it or the scene where Avenant falls through the glass roof of the pavillion. If Death can come and go through mirrors (2), then one can go through glass to death with no hope of return as

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1. Romanic Review, 1970, op.cit.

2. Orphée (1926) p. 147 (Grasser) 'Les miroirs sont les portes par lesquelles la mort va et vient.'

1. 'When they put the severed head on the office table, all <sup>the</sup> glass in the city broke.'

Cocteau showed in the case of Stanislas in 'L'Aigle à deux Têtes', who burst onto the stage through an open window. The fragility of the hold on life is emphasized by the glass wings and the earthly trade of the glazier-angel Heurtebise in the first 'Orphée'.

Higginbotham continues her article mentioning other examples of decapitation in Lorca's work which have counterparts in Cocteau:

"In 'Nocturno del hueco' Lorca conveys his fear of nothingness by a similar image; 'En la gran plaza desierta/mugia la bovina cabeza desierta.'"(1) As a third example she cites 'Degollación del Bautista' where the beheading is described as horrible yet thrilling to the spectators. In the first of these two incidents an animal's head is in question, which can be compared to the talking bust in the play 'Orphée'. Cocteau uses the head for comic effect on the stage although it also serves as reminder that part of 'Orphée's' spirit now belongs to another realm, thus demonstrating how the poet makes use of his obsession with statues which come to life. The choice of the Baptist as a shocking incident enables Lorca to portray the innate cruelty of a biblical scene and shows fascination and a horror of a religion which leads to death. Lorca's description is paralleled by Cocteau in his tapestry of Judith holding the head of Holophernes which he designed in 1948. The tapestry is seen in 'Le Testament d'Orphée' as a background to the scene in which the little girl is questioned, suggesting possibly the idea of the deceitful and cruel nature of women. In Cocteau's work loss of one's head occurs on several other occasions. It happens to the poet's statue in 'Sang d'un Poète', to the policeman (who gets it back again) in 'Le Boeuf sur le Toit'. In the play 'Orphée' the head of the horse is all that is shown on the stage and consequently this is the part of it which disappears. In 'Le Testament d'Orphée' the man-horse removes its head.

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1. Romanic Review. op.cit.

'In the great empty square, the bovine head was left mooing.'



When one adds to these phenomena the scenes in 'parade' and in 'La Belle et la Bête' where heads are masqued or even the unmasquing of Bête, a whole mythology of headlessness appears as some grim joke on death in which the poet seeks to sublimate his fears and where headlessness equals enchantment or death and having one's head on one's shoulders is the equivalent of being in this world of normal reality. The frequency with which it happens and the suggestion that the process is reversible indicates Cocteau's idea of the birth and rebirth of poets, of their being able to enter the forbidden zones many times to bring back the messages from that other world where the gods hold sway. A slightly different concept of the head appears in 'L'Aigle à deux Têtes', when the Queen, cradling, Stanislas' head on her knees, perceives the transitory nature<sup>d</sup> their encounter and the fatal direction in which they are going. She is able to isolate the reality of their moment of love from the rest of time, the life of their love being in the disembodied head of Stanislas, his body belonging to another time zone.

"Mes genoux sont sous votre tête et ma main sur elle. Votre tête est lourde. On dirait une tête coupée. C'est une minute sans rien autour. Un clair de lune dans le coeur." (1)

The telling image emphasizes the unreal nature of their situation and indicates that fate is giving another hint of the tragedy which is to follow. The effect of Cocteau's images is unlike Lorca's in that the Spaniard is seeking to make the reality of his image stand out by the strength of its stark horror and thus he could overcome his own subconscious fears, whereas Cocteau presents his heads often in a comic manner as though death were his familiar, or as if the head, representing the idea is the important part in the zone which he is

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1. 'L'Aigle à deux Têtes'; op.cit p. 330. This passage links Cocteau's idea of the fatal influence of the moon with that of the severed head and the maternal figure. see pp. 201, 202, 178.

describing. Cocteau's heads are thus less horrible than Lorca's and, with the exception of his tapestry, have less blood in evidence. Blood is the symbol of this life; a head without it is an image from another world.

The dismemberment of bodies in the work of these two poets calls to mind the paintings of the cubists and Surrealists and especially of Picasso and Dalí; one the hero of Cocteau, the other the friend of Lorca. Picasso's broken up bodies express anguish welling up from the depths of his being, the most obvious example being 'Guernica'. The strangely distorted figures of Dalí often originate in hallucinations which the painter cultivated deliberately, which portray not only the confusion between the worlds of dream and reality but also deep-seated subconscious disturbances. Yet these gruesome attempts to shock the aesthetic senses, to bludgeon them into consciousness of the unreal and the real, were not the first examples in art of a determination to look at things from a new viewpoint in which the imagination rather than the object is the focal point. In 'Through the looking Glass' Lewis Carroll had tried to shock Alice with an image of a dislocated face in an unreal world which caused the angry reaction that the Surrealists expected:

"'Now if you had two eyes on the same side of the nose for instance - or the mouth at the top - that would be some help.'... 'It wouldn't look nice,' Alice objected. But Humpty Dumpty only shut his eyes and said, 'Wait till you've tried,'"(1)

Carroll anticipated the Surrealists by many years but they found no better way of expressing their doubt about the conventional methods of artistic expression or the unknown power of the grotesque which they as well as Lorca and Cocteau exploited in their different ways. Thus there is ample support for Higginbotham's comment that; "The shocking image and 'humour noir' later adopted by the Surrealists in their revolt against artistic conventionality were inherent in Lorca's own poetic temperament." (2)

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1. Lewis Carroll; Through the looking Glass p. 196.
  2. Romantic Review.1970 op.cit.

The remark is also applicable to Cocteau: Indeed he, in particular, was ahead of the Surrealists in this field, for his collaboration with Picasso over 'Parade' had brought some of the new imagery to the stage even before the 1914-18 war came to an end. In a long sequence running from the talking head and the talking horse of the first 'Orphée' to the man-horse and the murder of the poet by the spear of Diana in 'Le Testament d'Orphée', there abound similar themes and features which the poet shares with the Surrealists. The same images used in 'Le Boeuf sur le Toit' and 'Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel' as grim visual jokes compare with the horror of the final scene of 'La Machine Infernale' or the tragedy of 'L'Aigle à deux têtes'.

From different yet related sources, all closely connected with Surrealism, yet outside the mainstream of the movement, one can deduce something of the intent and effect of this macabre aspect in Cocteau. There is an overt attempt to shock, in describing the macabre for its own sake. Lorca, Cocteau and Dalí all had a preoccupation with death and like Picasso had their own disturbances in their subconscious which lead them to conceive of distortion in the human body. They share Lewis Carroll's grim sense of humour and bolder than he, living in an age with a different spirit, they felt impelled to act on the advice of Humpty Dumpty. For both poets their preoccupations and fears needed a visible focus on which they could bring to bear the fears and intuitions of their poetic vision. By a strange conjunction they both found it in the moon which mythology from time immemorial has associated with death, femininity and a creative life-death cycle. The moon in controller of the waters, light of the stars and of the darkness of the poet. Primitive man has shared with modern poets the superstitious awe of the moon which in the collective unconscious has thus become a repository for many of the suppressed emotions of the subconscious.

Even in the horror of some of the melodramatic images found in the work of both poets there is a kind of sensuality. The decapitated head (1) evokes simultaneously death, the macabre, the pathos, the horror, the sacrifice and even the humour of both of the arena and the abattoir. Passion lust and the macabre are dealt with by Lorca in a more intense manner than one finds in Cocteau. (2) Auclair continues her passage describing Lorca's depth of feeling and intensity of expression by a direct comparison with the work of Desnos. This comparison which links Lorca with an established Surrealist, provides a bridge between Cocteau and the Surrealists which one hesitates to make directly on account of the long standing personal animosity between him and some of the Surrealists, especially with Breton itself. The poems which Auclair quotes are all variations on the theme of the voracious female and illicit love:

"L'oeuvre de Lorca témoigne d'une sensualité explosive. Au temps où il écrivait, il n'y eut peut-être que Desnos pour produire des poèmes aussi dévorants que le sont par exemple, 'Thamar et Amnon', 'Précieuse et le Vent', 'La Femme Adultère'." (3)

In all these poems the idea of guilt in an illicit love is present. In spite of his erotic sensuality, Lorca cannot bring himself to envisage love as permanent, unifying or creating. The moral distance between his lovers is as great as that between Cocteau's. For him too, the fulfilment of sexual love cannot be gratified in this world. The impossibility of love, the distance between lovers, the necessity of the intervention of death which abolishes all taboos and eliminates all differences of earthly status and all the ties of consanguinity, are the themes which Cocteau manipulates in 'la Machine Infernale',

1. See P.p. 203-204 for longer discussion of this topic.
2. As an example of the power with which he imbues these forces, see overleaf the poem: 'El martirio de Santa Olalla'.
3. M. Auclair: op cit p. 100

'L'Aigle à deux têtes', 'L'éternel retour', and 'Bacchus', and which are featured in a direct antithesis in the story of 'Antigone' with the heroine's struggle against the will of her uncle Creon, whose interdiction on the burial of her brother would for ever remove the possibility of her being reunited with him in Hades:

El Martirio de Santa Olalla.

The Martyrdom of Saint Eulalia.

Flor desnuda se sube  
por escalerillas de agua.  
El Cónsul pide bandeja  
para los senos de Olalla.  
Un chorro de venas verdes  
le brota de su garganta.  
Su sexo tiembla enredado  
como un pájaro en las zarzas.  
Por el suelo, ya sin norma  
brincan sus manos cortadas  
que aun pueden cruzarse en tenue  
oración decapitada.  
Por los rojos agujeros  
donde sus pechos estaban  
se ven cielos diminutos  
y arroyos de leche blanca.

Nude flower going up the water rack.  
The Consul asks for a tray  
for Eulalia's breasts.  
A spurt of green veins bursts from  
her throat.  
Her sex trembles, caught  
like a bird in the brambles.  
On the ground, now without limits  
her severed hands are leaping  
and can still cross themselves in a slender  
decapitated prayer.  
Through the red holes  
where her breasts were  
one can see miniature skies  
and streams of white milk.

(1)

This theme of course is also treated in a well known old French poem, which is far less violent in its treatment.

The barren impossible nature of love is implied in the theme of the brother sister relationship which is exploited by Cocteau in 'Antigone', 'Le Livre blanc' and 'Les enfants terribles' can be associated with the strange triangle of father and son in love with the same girl in 'Les Parents Terribles' which itself has a counterpart in the story of Oedipe and the horrific fulfilment of the oracle's prophecy. Although the idea recurred in the filming of 'Les enfants Terribles' in 1950, the idea was modified in the post war phase into a series of stories depicting the impossible nature of love except at a given moment in time which could never be recaptured. The distance separating the linked destinies

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1. Obras, p. 387.

of the lovers is the theme of 'L'éternel retour', which is a retelling of the story of 'Tristan and Isolde', of 'Renaud et Armide' and of 'L'aigle à deux têtes'. Although circumstances enables the love to blossom, it is never allowed to bear fruit. This situation is counterbalanced in the earlier 'Chevaliers de la Table Ronde' where the love affair of the Queen and Lancelot is suspended during the enchantment of the atmosphere in which the play takes place, and in the film of 'La Belle et la Bête' in which the love is made possible only by taking the heroine out of the world of reality and is consummated by taking Belle irrevocably into the realm of fantasy. One can only speculate on the likelihood of these flights of fancy having some kind of mirror image in the real life of the poet, in his relationship with his sister Marianne as well as with his ever-present mother and his absent father. Cocteau deals with these ideas in a series of closed, almost claustrophobic situations which a psychoanalyst would link with the subconscious, and so give some evidence of the anguish felt deep within the poet's soul. When one looks at Lorca's treatment of similar ideas, one senses immediately the difference in the vibrant, passionate intensity caught in the single moment of an incident which neither bears nor requires repetition, an incident full of passion for its own sake in which the role of the woman as temptress and devourer of innocence is all pervading. Here there is no question of an attempt, even a vain one, to create an enduring relationship: affection plays no part. The poem is a lyrical evocation of a chance encounter in a fleeting lustful moment and yet the separation is just as inevitable as in Cocteau. Lorca's method is much closer and more easily assimilated to the Surrealist technique of rapid evocation of a scene, a feeling, an incident in a few quick, even unrelated word pictures, although Cocteau is much closer to the Surrealist objective of penetrating the depths of consciousness to reveal

the elemental forces of the subconscious lying hidden below. The criminal love of Thamar for his sister Amnon and his guilty flight from his act have no equal in Cocteau in violence or in intensity, for it is not the passion and the event of encounter which inspire him, but rather the development of the inner state of mind of his protagonists as the situation unfolds and the impossibility of suspending Time and their moment of happiness, or of developing their relationship further, becomes apparent. Nevertheless in either case love leads to a kind of remorse or anguish, easily shrugged off by Lorca's virile gypsy character but refined into a subtle, dramatic and poetic weapon by the art of Cocteau.

The frustrations of love are thus linked with suffering, for Cocteau's lovers suffer anguish through their search for consummation even in the cases of Oedipe and of La Bête, who both satisfy their love through an unnatural liaison which takes them into the realm of death, where Orphée too pursues his quest for poetic truth, for his wife, and places himself in the hands of the beautiful Princess of Death. If Michel and Madeleine in 'Les Parents Terribles' are left free to pursue their love, it is with the sacrifice of Yolande and the rivalry of Georges still separating them, forcing open the isolation of the caravan home.

Lorca too is attracted by the theme of suffering as Higginbotham shows in the instance of the 'narraciones' (short stories), 'Degollación del Bautista', 'Suicidio en Alexandria' and 'Nadadora Sumergida' (The execution of the Baptist', 'Suicide in Alexandria' and 'Submerged Swimmer') (1). One might equally include 'de los Inocentes' (Massacre of the Innocents), as well as 'Santa Lucia y san Laceró'. (Saint Lucia and Saint Lazarus.)

In the story of John the Baptist, the poet appears to take delight, an

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1. V. Higginbotham, *op.cit.*

almost sensuous pleasure in the act of execution as though the horror of it exercised a morbid fascination on the poet:

"La degollación fue horripilante. Pero maravillosamente desarrollada. El cuchillo era prodigioso." (1)

Lorca's own sensuous sadism is taken to macabre extremes in vivid word pictures which emphasize the physical nature of the scenes:

"Los jóvenes pintaban sus corbatas en el cañon estremecido de la yugular desgarrada" (2)

In this respect, his method is very different from Cocteau's who is always seeking to stress the inner reality of the perception of the subconscious. When he does present pictorial images they have a correspondence in a mental image stemming from memory or desire as in 'L'Aigle à deux têtes' when the anarchist Stanislas appears before the Queen, bearing a strange resemblance to the dead King, whose image she had just been trying to evoke:

"J'ai cru voir le spectre du roi. J'ai cru que votre sang était le sien.... ce que vous ne saviez pas, c'est qu'il portait le costume des montagnards, et que, quand on a retiré le couteau, le sang a jailli sur les genoux". (3)

Moreover Cocteau's imagery is less vivid, more restrained, for not only is he concentrating on the interior reality of the imagination itself, but he is also presenting his images through the medium of action. In verse-poetry where he intends to evoke images of horror or terror he tends to express them by metaphysical allusions associated with brief, scarcely perceived outlines of a series of terrifying scenes:

1. F. Garcia Lorca; Obras Completas, op.cit, p.20-21 'The decollation was horrible But marvelously carried out. The knife was fantastic.
2. Ibid. 'The young man stained their ties in the trembling tube of the open jugular.
3. 'L'Aigle à deux têtes'. Act I.scIV. (P.45 folio edn).



"Il y eut là quelques minutes étonnantes  
 Où les îles semblaient où tonnaient les volcans,  
 Où l'ange assassinait les bêtes et les plantes,  
 Les soldats des Césars endormis dans les camps.

Les femmes des soldats avortaient sur leur couche  
 La peur fuyait la mort, la mort frappait la peur."

- - - - - (1)

The overwhelming impression of death on a cosmic scale brings out the conflict in the poet's mind of fear of death half obliterated by his morbid attraction towards it.

In the account of the 'Massacre de los Inocentes', Lorca demonstrates his capacity for depicting terror through the strange power of metaphor inspired by a surrealist association of ideas and different perspectives. In one image a bee sting is magnified until it has the power of the destroying sword:

"El aguijón de la abeja hacía posible el manejo de la espada." (2)

Whereas in this image the tiny object becomes the focus of the abstract action of the huge and terrifying sword, in the same passage the poet demonstrates a frightening power to envisage the abstract as tangible:

"La luz de la mañana era cortante." (3)

The poet continues, appealing now to the sense of hearing in a strange distorted, cruel double image which illustrates his complete mastery of metaphor to present terrible, surrealistic, impressions which alarm and disconcert the reader:

"Los rebaños ballaban con los cuellos partidos." (4)

1. Le Chiffre Sept (1952), Lannes, Poètes d'aujourd'hui, op.cit, p. 173.
2. Obras completas, 'De los inocentes', p. 21 op.cit. 'The sting of the bee made the work of the sword possible.'
3. ibid. 'The morning light was cutting'.
4. ibid. 'The flocks were bleating with their severed necks'.

The picture is steadily built up until the climax is presented at first as a matter of fact, almost casually, then completed with a clashing juxtaposition of objects as the conflicting elements of Lorca's imagination are brought together in a fearful lament of anguish:

"A las siete de la tarde ya no quedaban mas que seis ninos para degollar....  
...los senos se llenaban de leche inutil....la leche maternal y la llana sostuvieron la batalla contra la sangre triunfadora." (1)

The suffering depicted by Lorca is thus resolved as an expression of some of his principal themes, the key to which is revealed as he uses the word 'triumfadora' in referring to the martyrs' blood. In the final metaphor Lorca presents the massacre as the struggle for existence and self fulfillment of the children, expressed in the blood which flows away and takes them away from the dominating influence of the mother, whose anguish at their loss is indicated by their physical suffering. The defeat of the feminine influence is also a defeat for the moon, who is on the same side as the woman.

Suffering in Lorca is therefore a different theme from that in Cocteau. It is highly stylised with a precise poetic purpose and symbolism. For Cocteau, suffering is expiatory. It is a necessary concomitant to poetry in 'Le sang d'un poète' (2) where the poet has to suffer and speak 'par la bouche de sa blessure'. (3) Later on in Cocteau's career, suffering becomes linked with an idea of a search for identity. The search for self-knowledge is implicit in the theme of Oedipus (4) in whose case it is synonymous with a death wish. One may consider the case of Stanislas in 'L'Aigle à deux têtes' (5) in a similar light for in

1. Ibid. 'At seven in the evening there only remained six babes to behead...the breasts were filling with useless milk...the maternal milk and the moon sustained the battle against the triumphing blood.'

2. Le Sang d'un poète (op.cit).

3. ibid. also in 'Opium'.

4. La Machine Infernale. 1934. op.cit.

5. L'Aigle à deux têtes. op.cit.

searching for his true role in life, he too fell into the trap of 'Orphée' in becoming enamoured of his own death. It is in 'Le Testament d'Orphée' (1) that the sense of alienation is most poignantly rendered in the portrayal of the poet wandering through time and desperately seeking to be restored to his correct place. The poet must suffer many hallucinations, deaths and agonies before the secrets of that other world can be revealed to him, enabling him to enter into true communication with his spiritual essence. The twin agonies of the poet are revealed as not knowing and in not being able to tell of the hidden truths in his poetry. The suffering of Les Enfants Terribles, of Les Parents Terribles and the frustrated loves of Renaud and Armide or of Tristan and Iseut also demonstrate Cocteau's pre-occupation with a knowledge of self in order, in Jungian terms, to sublimate or satisfy their passions so that they may pass through the individuation process to that real self knowledge which begets inner content. In this aspect of his work Cocteau is nearer to the spirit of Surrealism than Lorca for he is able to see more clearly the forces which affect the subconscious. On the other hand, Lorca's images, so spontaneous, so grotesque yet so wonderfully vivid are much nearer the surrealist ideal in respect of a technique of spontaneity. Both poets however are too conscious of a need for form and too wary of the rigour of the language of metaphor ever to allow themselves to be drawn wholly into the Surrealist trap of letting inspiration and pure thought be the whole of Surrealism:

"L'instinct demande à être dressé par la méthode mais l'instinct seul nous aide à découvrir une méthode qui nous soit propre et grâce à laquelle nous pouvons dresser notre instinct".(2)

Lorca saw poetry in very similar terms to Cocteau, as a form for transforming the most secret thoughts through the power of the imagination:

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1. Le Testament d'Orphée, op.cit.

2. Le Coq et l'Arlequin, op.cit. p. 1 (Rappel à l'ordre, 18).

"....those poets who extol the unfathomed instincts in man as giving significance to the life of all nature. When they accept the world, it is a world transformed from head to foot by the individual imagination", (1)

In the case of both poets the power of the imagination was used to give a new interpretation of the objects within their range of vision, thus helping the ordinary person to expand his own perceptive abilities. Thus they both give a very similar definition of the poetic power which transforms the commonplace through metaphor:

"La poésia es algo que anda por las calles: Que se mueve, que pasa a nuestro lado. Todas las cosas tienen s misterio y la poesia es el misterio que tienen todas las cosas", (2)

For Lorca poetry is more than an intangible power it is more than a fact, it is real physical and visible. The concept of a quality which has physical dimensions is itself a powerful metaphor emphasizing the impact which poetry had for the poet himself. Cocteau expresses the same force of poetry by indicating the effect which it has on him:

"La poésie dans son état brut fait vivre celui qui ressent la poésie. Cette nausée morale vient de la mort. La mort est l'envers de la vie." (3)

1. E. Honig, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

2. F Garcia Lorca, Œbras, p. 1756.

'Poetry is something which goes through the streets: which moves, which takes place beside us. Everything has its mystery and poetry is the mystery possessed by everything'.

3. Le Secret professionnel, (In 'Le Rappel à l'ordre ', *op.cit* p. 218).

Poetry has a real deeply felt existence for him, he goes further than Lorca by postulating a source for poetry and an explanation of its nature. In doing so he reveals something of his concept of death as identical with poetic mystery and the life in the unknown. To this extent it is possible to view his obsession with death as an aesthetic desire to plumb the secret of the mystery of life itself. Inasmuch as he is a poet, he is obliged to live an aesthetic myth which has become real to him. Thus poetry makes itself felt in his life by giving him an instinct for death through his poetic concept of the subconscious, which has the power to overwhelm the conscious: poetry thereby comes to have a real meaning in his own life. Contrasted with Cocteau's concept of death as a life beyond our life which is a source of poetic mystery is Lorca's idea of the unfathomable nature of the mystery. It is not the same as saying with Cocteau that man should try to penetrate the power beyond the mystery (1) and that one should merely accept its dictates. Lorca affirms the secret nature of the mystery itself:

"La creación poética es un misterio indescifrable como el misterio del nacimiento del hombre. Se oyen voces no se sabe de dónde, y es inútil preocuparse de dónde vienen." (2)

In this instance Lorca is portraying the poet in the situation of Apollinaire in Cocteau's description of him 'à l'écoute' (3) attentive to his mysterious messages from another world.

Lorca's image also calls to mind Cocteau's description in 'Le Cordon Ombilical' (4) which was written after he 'discovered' (5) Spain, where he stresses the independent

1. See pages.. 224, 226, 228, 250

2. F.G. Lorca, Obras, p. 1762. Poetic creation is an unfathomable mystery like the mystery of the birth of man. Voices can be heard from one knows not where, and it is useless to worry about their source.

3. See pages 20, 21

4. For description of this process in 'Le Cordon Ombilical' see pages.. 67, 89

5. See 'La Corrida du Premier Mai' and pages referring to Cocteau's initiation to the bullfight and the spirit of Spain.

nature of a poetic work after the act of creation, after it has been born.(1)

Both poets see poetry as coming to the human mind, almost unbidden, painful yet welcome and the act of expressing poetry in artistic shape as a process closely analogous to parturition. However Cocteau's mystic view of the role of the poet distinguishes him, for he has a cosmic view of his powers which in Lorca appears only incidentally as a parameter of poetry itself rather than the poet:

"Le poète que rien ne limite rapporte quelque fois une perle des profondeurs où le savant prouve qu'il est impossible de descendre." (2)

The change in emphasis from the creator to the work is apparent when Lorca discusses the role of poetry in terms very similar to the guise<sup>h</sup> which Cocteau presents the poet:

"Naturalmente que en la poesia vive un problema sexual, si el poema es de amor, o un problema cosmico, si el poema busca la batalla con los abismos. La poesia no tiene limites." (3)

Cocteau shares with Lorca a view of the ordinary nature of poetry, of its presence in everyday reality but detectable and realisable in metaphorical terms by the intermediary of the poet's transforming power:

"Mettez le lieu commun en place nettoyez-le, frottez-le, éclairez-le de telle sorte qu'il frappe avec sa jeunesse et avec la même fraîcheur qu'il avait à sa source, vous ferez oeuvre de poète." (4)

This shows the same uncanny force of metaphor to give a reality to abstract qualities and present them as objects which can be cleaned, illuminated and which have the ability to strike a physical blow on the new awareness of the observer.

Cocteau's attempt to present reality in this new light is best known in 'Parade' (5)

1. See p. 88, 89

2. Le Rappel à L'ordre. (Le Secret Professionnel), p. 224.

3. F. Garcia Lorca. Obras p. 1756. 'It is natural that in poetry there lives a sexual problem, in the case of a love poem, or a cosmic problem if the poem is a conflict with the depths. Poetry has no limits.'

4. Le Rappel à l'ordre (Secret Professionnel), p. 215.

5. See p.p. 22.

and in 'Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel' Lorca's concept of the boundless nature of poetry enables him to approach Cocteau's capacity to overflow the strict limits of verse and to give expression to his ideas in forms other than pure poetry, in song, art and drama. It was his conviction that 'El Teatro es la Poesia que se hace humana' (1), which led him to take part in the venture of 'La Barraca', a popular touring theatre bringing drama to places which would not otherwise see it, and to give more formal expression to his ideas in his own plays. Whereas Cocteau achieved taking part in popular manifestations of his art in this way, although he gave many lectures, produced his own films and took parts in his own plays on the more solid stage of the theatre itself, he made a genuine attempt to make his poetry human through drama by his incorporating into it of a body of myth and legend already well known and presented under a new light, style or dramatic form. The ancient myths of Orphée and Oedipe take on a strange modern significance: Isolde and Belle et la Bête find a new existence in film: King Arthur's Castle is staged in a strange enchanted atmosphere: so that myth has a new and violent impact having been highlighted by a new vision which transforms it from the ancient into the modern, bringing the death of the past into the life of the present. There is an element of the universal in Cocteau's drama, drawing on such remote themes as classical mythology and medieval legend, thus according to his work an aesthetic distance at once making it remote in time and space to everyone and yet making it applicable to everyone by its presentation as diverse, closely examined facets of human nature. On the other hand Lorca's poetry being based in essentially Spanish themes vividly expresses the throbbing tragic spirit of Spain itself.

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1. Obras, 1757. 'Theatre is poetry becoming human'

PART 4

CREATION



i. THE MYSTERY OF CREATION

Certain of Cocteau's ideas about femininity may be derived from Nietzsche and may go some way to explaining his own relationship with his mother:

"L'amour maternel - comparable à l'amour de l'artiste pour son oeuvre." (1)

Cocteau expressed a very similar attitude in 'Le Cordon Ombilical' (2) by referring to the creatures of his imagination as his family. However if the idea was in part derived from Nietzsche it was also due to his own personal experiences, especially insofar as his failure to break the link with the possessive Mme. Cocteau is concerned. Nietzsche's concept of mother-love thus grows in Cocteau to the obsession revealed in his portrayal of Oedipe's marriage to Jocaste and the poet's feeling that the relationship is watched malevolently by the Gods. Also from Nietzsche comes the idea of the reversal of certain sexual roles in the animal kingdom which inspires certain passages in 'La Corrida du Premier Mai' (3)

"Chez les animaux le sexe mâle passe pour le beau sexe" (4)

Cocteau uses an almost identical phrase in his description of the Corrida:

"si le torero porte les brillantes couleurs du mâle et le taureau la robe modeste des femelles dans le règne animal....." (5)

His fantasy of the corrida as a form of marriage and the role turn by turn masculine and feminine of the torero seeking union with an ambassador of the poet's love - the Lady Death, thus stems from a Nietzsche phrase but reflects Cocteau's own subconscious to a very considerable extent. The Oedipal nature of the poet's

1. F. Nietzsche, Le Gai Savoir. Édns 10/18, Paris, 1973. Aphorism 72.

2. See p. 21, 88, 89

3. La Corrida du Premier Mai, op. cit.

4. F. Nietzsche, *ibid.*

5. La Corrida du Premier Mai, op. cit. p. 91.

mind is indicated in the description in 'Le Requiem' of Death, not as a seductress or mistress but as a mother. The work of creation goes into reverse in the phrase:

"La Mort, la bonne mère,...." (1)

Even at the end of his life the poet is not able to distinguish clearly between Love, Death and Motherhood. Thus the situation implies a submission and a dedication which is of a nature totally opposed to that of the torero, seeking union with death in the moment of conquering her ambassador:(2)

"Ma découverte (vers 1916) que les muses, loin d'être de bonnes fées, sont des mantes religieuses dévorant le mâle pendant l'acte d'amour, et que la poésie au lieu d'un charme est un sacerdoce." (3)

The poet as a priest can only achieve the ecstasy which the matador achieves in combat by totally submitting to the cruelty of his inspiration, personified in the forces which create him and guide him to his destiny. The titles of two of Cocteau's works serve as a reminder of the forces working on him. 'Les Enfants Terribles' (4) are creatures born of the poet's imagination. They are what he has made them to be: his relationship to them is a maternal one. On the other hand his destiny is in the hands of 'Les Parents Terribles' (5) who at great sacrifice restore to order the microcosm where Michel must live and in which Madeleine must ultimately replace Yolande and the son must take on the role of his father. In this play the storm of disorder is attributed to the influence

1. Le Requiem, op.cit. p. 43.

2. See also Le Requiem, p. 44, where Cocteau describes a bullfighter named Bombita whom he had met in St. Jean de Luz (see La Corrida p. 108)  
"Il était aimé de la dame, la dame lui tendait les bras, métamorphosés en cornes!"

3. Le Cordon Ombilical, op.cit. p.10. See La Corrida du Premier Mai, p.77: The Torero also has a priestly function in the ceremony."..depouillé de cet ornement sacerdotal"..The Priest brings the mystery to the public.

4. Les Enfants Terribles, op.cit.

5. Les Parents Terribles, op.cit.

of the moon, which the orderly Leo must efface as she restores the situation into a properly ordered one:

"Vous autres, gens de la lune, ce que vous valez, on vous l'accorde." (1)

However the desires of the others bring troubles in their wake which the orderly Léonie works poetically to resolve. She can only do so through the death of Yolande which makes a new balance of relationships possible. Once more the moon is associated with turmoil, death and stormy disorder and is seen as an image bearing with it the poet's emotions which are mirrored in the characters he has created. The image created by the poet is thus real in a very true sense, reflecting his own fears, loves and obsessions.

Cocteau frequently spoke of the frenetic act of creating a poem as giving birth to a work of art, revealing that there was special link between the poet and his work and that the work was of the essence of its creator. The idea is also derived from Nietzsche:

"Frédéric Nietzsche parle de ces hommes-mères, de ces hommes qui accouchent sans cesse et qui échappent à l'esprit critique parce que l'esprit créateur les dévore." (2)

He was talking here about Picasso in his loudspeaker address at a Rome exhibition, for he regarded him as being such a great artist as to be above criticism. However he considered himself in a similar light, eaten up by creativity and continually impelled to produce anew the creatures of his imagination. The relevant passage in 'Le Gai Savoir' is a vivid illustration of what Cocteau meant by the agony of the artist at the moment of creating his work. It also makes an interesting comparison with the idea of the femininity of creative ideas propounded by Jung in his anima theory (3) and with the interchange of sexuality in the courtship with Death in the bullring.(4)

1. Ed. Grasset, Théâtre Complet de Cocteau: Les Parents Terribles, op.cit. p. 438. See also pp. 506/7.

2. J. Cocteau, Corrida du Premier Mai. op.cit. p. 197.

3. See section on Jung's psychology.

4. See section on Cocteau and Spain.

"Il nous faut constamment enfanter nos pensées du fond de nos douleurs et les pourvoir maternellement de tout ce qu'il y a en nous de sang, de coeur, de désir, de passion, de tourment, de conscience, de destin, de fatalité. Vivre - cela signifie pour nous; changer constamment en lumière et en flammes tout ce que nous sommes.....seule la grande est la libératrice de l'esprit." (1)

Thus from Nietzsche, Cocteau derived his ideas of giving birth to poetry in suffering, of imparting himself to his work, and his idea of phénixologie, that the artist is continually burning himself in the agony and ecstasy of creativity and is continually being renewed by the sources of his poetic strength. The abjuration to 'change into light and flames....' is also capable of being interpreted as an invitation to use cinema as a vehicle for poetic expression, and Cocteau needed no greater encouragement to turn his attention to that medium. However Nietzsche's concept of the liberating power of poetic pain is far removed from the Surrealist intention to expand the power of man in order to achieve greater dominion over the maternal universe. The spiritual basis of Nietzsche's concept which found a ready response in Cocteau had no parallel in the mystic materialism of the Surrealist. The idea of re-creation is more succinctly expressed elsewhere in 'Le Gai Savoir' with an emphasis on the recurrent nature of the phenomenon and the lodging of the idea in the subconscious itself:

"Que dirais-tu si....un démon se glissait dans ta solitude la plus reculée et te dise; 'Cette vie telle que tu la vis maintenant et que tu l'as vécue tu devras la vivre encore des fois et d'innombrables fois.....' (2)

In Nietzsche the idea of a spirit producing the impetus to inspiration makes its appearance, the germ of an idea which is one of the links between Cocteau and Garcia Lorca examined in the final chapter. Yet it is the same

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1. F. Nietzsche, Le Gai Savoir, Paris, Édm 10/18, UGE, 1973. aphorism 3.

2. *ibid.* aphorism 341.

concept of a poet as a person capable of being possessed by a spirit which inspires and drives him to work, rendering the poet such a special person with a kind of perception, powers and a message for the rest of mankind, singling him out as a kind of superman.

One aspect of the German philosopher's well known idea of the superman also found in Cocteau is that of the pre-eminent, priestly position of the poet, an idea common to both Hugo and Baudelaire:

"Nous savons trop bien certaines choses, nous autres hommes conscients." (1)

Here 'Conscients' is used with the special meaning of 'gifted with special insight' and may be taken to refer particularly to poets, as well as to philosophers. In this instance the Surrealists also were inspired by Nietzsche, for they were looking for a method of acquiring the status of the Conscient which Cocteau considered he had been granted by divine dispensation when he was born a poet.

In a striking passage in 'Journal d'un inconnu' Cocteau shows how the philosophical ideas of the German became transposed into intense poetic feeling in the writing of 'L'ange Heurtebise'. The consciousness becomes a physical pain as a new work of art comes into being:

"L'ange ne se souciait guere de ma révolte. Je n'étais que son véhicule, et il me traitait de véhicule. Il préparait sa sortie. Mes crises accélérèrent leur cadence, et devinrent une seule crise comparable aux approches de l'enfantement. Mais un enfantement monstrueux, qui ne bénéficierait pas de l'instinct maternel et de la confiance qui en résulte. Imaginez une parthénogénèse, un couple formé d'un seul corps et qui accouche. Enfin après une nuit où je pensais au suicide, l'expulsion eut lieu.....(2)

1. Le Gai Savoir. op.cit, aphorism 4.

2. Journal d'un Inconnu. op.cit p. 51.

The poet sees himself gifted with a kind of clairvoyance not of his own making and even doubts his new creation being his own as he becomes one of Nietzsche's 'Hommes-mères'. (1) Yet the work was part of himself, even though his consciousness told him that it also derived from a realm to which the non-poet has no access. His poetry has thus something cosmic about it, transcending all ordinary experience.

On the other hand, once the works had achieved their independent existence, they showed some human qualities which may reflect personality disturbances in the author. At times he saw murderous tendencies in the creatures of his spawning, which recognize their origin and yet attack it:

"Alchimiste fourbu de parthénogénèses

Voici les noirs seigneurs dont le chef de Saint Jean

Semble (décapité par le linge des fraises)

Offert à Salomé sur un plateau d'argent" (2)

There is some link between these ideas and 'Les Parents Terribles' or 'La Machine Infernale'. In both these plays the hero is responsible for the death of a parent. Mik robs his father of a lover, whereas Oedipe, having killed his father, marries his mother. So much has been made of these recurrent themes in the poet's work, that it would be ironic if he were proving the existence of his characters to himself, by attributing to them human emotions and fantasies in a way which is based on the discoveries of contemporary psychology.

Even if this were so, there would nevertheless be, from the source of the works themselves as well as from the poet's concern for them, evidence of profound

1. La Corrida du premier mai, op.cit.p 197.

2. Le cérémonial espagnol du Phénix, op.cit.p 22.

disturbances in his subconscious. This is especially so when one looks at his attitude to his poems earlier in his career, when the work was part of himself, forced out into artistic shape in the heat of the act of creation:

"Écrire, surtout des poèmes, égale transpirer. L'oeuvre est une sueur." (1)

This image completes that of the poet having ink rather than blood in his veins and suggests that he viewed all the contents of his mind, especially his subconscious, as poems waiting to be forced into the mould of poetry. It thus follows that his work reveals, albeit indirectly, his state of mind and his nature. The fantasies of his creation do have a real existence in his mind and are not examples of literary theorising. The idea of his creatures having their own existence and being born out of the the writer's subconscious is not incompatible with his metaphysical concepts of the universe and the role of poets in it, for he believed in the power of the occult forces to suggest poetry to him as well as to provide the impulses which guide him to his destiny. The promptings of the unknown forces provide the poet with the generative force which he needs to produce images from the elements dormant in his subconscious:

"Nous ne prétendons pas analyser une puissance occulte qui imprègne l'univers et qui ne se manifeste pas seulement par l'entremise des artistes." (2)

Cocteau's interest in the hidden forces guiding the universe and in their creative and destructive powers occasionally led him aside from the realm of poetry into that of science and astronomy. This is a continuing interest, first witnessed in 'Le Coq et l'Arlequin' : "L'art est la science faite chair." (3)

His mystic sense applied to his interest in science took some strange turns; in 'La Corrida du premier mai' he reveals his knowledge of the work of a rather odd

1. Le Secret professionnel. op.cit. p 22.

2. ibid. p 52.

3. 'Le Rappel à l'ordre.' 1926. p2. (originally written in 1918).



Austrian astronomer named Hoerbiger (1) who invented a cosmic system of his own and published his ideas on it in 1937. The scientific is allied with mysticism in his account of the dropping of the first atomic bomb, a cataclysm which fascinated him by its very magnitude:

"Les hautes colonnes fulgurantes, qui montaient de Hiroshima et de Nagasaki, ne furent que la colère du chiffre 3 qui se réintègre et retourne dans une zone où l'homme ne se mêle plus de ce qui ne le regarde pas." (2)

The interest in the power of numbers is compulsive in him from early days as one can see from the concept of 'La preuve par 9' which he developed in 1918. However in later life it was more systematic as though he had found a philosophic base for his prediction. The origin of the system is as obscure as its meaning but may derive from Cabalistic studies as suggested in the letters of Max Jacob to Cocteau in 1923 or by the oblique references which one finds in 'La Corrida du Premier Mai' (1)

All these scientific interests are brought together in the chapter 'Des Distances' of 'Le Journal d'un Inconnu' (3) in which a series of dizzy perspectives on space and time, seen as functions of each other, lead him to a poetical consideration of the importance of death as a power which can integrate the soul with the universe:

"Plus ma route s'écourte, plus l'idée de mort me semble facile et plus il me semble rejoindre l'état normal de nullité qui était le mien avant de naître."(4)

In all this amalgam of pseudo-science, genuine science and mysticism, the poet is consistently in search of a key to the sense of order which rules the universe and governs the destiny of all things and all creatures. Although

1. La Corrida du Premier Mai, p.23 op.cit. see section on the moon.
2. Journal d'un Inconnu, p. 78, op.cit.
3. Journal d'un Inconnu, p. 167 -190, op.cit.
4. ibid. p. 190.

he is once again in the same field as the Surrealists, he is proceeding in his characteristically independent manner, seeking the knowledge because of a poetic need to know and not from a will to dominate the secrets of the universe.

The same systematic approach is evident in the way in which he deals with poetry. He attempted to reduce his art to a system in which the ideas would be assimilated, take shape and be given forth. He describes the process as almost mechanical:

"Il faut à tout prix que la poésie batte comme batte le coeur avec sa systole, sa diastole, ses syncopes qui le distinguent d'une machine." (1)

The human element in the heart makes it different from a machine. Poetry also works in a systematic way but with something spiritual in it which gives it its own unique qualities. Man can perceive and the poet can interpret the divine in creating new forms of art. Creating a new work of art is fatiguing, yet when one drives oneself to continue working in a condition of tiredness, one is most likely to enter the transe-like state in which the subconscious can assume control so that in spite of the fatigue, the work takes place more easily, almost of its own accord:

"C'est une des raisons pour lesquelles le cinématographe serait une arme poétique de premier ordre. Dormir debout, c'est parler sans s'en rendre compte. C'est se confier. C'est dire des choses qu'on ne dirait à personne. On s'ouvre. Les ténèbres cessent d'être des ténèbres." (2)

Cocteau suggests that the physical demands made by the problems of organising the film, take so much of his conscious attention that the subconscious is freed to express itself. Thus he has stumbled on a technique for reaching the

1. Le Secret Professionnel, op.cit.p. 47.

2. 1932 postscript to Le Sang d'un Poète, op.cit.

subconscious which the Surrealists themselves had not discovered, yet the state which he describes here is most suitable for Surrealist experiment or for psycho-analytical investigation. In film-making, poetic intuition comes to the aid of the Director as he attempts to create a new poetic order on film from the range of elements at his disposal. It is a particularly tiring form of activity because the poet has to organise other people, technicians as well as actors, and has to capture the whole spirit of his work on celluloid without the advantage of a live audience by which to judge his degree of success during production. Even so, the poetic moment is the moment of 'take' when the director can fully visualise what he is attempting. The fluid shape of the film does not crystallise until it is edited. This is a process which can be so important that the cast may not be able to understand what they have done until they see the film itself. There is an instantaneity about each stage of a film which is a moment of poetry for a director to seize. When the camera rocked at the end of 'Les Parents Terribles', instead of ordering a retake, Cocteau incorporated the rocking into the script as the caravan went on its way. In his statement on 'Sang d'un Poete'<sup>(1)</sup> he indicated how he was able to get his deepest, most personal thoughts into the film and to conceive original ways of expressing them in the exhilaration of the moment which lightens the dark corners of the mind. He is also able to cheat by drawing not on his subconscious but on memories of childhood. This shows that Cocteau does not necessarily consider remote memories to be placed in the subconscious, or that he allowed himself to forget incidents which impressed him. If the incident of the snowball fight was so impressive, there was much of it which was still present in the conscious zones of his mind but there may also be other subconscious urges compelling him to retain certain facts in his memory in the film of obsessions. His interpretation of the snowball fight allows nothing more than the merest glimpse of an incident which seared its way so deeply into his memory

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1. Preface and Postface 1932 and 1946. op.cit.

that he could not describe the appearance of it his film as a manifestation of the subconscious whatever may be the nature of the painful drive which impelled him to magnify the same scene in succeeding parts of his work from its original triviality to a violent impact in 'les Enfants Terribles' then to a murder in 'Le Sang d'un Poète'. Cocteau had inhibitions which prevented him from exploring the subconscious coldly and deliberately in the way the Surrealists approached the problem. He understood too well its power which can be destructive as well as creative; certain mysteries were best left alone by man unless he wished the punishment to descend on his head for usurping the role of the Gods and thus suffer the fate of Jocaste and Laius. Yet he explored those same mysteries, by the immunity of his position as a poet, intuitively in 'Le Sang d'un Poète' 'Orphée', 'Le Testament d'Orphée' and in those other works which penetrate a reality greater than the one which our normal perception can reach. His characters are a part of himself better endowed than he to penetrate the 'nuit' which is their home, and less likely to attract divine retribution.

He was interested in poetry for its own sake; from obedience to its dictates he derived a kind of exaltation which is akin to Rimbaud's state of voyance or to the Surrealist trance which produced automatic writing:

"Ces odeurs qui arrivent des zones interdites rendent ces sens officiels jaloux.....Un merveilleux désordre s'empare de l'individu. Attention! À qui se trouve être dans cet état, tout peut devenir miracle." (1)

Cocteau reveals that it is his subconscious which is in closer contact with the mystery of poetry than the conscious mind and that it is the signal received from that mystery which triggers off the creative impulses. The mystery itself is lost in the supernatural; the poet functioning as a medium presents it in language more accessible to men. He suggests that the language itself comes

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1. J. Cocteau; Le Secret Professionnel. p. 55

from the same mysterious source as the poetry and that therefore it is not entirely within his conscious control. The poem imposes its own form:

"La mise en place du verbe, les terminaisons masculines ou féminines, la pulsation du rythme, l'incroyable sévérité qui nous empêche, là où le lecteur ne saurait voir que paresse, se forment peu à peu, nerveusement, jusqu'au supplice." (1)

For Cocteau the act of creation was a kind of beautiful anguish, like giving birth, but the form of what was created was that of a thought crystalised on paper:

"la forme doit être la forme de l'esprit. Non pas la manière de dire les choses, mais de les penser." (2)

The poem is shaped in the subconscious. To this extent it may be 'lucide' and 'construite' as Dr. Bernard says but 'voulu' implies formation in the conscious rather than the subconscious mind. Cocteau's poetry is shaped and formed in his subconscious as some of the enigmatic poems of *Opéra* (3) demonstrate. The most striking poem on this account is 'Heurtebise'.

Cocteau describes how this poem was created, starting with a striking image of a thought taking concrete form, yet inspired in him by an exterior spiritual agency:

"l'idée que je me formais des anges...; avant que je n'eusse la preuve que leur invisibilité pouvait prendre figure de poème et se rendre visible...."(4)

The thought that was the genesis of the poem was a spirit but there is every indication that it came to the poet through his subconscious. He described the effect which the spirit had on him as it struggles within him to take shape:

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1. Le Secret Professionnel, p. 47.

2. ibid. p. 63

3. J. Cocteau, Opéra, Paris, 1927.

4. Journal d'un Inconnu, pages 48-53. 'De la naissance d'un poème', Paris, 1953.

"Le soir, je m'endormais et me réveillais en sursaut, incapable de retrouver le sommeil. Le jour, je sombrais et trébuchais dans une pâte de songes. Ces troubles devinrent plus atroces. L'ange m'habitait sans que je m'en doutasse...." (1)

At this stage dreams were becoming so real as to be tangible as he felt the spirit take possession of him. His poem was to be born in suffering and the poet was powerless in the grip of his spirit. Although the poet was aware at this stage of his torment, its precise nature was still apparent only in his subconscious which slowly was taking control not merely of his mind but of his whole person. The birth of the poem took place without regard for the poet's consciousness and came forth as a part of the poet himself in a strange reversal of the Narcissus myth;

"Imaginez une parthénogenèse, un couple formé d'un seul corps et qui accouche."  
 Ce qui s'échappait de moi.....se reconstituait à sa guise." (2)

The spirit of the poem needed part of the poet's own body to give it form although the poet could not control the form. Finally the agony of creation was over leaving the poet empty and exhausted. The angel was now a poem in visible form. The agony and the ecstasy of creation was over. The poet was exorcised of his spirit like a Biblical figure and the poem was there, a little of another world given form for man to see:

"Il voulut pénétrer notre règne." (3)

Cocteau thus reveals his mission as a poet, at the same time as he unveils himself as a medium transmitting the divine to mankind and shows the immense role played in this process by his subconscious. The dual sexuality of Cocteau is poignantly expressed but his feeling for his work is less maternal than in 'Le Cordon Ombilical' (4) Moreover the analogy is not strictly of childbirth

1. Journal d'un Inconnu, page 50, 'De la naissance d'un poème', Paris, 1953.

2. Journal d'un Inconnu. *ibid.* p. 51.

3. *ibid.* p 53

4. *op.cit.*

but more of deliverance from some kind of demonic possession, as though he was glad to be rid of his inspiration. At the moment of poetic creation he lived a secret thrill, fear and anticipation as his intuition reached into normally forbidden zones:

"(Mon pouls) saute sous ma plume et fait ce vacarme inimitable, farouche, nocturne, complexe au possible, de mon coeur enregistré dans 'Le Sang d'un Poète' (1)

Here are the elements of wildness mingled in the poet's night and interwoven in the web of his film by the power of his intuition. Yet the poet's instincts can play tricks on him if he does not keep them under control. They may wander at random, unearthing a plethora of unconnected trivia from all the various recesses of the subconscious. At times as in 'Journal d'un Inconnu' such a procedure may be useful. but, although each separate chapter has its own significance and each one is linked with the theme of the author's life, there is none of the rigorous unity characteristic of his plays or films:

"J'avais remarqué, à la campagne, et Montaigne l'explique mieux que moi, comme l'imagination se débride et s'éreinte à l'aveuglette si on ne la fixe pas sur quelque objet. Ce journal, par chapitres, n'est pas autre chose que la discipline d'un esprit en vacances et qui se regroupe par crainte de se perdre aux loisirs. "(2)

Even in this instance the author indicates the effort he has made to impose a measure of unity on his work. However he comments that he found it beyond his capability to write with his conscious mind in control of his ideas. It is not the same to impose a control based in the conscious upon elements welling up from the subconscious, as to write in an entirely conscious way:

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1. La Difficulté d'être, op.cit. p. 173.

2. Journal d'un Inconnu, p. 12. op.cit.

"Je raconte dans 'Opium' une liberté que j'ai prise pendant 'Les Enfants Terribles'. Flatté par l'allure de ma plume, je me crus libre d'inventer moi-même. Tout s'arrête." (1)

He learned this particular lesson fairly early and rarely attempted the deliberate type of composition after 'Les Enfants Terribles' and when he did in the instances of 'La Machine à Écrire' and 'Les Monstres sacrés' he records his failure saying he had produced 'Deux taches d'encre' (2). Even when using his system of composing by intuition, the work did not necessarily come to him in a continuous stream but was interrupted on occasions by a loss of the thread of the work, which he was able to pick up again after an interval. In the case of 'La Machine Infernale' he reveals that the fault was sometimes as much his own doing as simply a loss of contact with his inspiration. The writer has to give himself entirely to his work and only when he does so can the magic of creation from the resources of the subconscious take place:

"'La Machine infernale' usait d'un autre système. Elle m'abandonnait pendant des périodes fort longues. Elle attendait que d'autres fièvres cessassent de m'occuper. Elle me voulait à elle. Avais-je une distraction, elle me tournait le dos." (3)

The poet held a profound respect for the power of his secret resources which he knew well. It is an act of courage to enter that hidden world which contains so many fearsome things. Moreover to enter the realm of one's own subconscious gives one the power of access to the secret emotions of all mankind inasmuch as there is in each of us a component of the collective unconscious of us all (4). The poet as a medium, interpreting his strange realm, needs his special powers which impose on him special responsibilities for he can see further than other men:

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1. La Difficulté d'être, op.cit, p. 42.

2. Le Cordon Ombilical, op.cit, p. 29.

3. La Difficulté d'être, p. 42.

4. See section on Jung.



"L'Homme est occupé par une ténèbre, par des monstres des zones profondes. Il ne peut y descendre, mais cette nuit quelquefois dépêche des ambassadeurs assez terribles, par l'entremise des poètes. Ces ambassadeurs vous intriguent. Ils vous attirent et vous répugnent. Vous cherchez à comprendre leur langue et, ne la comprenant pas, vous demandez aux poètes qu'ils vous la traduisent. Hélas, les poètes ne la comprennent pas davantage et se contentent d'être les humbles domestiques de ces ambassadeurs, les médiums de ces fantômes individualistes qui vous hantent, qui vous dérangent et que vous aimeriez bien syndicaliser." (1)

If this world is so terrible one wonders why the poet is so attracted to it. The answer lies in its truth, its reality. The world of poetry manifest in the subconscious is both a refuge and a defence against the stupefying forces of blind reason which had been the mark of art at the end of the nineteenth century and which the new poetic movements such as symbolism in poetry and in painting, impressionism, fauvism and cubism, were to break down, so that the way was clear for a poetry of perception, intuition and a new kind of reality, which the Surrealists and Cocteau were seeking in their closely allied planes, and in their characteristic ways. In a world of materialism, the poet represents the search for the soul, the spiritual quest as a counter to the pressures of contemporary society.

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1. Lettre aux Américains, *Poésie Critique* 2, p. 69. op.cit.

ii. THE NATURE OF THE IMAGE

The Surrealists felt intensely the materialism and the mechanism of the twentieth century but they began their search for a new spirituality or expression of the poetic idea within its limits. This horizon appears to have bounded their horizon in poetical thinking, if less so in their painting.

In Point du Jour Breton reveals an element of disappointment at the way in which he was failing to reach his objectives. Although he was becoming disenchanted with the possibilities of automatic writing, he did not lose faith in the value of Surrealist investigation into the subconscious nor in the need for fundamental reform of ways of thinking and for complete revolution in the arts:

"L'histoire de l'écriture automatique dans le surréalisme serait, je ne crains pas de le dire, celle d'une infortune continue....j'ai compté sur le débit torrentiel de l'écriture automatique pour le nettoyage définitif de l'écurie littéraire. A cet égard la volonté d'ouvrir toutes grandes les écluses restera l'idée génératrice du surréalisme." (1)

The classical reference to the Augean stables shows how complete the domination of classicism had been on the style of French writers. Breton's contempt for tradition does not accord with the use of such an image; the explanation being that he is so permeated with the tradition that he uses it unawares. The Surrealist movement moved away gradually from its preoccupation with automatic expression partly on account of the unsatisfactory results it achieved but also because of growing interests in other spheres. The mystic side of Surrealism came to the fore as the movement developed and political considerations had become extremely important by 1930. Painting was becoming a better known expression of the movement than its writings. When Breton looked back over the development of Surrealism he indicated how and why automatism had become less important:

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1. A. Breton, Point du Jour, 1934, p. 226.

"A l'origine le surréalisme se concevait comme 'dictée de la pensée... etc, à l'abri de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale'. Cette formule ne continue à valoir que pour l'automatisme." (1)

The Surrealists did not desert automatism but the stream of thought from the subconscious became a less vital consideration to them. By 1953 Breton had come to a view bearing comparison with Cocteau's that poetic intuition was man's best hope for penetrating and portraying the nature around us (2). However in probing the subconscious or in deploying the power of poetic intuition the Surrealists were aiming at increasing the power of man to comprehend the universe and to make use of that new comprehension in the daily organisation of their lives. In seeking to bring the material and spiritual together, they promulgated a new concept of reality which could not be accepted by an orthodox realist or materialist, seeking as they did 'connaissance de la *réalité* suprasensible'. (3) Such an attitude, together with their tendency to exalt the individual rather than society as a whole was bound to bring them into conflict with some of the philosophical aspects of Marxism, even though they espoused its political cause for the sake of overthrowing the old order. They agreed with the Marxists about the value of the ordinary people, the irrelevance of previous thinking to the needs of the new society and the overriding importance of material considerations but were bound to disagree eventually when the question of imagination and the value of the individual became issues. Breton's own outlook, although not theistic and therefore not religious, was imbued with a spirituality, a transcendence of reality, which in the long run, Marxism could not match. He had early developed a concept of perception which expressed reality in ordinary language;

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1. A. Breton, Entretiens, p. 254.

2. A. Breton, Manifestes, p. 188 'Du surréalisme en ses oeuvres vives', 1953.

3. *ibid.*

but the reality was shaped in the mind and perceived by the mind from the images arising from the Subconscious. He outlined the nature of this process in a comment on automatic writing:

"On peut même dire que les images apparaissent comme les seuls guides de l'esprit. L'esprit se convainc peu à peu de la réalité suprême de ces images." (1)

This view of perception is entirely subjective since all depends not on the image but on the orientation of the perceptive faculty. The subject can shape, distort and reform any object in his mind to become anything he decides it will become. Salvador Dalí's method of critical paranoia is precisely this although he developed his mode of irrational perception to a degree beyond the scope of Surrealism and outside the limits of the subconscious. The Jung school of psychoanalysis saw this type of perception as being essential in a work of art and quoted the words of Giorgio di Chirico who had been closely associated with the very earliest Surrealist experiments and who was greatly admired by Cocteau. Chirico wrote:

" 'Every object has two aspects; the common aspect which is the one we generally see, and which is seen by everyone, and the ghostly and metaphysical aspect, which only rare individuals see at moments of clairvoyance and metaphysical meditation. A work of art must relate to something that does not appear in its visible form.'.....Chirico's works are dreamlike transpositions of reality which arise as visions from the subconscious." (2)

The power of perceptive minds to create new images is a quality of the mind itself as it is a function of the reality of the image. What kind of reality the image had before being fixed by the mind of the artist, it is impossible to say, although a Surrealist will affirm that it is in the subconscious. In stressing

1. A. Breton; Manifeste du Surréalisme. p. 52.

2. The passage is taken from Chirico's 'Memoria della mia vita' and appears in English in 'Man and his Symbols' p. 293.

the powers of clairvoyancy and meditation Chirico is moving away from Breton's notion of the arts being for anyone who wishes to practise them towards Cocteau's idea of the poet as a kind of priest of the infinite . The new subjective reality is what Cocteau meant in his phrase; 'irréel d'un réalisme passant les bornes' (1) where the unreality perceived by the poet is more true than the reality of this new unreality. Cocteau and Breton are not so far apart as they seem for if the value they place on the poet as a person is different, that which they place on poetic perception is closely similar.

Cocteau saw Chirico as a poet because of his way of seeing reality in a personal way: 'Chirico me prouve l'existence d'une vérité de l'âme' (2), Even as early as 1932, Cocteau had grasped the essentials of Surrealist perception, which Breton finally expressed in 1953. Cocteau's explanation of reality which justifies his own claim and Chirico's to artistic integrity is very similar to the one which Breton formulated towards the end of his career:(3)

"Le réalisme consiste à copier avec exactitude les objets d'un monde propre à l'artiste et sans le moindre rapport avec ce qu'on a coutume de prendre pour la réalité.(4)

He adds to this a comment reiterating what he had already said in the preface to 'Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel' and which even more closely compares with Breton's view in 1953:

"Le vrai réalisme consiste à montrer les choses surprenantes que l'habitude cache...." (5)

This is almost exactly what Breton said, that through the exercise of Surrealism 'L'homme peut faire servir le peu qu'il sait de lui-même à la reconnaissance de ce qui l'entoure." (6)

1. J. Cocteau, Hommage à Gongora in Clair-obscur, 1954.
2. J. Cocteau, Essai de Critique Indirecte, p. 152. 1932.
3. See two pages previously.
4. J. Cocteau, Essai de Critique Indirecte, p. 159.
5. Essai de Critique Indirecte, p. 160.
6. Du Surrealisme en ses oeuvres vives, p. 187.

The intuition of the poet is subjective and his interpretation of what he perceives will be personal. It is the poet's duty to present a faithful image of his personal vision to his public.

In his definition of Surrealism in 1924, Breton demonstrated that the objective of Surrealism was to express pure thought by driving it from its very source and by not allowing the conscious mind to influence it either esthetically or morally. He was to reiterate this later condition in 1934 in 'Point du Jour' even though by then he was beginning to move away from the idea of automatism as an access to the subconscious. Even in the early days Breton could see that his objective was at least as likely to be achieved through the medium of the other arts as it was through literature:

"Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, ou en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale." (1)

The expression was not necessarily in written form, showing that from the beginning Surrealism was not exclusively concerned with only automatic writing but also with other modes of automatic expression. In stressing the absence of moral or esthetic considerations, Breton was not necessarily implying that the Surrealists were amoral or that they deliberately cultivated the ugly, although the code of esthetics and morals of those who practised Surrealism may well have been at variance with that of the rest of society. He was saying that if purity of thought is to be obtained, then all moral and esthetic considerations must be suppressed, along with other manifestations of the conscious mind, imprisoned in the traditions of centuries. Neither Cocteau nor Rimbaud were in agreement with the Surrealists on this point; for in their own way each was seeking a special sort of Beauty, considering the rigour with

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1. Manifeste du Surréalisme, p. 37.

which they expressed their vision as a personal moral code, in which morals and esthetics were inexplicably interwoven.

In the six years between the two manifestos, Breton's thoughts crystallised, partly under the influence of Hebraic Cabalism, into a mystic view of the subconscious as containing a point where thought came to have very special magical powers:

"Tout porté à croire qu'il existe un certain point de l'esprit d'où la vie et la mort, le réel et l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable, cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement. Or c'est en vain qu'on chercherait à l'activité surréaliste un autre mobile que l'espoir de détermination de ce point." (1)

By now Breton was less concerned with torrents of automatic production than in finding this point of supreme perception, which would become a new philosophers' stone, giving supreme power to thought and to the mind which controls it. Yet the mind could only control that power by bringing the subconscious as a whole under its dominion. The point must lie in the subconscious for if it lay elsewhere in the mind, it would have already been made use of. It is there that one may find the lost intuitive power of the mind which generations of civilisations have suppressed.

In seeking the magical point, Surrealism became separate from reality and entered the realm of abstraction. Paradoxically enough, the precise time at which Surrealism was at its most abstract, was the one at which it became most deeply involved in political activity. Perhaps it was the idea of revolution, maybe just the association of ideas contained in the word, coupled with Breton's ideal of the democratic nature of Surrealism, which, for a short time, lead him into the error of believing that his movement was compatible with Communism until

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1. Second Manifeste du Surréalisme, p, 77.



experience showed him that Surrealism had little in common with the rigid hierarchical structure and completely materialistic outlook of Marxist-Leninism. Nevertheless Surrealism was attempting for literature a revolution on similar terms as the Communists had achieved in Russia for politics. A clue to the train of thought which put Breton on the way to political involvement appears in 'Le Manifeste du Surréalisme':

"Le seul mot de liberté est tout ce qui m'exalte encore. Je le crois propre à entretenir indéfiniment le vieux fanatisme humain." (1)

In 1924 he was opposing 'liberté' to 'esclavage de l'imagination' but the terms which he uses are easily transposed to the field of politics, especially when one takes into account the value placed by the Surrealists on the poetic ACT. In talking about fanaticism, he shows that Surrealism is not really so remote from certain creeds either religious or political, which non-devotees consider extremist. By 1930 his group had joined the Communists although not wholeheartedly, nor were they welcomed without reservations:

"J'accepte, cependant, que par suite d'une méprise, rien de plus, on m'ait pris dans le parti communiste pour un des intellectuels les plus indésirables."(2)

In logical pursuance of their ideals of democracy, freedom and fanaticism the Surrealists had drawn close to the political party which they most resembled. Breton's mortification at being told that Surrealism was a counter-revolutionary philosophy (3) is equalled by the determined sympathy he showed for the mass of the people (4). However, looking back on the scene he was able to see that the principal concern of the Surrealists was the subconscious, which was low in the Communists' list of priorities, if it was there at all:

1. Manifeste du Surréalisme, p. 12.

2. Second Manifeste, p. 99.

3. ibid. p. 98.

4. ibid. p. 99.

"Le propre du surréalisme est d'avoir proclamé l'égalité totale de tous les êtres humains normaux devant le message subliminal."(1)

Breton here links his literary and political beliefs in a way which the Communists would be most unlikely to accept and shows his continuing faith that the value of subconscious perception is of universal application. It seems that the subconscious is a common denominator of mankind; that outside its range, factors of personality, individuality and ability account for the differences that exist between people. The reasons behind the political involvement of the Surrealists are most clearly put forward in the 'second Manifeste' and indicate that their concern with the subconscious is itself part of a more general concern, in which political action is identified as another form of human expression on a par with literature and the fine arts. Such expression, originating in the subconscious, must encourage the development of the intellect and sensibilities of all men in freedom from repression:

"Le problème de l'action sociale n'est, je tiens à y revenir et j'y insiste, qu'une des formes d'un problème plus général que le surréalisme s'est mis en devoir de soulever et qui est celui de l'expression humaine sous toutes ses formes." (2)

A political creed allowing this kind of expression must be revolutionary. Unfortunately for the Surrealists the Revolution of Marxist-Leninism also imposed a ruthless discipline on society which they found an intolerable limitation on their ideal of setting free the imagination or liberating the conscience of the individual.

By contrast Cocteau did not become politically involved. He saw himself exclusively as a poet. He was unconcerned with people as a mass, being aware of the individual and his capacity for poetry on the one hand and his fate on the

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1. A. Breton, Point du Jour, p. 241.

2. Second Manifeste, p. 108.

other. Moreover his preoccupation with self, immersed as he was in poetry, made him avoid political involvement, although by virtue of his social origin, he was associated by many with the right rather than the left. The rejection of the Surrealists by those whose commitment was wholly political shows that Cocteau's outlook was more realistic and his view of the poet's social role more accurate. The poet should concentrate on finding and expressing new images of reality which would be beyond the compass of political considerations yet not entirely without relevance to them. Time was to show that he was right when the Surrealists were obliged to abandon their own political involvement and seek to redefine the status of poetry in a society becoming increasingly materialistic. It is at this point that the similarity of their viewpoint and Cocteau's makes itself apparent. In each case an image is sought in the subconscious and given a form which could have a profound effect on the way of life of not only an individual but of a whole society. Cocteau's images differ in being carefully formed expressions of a personal anguish whereas Breton and his friends appeared to have more general and social concerns in their own subconscious.

iii. INSPIRATION IN THE SUBCONSCIOUS

In quoting Dr. Schrenk-Notzing's view of automatism Breton indicates some of the hopes which he had had of it and possibly some of the reasons for his failing to achieve all his objectives:

"Un moyen assuré de favoriser l'essor des facultés psychiques; et particulièrement de talent artistique, en concentrant la conscience sur la tâche à accomplir et en affranchissant l'individu de facteurs inhibitoires qui le réjettent et le troublent au point parfois d'empêcher absolument l'exercice de ses dons latents." (1)

Allowing the subconscious full freedom was not likely to concentrate the consciousness, but rather to allow it to sleep. While the inhibitions of conscious thought might thus be set aside, the inhibited factors could only be expressed in a way totally unorganised by the consciousness. It was just this organisation into poetic form which Cocteau regarded as the essence of the poetic function. However the objectives which the Surrealists hoped to achieve in their researches into the subconscious become apparent and had they been more willing to recognize that the conscious mind also had a part to play in artistic expression by setting some kind of form to it, their revolution in thought would have borne even more fruit immediately.

With the aid of the techniques which they developed, the Surrealist attempted a series of researches which were intended to go to the very source of myth buried deep in the subconscious. Breton saw analogies with his project in various mystical philosophies, including both alchemy and Hebraic Cabalism!

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1. A. Breton ; Point du Jour, p. 243.

"...les recherches surréalistes présentent, avec les recherches alchimiques une remarquable analogie de but; la pierre philosophale n'est rien autre que ce qui permet à l'imagination de l'homme de prendre sur toutes choses une revanche éclatante et nous voici de nouveau après des siècles de domestication de l'esprit et de résignation folle à tenter d'affranchir définitivement cette imagination par le 'long immense raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens' et le reste." (1)

Breton shows here how he rejects the established values of civilisation because they stultify the imagination. He also shows how the object of the Surrealists is to liberate the mind from its centuries old straightjacket by encouraging new ways of thinking, even incorporating hallucination into its scope. The philosophers' stone of the alchemists turned base metal into gold. That of the Surrealists was to perform a similar transmutant function for the quality of thought. With his last word 'et le reste', Breton rejects even the boundaries on the thought of Rimbaud; for the Surrealists the imagination knows no limits at all. The Surrealists' equivalent of the philosophers' stone was the word, the image; "Soit qu'elle soit d'ordre hallucinatoire, soit qu'elle prête très naturellement à l'abstrait, le masque du concret, ou inversement, soit qu'elle implique la négation de quelque propriété physique, soit qu'elle déchaîne le rire." (2)

The image had the transmutant power over thought to change it into forms which could be reached by the intuition or perception. It could even alter the form of reality so that it might be viewed in a new way which might be illuminating or just amusing. The image frees the subconscious from the depths of the mind where it is buried, allowing it to become thought accessible to the normal thinking

1. A. Breton, Second Manifeste. Breton is quoting from Rimbaud. p. 135.
2. A. Breton, Second Manifeste, p. 136.

mind where the process of imagination could begin to work on it, so resulting ultimately in the surrealist illumination. The process of transposing subconscious thought into poetic illumination is not so far removed from Cocteau's concept of producing poetry from the night of the human mind so that the rest of mankind might apprehend the secret of the messages of the Gods. The Surrealists were seeking ways of exteriorising thought which they believed to be engendered not only in themselves but in everybody. Their idea that anyone by the practice of Surrealism, could become a poet or artist is a different facet of Cocteau's idea that the secrets of the subconscious originate outside the individual human mind in a mysterious zone controlled by unknown forces which command the whole universe, the 'Inconnu' towards which Rimbaud strove. Cocteau took it as the poet's privilege and duty to present those secrets for the rest of mankind. Poetry was thus a form of religion to Cocteau whereas it was manner of existence to the Surrealists. Through the alchemy of the image the Surrealist would be moved to a state bordering complete ecstasy in which his perceptive powers are heightened. To the non-initiate such a state would seem like madness but for the Surrealist it becomes almost a trance which resembles in certain respects the contemplative trances of the Yoga and of the Buddhists:

"....il ne s'agit pas d'un simple regroupement des mots ou d'une redistribution capricieuse des images visuelles, mais de la récréation d'un état qui, n'ait plus rien à envier à l'aliénation mentale." (1)

Breton shows how the Surrealists were to achieve this state of exaltation and the benefits which he thought they would derive from so doing;

"Si l'effort du Surréalisme, avant tout, a tendu à remettre en faveur l'inspiration et, pour cela, si nous avons prôné de la manière la plus exclusive l'usage des formes automatiques de l'expression; si, d'autre part, la psychanalyse, au-delà de toute attente, est parvenue à charger de sens pénétrable ces sortes

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1. A. Breton, Second Manifeste. p. 136.

d'improvisations que jusqu'à elle on s'accommodait trop bien de tenir pour gratuites et leur a conféré, en dehors de toute considération esthétique une valeur de document humain très suffisante...." (1)

Breton goes on to say that although these conditions have been fulfilled the conditions required for obtaining automatic texts have not been fully investigated. He brackets together inspiration and automatic expression and suggests that it is thanks to psychoanalysis that we are able to make sense of them and thus formulate an idea of the nature of the subconscious in terms which we can appreciate consciously. He stresses the scientific rather than poetic role of psychoanalysis and indicates that Surrealism has aesthetic reasons for pursuing similar lines of research to the scientists ( or pseudo-scientists). However it was the Jung school of psychoanalysis rather than the Freudian one which considered the problem of creativity in art and the subconscious and they point to the reasons why Breton's group had relatively little success in producing works of literary merit as distinct from a philosophy and way of life or works of artistic value. It is perhaps therefore a little strange that Breton appeared so unaware of the importance of Jung's psychology, in spite of the attention which they gave to his ideas:

"How does the relationship between consciousness and the unconscious take shape in the work of modern artists? (2)

.....One answer may be found in the movement called surrealism...

Andre Breton wrote 'I believe that the apparent antagonism between dream and reality will be resolved in a kind of absolute reality - in surreality'. (3)

1. *ibid.* Point du Jour, Paris, 1934. p. 223.

2. Jung developed the Freudian concept of the subconscious from a static phase based in infancy to a dynamic state maturing in harmony with the conscious mind, which he called "unconscious". Both Jung's and Freud's words are rendered in French as "inconscient".

3. Manifeste du Surréalisme. p23: "Je crois à la résolution future de ces deux états, en apparence si contradictoires que sont le rêve et la réalité, en une sorte de surréalité pour ainsi dire."



But the way he took to reach his goal could only lead him astray...the way is opened to a stream of unconscious images, and the important or even decisive part to be played by consciousness is ignored....Consciousness alone is competent to determine the meaning of the images and to recognise their significance for man here and now, in the conscious reality of the present. Only in the interplay of consciousness and the unconscious can the unconscious prove its value...." (1)

In seeking the source of inspiration, the surrealists omitted to chart its course through to imagination and illumination. Cocteau realised that the fact of inspiration was more important to him than its source; he maintained that there are mysteries which should remain mysteries. The inspiration itself was sufficient for him. It was this which he sought to shape consciously and deliberately into poetry whether it be on the stage, the screen or in verse. This inadequacy of the philosophy of surrealism in the face of aesthetic considerations, was the cause of the departure from its ranks of such figures as Aragon, Eluard and Dali. They were to do their best work when they had gone beyond Surrealism to the stage where they could impose their conscious will on the ideas welling up from their subconscious. On the other hand Surrealist painting was to degenerate into such joke-art forms as action painting or to evolve in new ways into abstract painting and to become popularised in the psychedelic shapes and colours of pop-art.

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1. Man and his symbols, published Dell, New York 1968. p. 296.

a symposium directed by John Freeman under the Guidance and Editorship of C.G.Jung. Contributors; M-L von Franz, Joseph L. Henderson, Jolande Jacobi, Aniela Jaffé. published in English.

**iv. F A T E**

In spite of the parallels between the Surrealists and Cocteau and of the claim that he was working on similar lines to theirs, he did not have the same blind trust in poetry's power to rejuvenate man's psyche by an appeal to primeval urges, trusting that instinct is more faithful as guide to the needs of society than conscious thought. For him the subconscious was rather the ground on which the human and the divine could meet, where the gods left the messages for the poet to interpret. Moreover he was wary of the subconscious as if there were elements of his distant past repressed in it which he had no desire to re-activate. His poetry thus becomes an amalgam of the divine and the personal which is expressed sometimes in a visionary manner, but always concisely and lucidly, shaped with a conscious will and skill totally at variance with the random images and descriptions of dreams which were typical of the Surrealists. He expresses his mistrust of the subconscious by emphasizing the differences between his own interpretation of the Oedipus myth and Freud's;

"En ce qui concerne le complexe d'Oedipe, Freud coinciderait presque avec notre ligne (nuit humain qui nous pousse dans un piège sous prétexte d'en éviter un autre). Les Dieux s'amuse à combiner une farce dont Oedipe est la victime." (1)

'La Machine Infernale' in some respects is a parallel to 'Orphée'. The Sphinx and the Princesse fulfil similar roles as the agent of Death, of Fate. In Act II the Sphinx imprisons Oedipe in her web before whispering the solution of the riddle to him, so that he can answer and save himself. However the imprisonment is a temporary trance induced by the hypnotic suggestion of the Sphinx, so that he is able to penetrate the illusion of her outward form to her real nature. In this trance he learns the secret which he will be able to use

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1. J. Cocteau, Journal d'un Inconnu. Paris 1952. p. 41.

to destroy her. In this the confrontation resembles that of Stanislas and the Reine, who can never meet as equals on this earth. So the dream of Oedipe gives him a supernatural power to see into the future, but here he is in the realm of the Gods and they will wreak on him the vengeance for his trespass as they had promised his parents through the oracle:

"Fermez les yeux. Ne trichez pas. Comptez jusqu'à cinquante." (1)

As Oedipe opens his eyes, he exclaims: "Je rêve" and in fact he has gone through a process which is calculated to induce a hypnotic state of poetic meditation. Now he is in the power of the Sphinx and no longer master of himself, being in the same position as the poet before the tribunal in 'Le Testament d'Orphée'. The Sphinx reminds him that he trespassed of his own volition and must accept what fate has in store for him:

"Ce que tu veux, tu le veux, tu l'as voulu. Silence. Ici, j'ordonne. Approche".  
(1)

But now Oedipe is bound and helpless until the Sphinx, like a hypnotist releasing a subject says 'Tu es libre' and allows Oedipe to waken from his trance. The scene is played again, in reality, at the insistence of Anubis. Oedipe answers the riddle and the Sphinx takes on her divine form again, learning of the fate in store for him with pleasure as she anticipates the vengeance to descend on the ungrateful hero. It is interesting that the small boy was able to perceive the nature of the Sphinx even in her human guise, without the need to enter a trance for children live in the world of dreams from which they emerge unharmed. The child's mother however is unable to penetrate the mystery, although traces of it are suggested to her by her subconscious.

"Maman, dis, c'est cette dame le Sphinx?"

"Tu es trop bête"

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Croyez-moi, nous ne serions tranquilles que si un homme à poigne nous débarrasse de ce fléau" (2)

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1. J. Cocteau, op.cit. p.81. La Machine Infernale.

2. ibid. p.70

In spite of the prophetic overtones referring to the coming political and military struggle with Hitler and the re-echoing of the need, so loudly proclaimed in the same terms by the French Right Wing, of a political strong man, the mother's comment bears directly on the drama for it shows that she was aware of the danger hanging over the country, posed by the Sphinx. This incident in the play also points to the contemporary political analogy by suggesting that in times of trouble the ordinary people look to a hero to save them. There is no need to suggest that Cocteau is advocating Fascism in indicating this solution for this kind of appeal is implicit in the French tradition of looking to a powerful warrior to lead in times of crisis. However the sequel in Cocteau's drama hints that when a nation chooses this way out they might place themselves in a situation which was not entirely satisfactory to them and that the Gods have their own way of abasing those who aim too high or who wilfully abandon paths of honour and duty. The fears of the woman during her encounter with the disguised monster suggest the promptings of a subconscious which she was totally unable to heed with her conscious mind, yet this same meeting softened the heart of the Sphinx, making her realise the terror which her killing had wrought, so that she was disposed to favour Oedipe when he appeared.

In his confrontation with the Sphinx, Oedipe was endowed with a greater than normal power of perception; even so, he was unable to see far enough, for the Gods made use of his own pride to conceal from him that he was placing himself in the power of the monster. She for her part tried to avoid him:

"Mêlez-vous, cher Monsieur, de ce qui vous regarde et laissez-moi passer mon chemin." (1)

The struggle was sought by the man, not the god. Further warnings failed to deter him from his purpose. At one point it seemed that he had forgotten

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1. Jean Cocteau, La Machine Infernale, op.cit. p.73.

the prophecies of his doom altogether, being motivated in his task by an overweening ambition to win the prize of being the new King of Thebes. A remark calculated to point out the enormity of his aspiration completely fails to daunt him:

"Croyez-vous qu'une reine et un peuple se livrent au premier venu?" (1)

Indeed he appears all the more eager to rush to his fate, not even thinking that the Queen might be his own mother or that he might in any way be lacking in the qualities required of a king. In his blind confidence in his destiny and his fixedness of intention to follow it to the limit and beyond, Oedipe resembles his author. The Sphinx too appears as if she might be an imaginative representation of the relationship always possessive and at times stormy between himself and Madame Cocteau, yet since Oedipe's mother is also present in the story, she may instead be a portrayal of some feminine force seeking to take him away from his mother and from his duty too, an unceasing conflict between his family relationships and his poetic task:

In the end the Sphinx becomes exasperated and gives a warning that is explicit, yet still unheeded:

"La manière la plus sûre de déjouer l'oracle ne serait-elle pas d'épouser une femme plus jeune que vous?" (2)

Finally provoked into anger by the young man's obstinacy and incomprehension the Sphinx enters into her foreordained role with a savage joy at humbling one who had so spurned her self-sacrifice.

These warnings resemble the one's gives to Orphée in the film not to tamper with the spiritual, for it is not the preserve of mankind but of God. The wrath about to fall on Oedipe stems from the sin of pride in Jocasta and Laertes in wanting to know the future, thus trespassing in a forbidden zone. If Oedipe is

1. *ibid.* p. 76.

2. J. Cocteau, *ibid.* p. 77.

blind to the warning, it is because the Gods wanted him to be so. Heir to the same fault as his parents, he was incapable of leaving the Sphinx so the Gods lead him into the trap. Cocteau can feel at one with his hero for he as a poet is near to committing the same sin and risks equally terrible punishment. There is also a parallel between the relationship of the hero in the myth with his parents and Cocteau's own quest for his parents and a proper relationship with them. Another link with his personal mythology appears in the dominant personality of the female Sphinx, who enslaves Oedipe just as the Dame Blanche of 'La Corrida du Premier Mai' ensnares the bullfighter.

The close link which the poet found between the woman-god-like nature of the Sphinx and the power of attraction which lured him into the unreal world of mystery and poetry, in which he was in her thrall, is revealed in her saying:

"Je suis du sexe qui déjoue les héros." (1)

a comment which brings into a new focus Cocteau's remark about the power of 'Le Sexe surnaturel de la beauté' which was an attraction possessed by certain men, for Cocteau was so bound up in his world of poetry, his subconscious tie with his mother and possibly his sister, his loss of his father and his need to spawn a creation of his own mind, that he was remote from normal, physical earthly passion. The Sphinx was able to perceive the confusion and weakness behind the hero's pride and forced him to state his immediate object in life which was poetic glory. Since both personalities are part of a dream of the poet and both represent some element in his subconscious, we are forced to conclude that the will to public acclaim, the pride in self and the realisation that these traits are self-delusion, are all fundamental in the nature of the man.

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1. *ibid.* p. 78.

In face of his pride in insisting on his *quest* for the Sphinx, she offered him an alternative, more divine, poetic way of life which he rejected:

"Aimer, être aimé de ce qu'on aime." (1)

The poetic mission of the hero was to emulate the gods, in spite of his knowledge of the risks he was running, so that he was unable to accept the offer of the Sphinx to let him pass by in ignorance, for she could see his weakness which lay in pride:

"Les faibles me plaisent et j'eusse aimé vous prendre en défaut." (2)

Even then, she did not take the steps to entice him into her power without a final warning:

"Jusqu'à nouvel ordre, rien d'autre ne préoccupe votre esprit.....que le Sphinx." (3)

Thus the hero's search for poetic knowledge, the face of every danger, was to lead him irrevocably into the fate prepared for him, a fate which he had to accept as the price of his mission.

In Cocteau's subconscious he identifies himself with 'Oedipe' as he proved in 'Le Testament d'Orphée' in the scene where he passed the ghost of the hero as he allowed himself to be led down into hell. Perhaps he was also conscious that he resembled Oedipe at least in as much as he too walked with a limp. In 'La Machine Infernale' his other self, his hero seeks the source of his poetry and, having shut his father from his mind, returns to his mother. That this is not his true mission he realises and accepts that he must accept the ghostly guidance of his father and go about his business blindly, guided only by his subconscious. The Sphinx who takes him into her power is the true poetry, the real muse and his ingratitude kills her. He is unable to perceive her when he is blinded from

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1. Ibid. p. 75.

2. Ibid. p. 79.

3. Ibid. p. 79.



ordinary perception as a punishment for his crimes yet given a divinely inspired inner light which enables him to accept the guidance of her ghost in the last scene. In that scene he is able to distinguish her maternal role and realise he cannot find a wife to replace her or the Sphinx. So he accepts the guidance of Antigone, an angelic creature of his own making, born of himself and his crimes. The priest can thus send them on their way to the immortality of myth, knowing that they are no longer of this world:

"Ils ne t'appartiennent plus.....(ils appartiennent) Aux peuples, aux poètes, aux coeurs purs." (1)

The punishment of Oedipe was in one sense a judgement on his parent who had encroached on the privileges of the gods by wanting to know the future; but even more so because they did not seek to appease the wrath of the gods, but rather attempted to deceive them and in doing so reaped a double judgement for rejecting their duties as parents. In this respect the fate of the child of Jocaste and Laius resembles that of the offspring of Pasiphae for the judgement for her enormities appeared also in the fate and form of her offspring. Cocteau's comment shows that he follows the classical belief of Sophocles in exterior fate whereas Freud reveals his own belief in the chance nature of fate in which free will plays a part. For him the attraction between Jocaste and Oedipe as well as the conflict between Oedipe and Laius are inherent in their natures and similar relationships are inevitable in any family. On the other hand Cocteau accepts that the fate of Oedipe was;

"une des plus parfaites machines construites par les dieux pour l'anéantissement mathématique d'un mortel." (2)

He thus accepts predestination, conditioned by exterior sources, rather than believing that Oedipe yielded to the forbidden desires of his own subconscious. Considering that the gods do not normally intervene in human affairs, it was his

1. Ibid. p. 136.

2. Preface to La Machine Infernale. 1934.

idea that, when they did, it was with evil intent. Blinded to the warnings of his subconscious by his pride and ambition, in the dream-scene of the riddle failing to heed the warnings of his anima, the Sphinx, consciously chooses the paths which lead him to his destiny, thus falling into the series of traps so carefully laid for him. The gods ensured that he would take the road they chose by preventing the warnings of his subconscious from reaching him. The Sphinx, the ghost of Laius, the premonition of Jocaste were all in vain. Oedipe committed the sin in spite of the warnings which his conscious mind could not interpret and after the revelation of its magnitude could only expiate it by suffering. The warnings and messages of the subconscious have to be heard to be heeded; the mind has to be specially prepared, in a poetic condition, to hear. Cocteau does not specify whether the preparedness is due to special training of the mind, to the special powers of the poet or to outside agencies. The Surrealists would certainly choose the first but Cocteau seems to hesitate between the last two of the three factors while at the same time insisting that the consciousness must exert its control vigilantly and poetically. Cocteau emphasises the external nature of the fate of Oedipe by making the Sphinx into a medium, not merely for the words of the gods, but entirely contrary to her own intent, of their desires too. Her desire to save Oedipe indicates that in a dream world she can be identified with him, that in Jung's terms she is the 'woman within' trying to save himself from himself. However both the Sphinx and Oedipe are caught in the web which the gods are spinning for their own amusement, to teach man that they are in control of Fate, a function which man is forbidden to question or usurp:

"Le Sphinx, intermédiaire entre les dieux et les hommes, est joué par les dieux qui feignent de le laisser libre, et lui souffle de sauver Oedipe à seule fin de le perdre." (1)

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1. Journal d'un Inconnu, p. 41.

Free will is therefore an illusion and so is the Surrealist's idea of objective chance, for all is decided from outside; but as the Surrealists did not believe in exterior fate they were free to take the opposing view.

The same reluctance to accept Freudian psychology wholeheartedly was expressed in 'Le Cordon Ombilical' where Cocteau commented:

"Jean Genêt estime que le rôle d'Yvonne (in les Parents Terribles) sort d'un instinct maternel qui me pousse vers les adoptions amicales. C'est possible."  
(1)

In giving this grudging recognition Cocteau reveals something of his inner self but he immediately denied that Genêt had told the whole story of the origin of 'Les Parents Terribles' by continuing:

"Mais là encore c'est ce que Jean Marais me racontait de sa mère et des disputes entre sa mère véritable et Yvonne de Bray qui prétendait l'être, qui fut à l'origine d'une intrigue de vaudeville dramatique où j'enchevêtre le rire et les larmes." (1)

Cocteau found it necessary to give a reason for his study of relationships in 'Les Parents Terribles', which at this point he claims to derive not from his own experience but from that of Jean Marais. However he did not deny that the story touched a sympathetic chord in his own heart. Cocteau's choice of Jean Marais for the play, contrary to the advice of Louis Jouvet who refused to produce it, was on the grounds that it was based on Jean Marais' own life and that only he could understand fully what he was trying to interpret on the stage. An intuitive understanding based on the subconscious was needed for the tragedy and comedy interwoven in the situation to be revealed in complete poignancy. In spite of Cocteau's claim that the play was inspired by Jean Marais, 'Les Parents Terribles' has many of the typical attributes of Cocteau. The family atmosphere

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1. Le Cordon Ombilical. p. 27.

the close linking of the characters by bonds buried in the subconscious give the play a very special tone. There is an affinity verging on kinship between Michel and Oedipus, between Yvonne and Jocasta which sets one wondering if the story did not have more personal implications for its author than he admits. The sacrifice of Yvonne, in committing suicide to free her son from the bonds of maternal love or the alternative explanation that she was in despair and committed suicide because his emancipation in fact was established, has a parallel in the sacrifice of the Princess in the film of 'Orphée' when she turned back time itself to undo the wrong which she had done to Orphée. Madeleine's falling in love with both father and son in turn can be explained by postulating subconscious perception of inherited similarities between the two who both needed the strong maternal personality of Yvonne as well as the 'Esprit d'ordre' of Léonie, which were both present in Madeleine's personality. Characteristic of Cocteau too is the Sphinx-like role of Léonie, playing the part of fate, yet trying to warn the victims of the danger they are in and which they cannot evade. Freewill is limited to the choice left to the protagonists whether to accept their fate or to struggle in a battle which they cannot win. In the long run, the interventions and reconciliations effected by Léonie, will not alter the direction of fate, even though she may affect its pace. The play leaves unresolved the two questions of whether the love of Léonie for Georges or of Michel and Madeleine achieve fulfillment but leaves the impression that the sacrifice of Yvonne, the memory of the series of deceptions and of Madeleine's first love for Georges, all combine to make it impossible for the family in the caravan to replace Yvonne by Madeleine and yet to continue as before. The subconscious links with the past are too strong to be broken in this way. Cocteau saw love in a light somewhat like Racine, not as a guilty passion but as an impossible one leading to despair, disillusion and disappointment. Subconscious barriers and ties make communication between individuals impossible.

V. THE DREAM WORLD

This negative aspect of the subconscious is one which made Cocteau wish to restrict its scope by imposing some form of conscious control on thoughts issuing from it. Without the control the poet cannot be understood at all. Comprehension of poetry is difficult at any time; the problem has to be simplified a little by making the message as clear and precise as possible. For that reason he is not willing to write, as one might say, directly from the subconscious, by entering a trance or recording a dream but rather he talks of a state of half-sleep in which the imagination is free to wander but in which the conscious mind can impose a measure of control by selecting images and giving a careful poetic form to new ideas. He is afraid of the total submission to the subconscious which is implied by complete surrender to a dream world:

"Le rêve procure à chacun une sorte de génie capable de magnifier jusqu'à l'épouvante les actes du rêve éveillé dont les hommes se veulent responsables par une résistance orgueilleuse à se mettre aux ordres du sort." (1)

In spite of his fear of the dream and his resistance to it, he does hope that he can derive some poetic benefit from it. It is in a state of half-sleep that he portrayed his poet in 'Le Sang d'un Poète' where his waking dream took him from one realm to another, through a series of fates, culminating in cheating and losing in the game of cards with his own destiny.

The creation of a dream-world, through which the poet moves in full conscious control of himself is even more explicit in his last major film, 'Le Testament d'Orphée'. Cocteau himself said that the theme was the same one, fully orchestrated, as the one attempted in his first film thirty years previously. The poet is allowed to wander in space and time and to pass into the half-life between the living and the dead, where the hereafter may be perceived if not reached. In this film Cocteau also attempts a surrealist synthesis of the real and abstract

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1. J. Cocteau, Le Cordon Ombilical, p. 49.

worlds; but in postulating the existence of powers outside the human mind and life beyond our own, he goes beyond the Surrealist experience. Yet in his dream world Cocteau retained a deep interest in the subconscious, wanting to bring back to life some of those ceaselessly active memories which we hide in the very depths of our being. Whether he was simply using them as themes for poetry or whether, deliberately or otherwise, he was using them in his art to purge them from his subconscious, in a psychoanalytical way must remain a matter for conjecture. The recurrent themes of mother love, of brother-sister love, of Dargelos and the snowball, of the fate of a poet out of his milieu and rejected by society, are all ones which held a profound interest for Cocteau as he shows by making them recur so frequently in his work, almost like the folds in time of which he speaks in *La Machine Infernale*. Moreover his themes are associated with a search for his own identity for love and for a sense of the purpose in life, in the deeper reality lying beneath appearances. Finding difficulty in adjusting himself to society, he concentrated his search within himself and in the mythology which is universal to mankind. Oedipe is resurrected for Cocteau's final film, 'Le Testament d'Orphée', as well as being found in works as far spaced in the time scale of his work as 'Opéra' and *Journal d'un inconnu*, Dargelos is to be found not only in 'Les Enfants Terribles', but also in 'Le Sang d'un Poète'. References are made to the same theme in 'Vocabulaire' and in the postscript to 'Le Sang d'un Poète' (1). In his treatment of the Dargelos myth, Cocteau is dealing with a conscious memory which has affected him profoundly, although it is his distorted memory of the event which he dramatizes, rather than the literal truth. A minor injury in a schoolboy snowball fight becomes magnified into a

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1. Postscript to Le Sang d'un Poète. For a full account of the Dargelos myth in Cocteau's work, see 'Dargelos et les pièges de la Beauté' By JJKihm in 'La Table Ronde', October, 1955. See also J. Cocteau; Le Grand Écart and Le Livre Blanc.

tragic death in 'Le Sang d'un Poète:

"Mais si le cinéma interdit les déformations dans l'espace, il permet les déformations dans le temps. Une histoire de mon enfance me hante toujours. On la retrouve dans quelques-unes de mes oeuvres. Un jeune garçon blessé par une boule de neige, Dans 'les Enfants Terribles', l'enfant ne meurt pas. Dans mon film l'enfant meurt. Ce n'est pas reprendre un thème, C'est toute une mythologie que le poète remue et qu'il observe sous d'autres angles. L'enfant qui saigne a dû saigner en réalité très peu, saigner du nez. Dans mon souvenir il vomissait du sang. Or je n'ai pas voulu tourner une scène réaliste mais le souvenir déformé de cette scène." (1)

In examining the past, time itself can become distorted, memory even can become a distorting lens, allowing the poet's subconscious to make free with fact. What the poet tried to film was his own feelings projected on to the scene that he was viewing. As he remembered the scene, above all he recalled and wanted to film the horror of the bleeding, the beautiful savagery of the action and the power of the snowball thrower. The exhilaration which he felt at the moment of the accident is what he was trying to record in the film and in his description of the legend, to such an extent that each successive telling fed on the previous one. In Cocteau's work memory is interpretative. It is not the Proustian obsession to fix a moment in time; for Cocteau showed in 'Le Testament d'Orphée' that he considers time to be a dimension through which a poet can travel, although Time may also distort, giving an image of the past, or even of the future, distorted by the poet's imagination into forms in part suggested to him by his subconscious.

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1. J. Cocteau, Postscript to Le Sang d'un Poète. 1932.



The reader or the onlooker sees what the poet remembers or wants to remember. The image which the poet presents eventually tells as much about the poet as about the incident to which he refers.

The poet's own interpretation of his film reveals that it was drawn from his own self, that it consists of myths existing in his own subconscious:

"...que la bataille des boules de neige, c'est l'enfance du poète, et que, quand il joue cette partie de cartes avec sa Gloire, avec sa Destinée, il triche en prenant sur son enfance ce qu'il devrait puiser en lui-même." (1)

The guardian angel of the dead child took back the card, which was the one the poet needed to win his card game with the woman-statue. The poet shot himself, thus symbolically granting the statue her victory. Having achieved her vengeance the woman-statue became a statue again, thus reversing the Pygmalion myth; for in Cocteau's world, beauty is fatal. Even by cheating, the poet could not escape his fate for it is within him and without him. He had no inner resources with which to resist. The statue represented the poet's work which he loved, but its beauty was too great for him and he had to submit to it. It was Pygmalion who brought the statue of Galatea to life, by a favour of Venus, so that he might live with and love a woman who was a projection of his own concept of beauty. To a degree Cocteau too loved himself in his work but in other respects his introspection was more that of Narcissus who saw beauty only in himself, and eventually died through loving himself too much, and not being able to appreciate the beauty of others around him. The film has points in common with other manifestations of a death wish in Cocteau and with his concept of death as a beautiful woman whose love would be attained only after a long courtship.(2)

1. 1932 Postface to Sang d'un poète.

2. See section on Jung and the death wish and also the comparison in La Corrida du Premier Mai in chapter 3.

The material used in 'Le Sang d'un Poète' had been in his mind for a number of years and many years afterwards he indicated that there was an underlying conscious unity in his work covering a period of almost thirty years in the cinema:

"Orphée (qui orchestre vingt ans après le thème du 'Sang d'un Poète'...) (1)

Although this comment was made before the making of 'Le Testament d'Orphée', it still shows the community of idea which was taken up and made absolutely clear in this last film. He drew much more extensively on his first film here than he did on the material of 'Orphée', itself derived from the stage play of 1926. Even so, the elements of this work which are reflected in 'Le Testament' are sufficient to establish a continuity throughout practically the whole of his creative life, demonstrating a permanent obsession with life, death, art, re-creation, time, space, fate, free-will, inspiration both interior and exterior, the subconscious, power, beauty and the use of a personal mythology in a search for reality and identity.

Cocteau could not explain what made him include any particular element in his film. On occasion he let himself be guided by a feeling that a particular incident should be included, even though at the time he did not fully understand why he should wish to include it;

"Le film doit avoir ses raisons". (2) he said to explain the inclusion of such elements. The same reasoning applied to the inclusion of items in his plays, poems and novels:

1. J. Cocteau; 'Entretiens sur le cinématographe', originally 1951.  
repub. Belmond, Paris, 1973. p. 43.
2. Preface to 'Le Testament d'Orphée'.

"Je laisse les événements suivre la route qu'ils veulent mais au lieu de perdre tout contrôle comme il arrive dans le rêve, je célèbre les noces du concret et de l'inconscience, qui mettent au monde ce monstre terrible et délicieux qu'on appelle poésie." (1)

Thus the reader or spectator is free to interpret in his own way what he perceives, for Poetry is independent of its creator and may even have elements which its author did not realize that he was incorporating in it. The poet is creating, not out of his own mind, but what the unknown muse in the Night of the mind is dictating to him.

A possible interpretation of the snowball scene in 'Le Sang d'un Poète' is that Cocteau saw death as the voluptuous woman who appeared in Orphée, that life was a courtship in which he must eventually surrender to the cold embrace. (2) Evidence for this attitude to death may be adduced from 'L'Endroit et l'envers' written in 1922:

"Certes vous vous couchez comme un ange de neige

.....

Sur l'amant dont le spasme enfin vous réjouit,

Sous votre feu glacé la chair se fait statue,

Mais à la longue, il faut, mort, que je m'habitue

À vous recevoir dans mon lit." (3)

By a Surrealist quirk of double meaning and transposition of thought, the cold kiss of death becomes imbued with a sexual significance. The coldness implies snow, ice and whiteness, which is identified with purity and both with

1. R. Gilson; Jean Cocteau (Cinema d'aujourd'hui; Seghers), 1964, p.126. quoting Cocteau writing in 'les Lettres Françaises'; 8 oct.1959. See also G.Bachelard on 'La rêverie' in La Psychanalyse du feu and section on Jung.
2. On this point see the comparison made in 'La Corrida du Premier Mai'.
3. 'L'Endroit et l'Envers' in Vocabulaire 1922.

love and death. The hardness of ice has an association with marble. Statues, especially marble statues, have therefore a link with love, life and death. Ice can be like marble which when thrown is hard enough to kill. The violence of love and hate can both be consummated in death. Moreover Cocteau was obsessed by the statue of Venus de Milo as he indicated in several poems in 'Opéra'. His poem 'L'endroit et l'envers' (1) shows that he considered Venus as a rival of Death, although he appears to have preference for Death:

"Mieux que Vénus, O mort, vous habitez nos couches"

and

"Rivale de Vénus, qu'on me roule et me couse

à jamais dans les draps où votre ange m'épouse." (2)

Venus brought to life the statue of Pygmalion. Death may turn the body into a statue. Love and Death are rivals in a conflict which Death must eventually win; so, in this life, love is impossible. Only on rare occasions as in 'Orphée' 'L'Éternel Retour' or 'L'Aigle à deux Têtes' can love win a temporary reprieve from death; or as in 'Les Parents Terribles' a substitute victim may be accepted as a sacrifice, which might allow love a temporary flowering in this life. Because of the love of the poet in 'Le Sang d'un Poète' for his work, the statue was able to come to life. Yet the statue was his Destiny with whom he played a game of chance. The schoolboys in the film, led by Dargelos, destroyed a snow statue to make snowballs and fought in the impure slushy street snow. Since they used the symbols of Death in this way and without any trace of love, a tragedy was inevitable. The film scene re-echoes a poem 'A Force de Plaisirs' published eight years previously in 'Vocabulaire':

1. 'L'Endroit et L'Envers' in Vocabulaire, 1922.

2. 'L'Endroit et L'Envers'. op.cit.

"La neige est vite marbre aux mains prédestinées."

This was Cocteau's description of the making of the snowballs. At that time he thought of the tragedy as being foreordained by some exterior force. In the poem the snowball incident was juxtaposed with a description of Venus and statues indicating the recurrent victories of Death over the Goddess of Love:

"Sachant les détours de la chair aux statues,  
Venus s'endort debout et se réveille au Louvre." (1)

The concluding stanza of the poem also refers to an event which was enacted in the film:

".....je sombre  
"Entraîné par Vénus et par l'homme de neige", (1)

Like his obsession with Dargelos, his linking of beauty and fatality are well known features of his work. Beauty demands love which is impossible in this life and leads to death. Venus has a double aspect; she can go through the mirror which is the barrier between life and death, in either direction, as we see from the strange power of the Princess in 'Orphée' and of Belle in 'La Belle et la Bête'. From Cocteau's description of the Dargelos incident, there emerges an intriguing possibility that the poet himself may have been the victim of the snowball. Certainly in the figurative sense he was overwhelmed by the power of his hero although it is the poet's secret whether there was a real incident in his childhood, guarded in his subconscious, which is the source for Cocteau's myth;

"Souvenirs du collège, ah! laissez-moi tranquille." (2)

1. 'L'Endroit et L'Envers', op.cit.
2. 'À Force de Plaisirs', Vocabulaire, 1922.

vi. THE SOUL

The intuitive element in Cocteau's work is supported by a reliance on the workings of chance, which the Surrealists also exploited. Chance brings to a masterpiece its own particular individuality which enhances its quality and makes it a little more original, a little different from its fellows;

"Tout chef d'oeuvre est fait d'aveux cachés, de calculs, de calembours hautains, d'étranges devinettes." (1)

With or without the knowledge of the poet, destiny half reveals its face in every work of true poetry. Even the talking horse played a part in ensuring the fate of Orphée, although the inspiration which it provided for the poet proved to be false. Oedipe went to his fate in spite of the warnings which were strewn in his path, even in spite of the self-sacrifice of the Sphinx who loved him and would be punished for her effort to divert the purposes of the gods. Even the poet's mistakes may assist the poetry of his work if he exploits them properly for they can bring an element of the unexpected to bear:

"Seules les fautes triomphent de l'habitude et provoquent ce relief accidentel sans quoi le conformisme dévide sa pelote."(2)

Technical errors in making a film such as the final shot in 'les Parents Terribles' can contribute to the poetry of a film. The surprise element constituting a Surrealist exploitation of chance and also resembling automatic writing in that the poet created something without his being aware of it:

" Une faute cesse d'être une faute si le fauteur la change en ce que Baudelaire appelait 'L'expression la plus récente de la beauté.'" (3)

1. Essai de critique indirecte, p. 166 op.cit.

2. Le Cordon Ombilical, p.71 op.cit.

3. Gilson, op.cit p. 126, quoting from an article by Cocteau in 'Lettres Françaises' of 8.x.59. See also Le Rappel à l'ordre, p. 88.

Such fortuitous elements also contribute to the magic of a work of art. Often the magic is hidden but in a true work of art it none-the-less is there. Although the poet deliberately exploits magic, he does not always expect his public to be conscious of it:

"Dans un lieu féerique, les fées n'apparaissent pas. Elles s'y promènent invisibles."(1)

During the course of a quarter of a century he gradually perfected his technique until in 'La Belle et la Bête' the magic is there but the magical is represented only by its grotesque creation; La Bête. He had succeeded in bringing to the screen 'Un conte de fées sans fées.' (2)

In this film the beauty is the everyday earthly heroine who uses the power of her beauty alone to overwhelm the magical. In entering the magical world of her own volition and establishing her domination over it, Belle shows that Cocteau understood what Breton had been saying in the 'Second Manifeste':

"..la révélation attendue exige encore que l'on se tienne en 'un endroit pur et clair, tendu partout de tentures blanches' et que l'on n'affronte aussi bien les mauvais Esprits que les bons que dans la mesure de la 'dignification' à laquelle on est parvenu." (3)

The mental alchemy which Cocteau brought to 'La Belle et la Bête' was at least<sup>as</sup> rigorous as that of which Breton spoke and with the advantage that the images which he presented to his public were far more real. So real were the images of his work to the poet that at times even he had doubts whether they were only images. Many of the most famous subjects for artistic inspiration have been real events, imbued with a natural poetry, which artists through the ages have made their own attempts to recapture and re-interpret. The poet has a sense that those

1. Preface to Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel.

2. Entretiens sur le Cinématographe, Belmond, Paris, 1973, op.cit. p. 45.

3. Manifeste du Surréalisme, op.cit. p.143.



images which he presents as poetry may be based in just such a reality as the works of the great painters:

"Du reste, ces images, sont-elles des images? La vie fait de grandes images sans le savoir, le drame du Golgotha n'ayant pas eu lieu pour les peintres. Quand je travaillais, je le répète, je ne pensais à rien, et c'est pourquoi il faut laisser ce film agir...." (1)

The film has been created, from ideas suggested by fate. What appears to be a chance in the film may be the hand of fate guiding the artist; the work of art superimposes its own nature on the work of the poet, so the public must bear with him and watch the film for themselves.

In 1946 the poet looked at his earlier work, writing a new preface to 'Sang d'un Poète'. In it he re-examined the methods and motives which had gone to the making of the film:

"Je parle de ces oeuvres d'une minorité qui s'oppose à la majorité à travers les siècles et qui, sans qu'elle s'en doute, la gouverne. Cette minorité possède ses antagonismes. À l'époque du 'Sang d'un Poète', seul de cette minorité, j'évitais les manifestations volontaires de l'inconscient au bénéfice d'une sorte de demi-sommeil où je labyrinthais moi-même. Je ne m'attachais qu'au relief et au détail d'images sortant de la grande nuit du corps humain." (2)

He states his view of the power and importance of the poet as a leader who has stood out through the centuries. However he also indicates his role in the literary quarrels of the 1930's, pinpointing what he considered to be the major distinction between himself and the Surrealists. He did not try to make his subconscious expose itself but in a state of trance, which was on the verge of

1. 1932 Postscript to 'Sang d'un Poète'.

2. 1946. Preface to 'Sang d'un Poète'. Editions du Rocher. Monaco.

sleep, wakefulness and hypnosis, he examined his subconscious in detail and sought the images which it presented to him. His reluctance to accept wholeheartedly the idea of using the subconscious in art is plain even though it appears that Cocteau did not realize that the state of half-sleep which he describes bears a very close resemblance to a Surrealist trance. Cocteau's idea of deliberation which he opposes to the Surrealist one of voluntary manifestations of the subconscious may point to the notion that the Surrealists were able by 1930 to recall the subconscious at will through the exercise of their various techniques of recording dreams, automatic writing and speaking, free-association of ideas and Surrealist seances not unlike the psychiatric practice of group therapy. Although Cocteau did not participate in such activities he had his own access to the subconscious which made Robert Amadou call him 'Le medium naturel', an apt name for one with such ready contact with mysteries that the gods normally hide from human eyes. In calling his trance-state a half sleep, Cocteau establishes a difference between his method and the Surrealist one of recalling and recording dreams instantly on awakening. He retains some consciousness and deliberate control over his actions, whereas in sleep the subconscious is free to express itself as it will. However Cocteau was much nearer to the state of trance which the Surrealists attempted to induce when they wished to participate in automatic writing or the total recall of the images of the subconscious by free association. This is a technique by which the subject says whatever comes to mind while he is in a completely relaxed state yet just sufficiently removed from sleep to be able to speak, and sufficiently far from wakefulness for him to have no control over what he actually says. Someone else may record his utterances or even put suggestions to him. This state is similar to hypnosis or self-hypnosis, with which Freud

made some experiments before rejecting it in favour of free-association on account of dangers of reinforcing subconscious blockages. (1)

The other advantage of free-association is that the state assumed is not hypnotic, has no after-effects and does not require a trained hypnotist. The method is also applicable to subjects who cannot be hypnotised or who sleep very lightly. However if Cocteau allowed himself to be in a kind of half-sleep, he is deluding himself in thinking that he was avoiding deliberate manifestations of the subconscious, for others used such a state for that very purpose. Indeed he reveals that, in allowing his memory to work on its own while he surrenders himself completely to his work, that his technique very closely resembled that of the Surrealists. In describing his memory as a kind of theatre he shows how his subconscious selects what he is going to remember and even distorts it by making the past appear in a new light which may be a reflection of a different period of time. He also indicates an unknown link between his memory and his nuit. At this time Cocteau appears to regard the subconscious as an unknown part of himself and implies that 'the powers who give him his orders' (2) both introduce elements for him to find there and also speak to him directly. He still has no intimation of the nature of the powers which he regards as supernatural: }

"Ma mémoire n'est jamais plus contente que lorsque je ne m'occupe point d'elle. La voilà libre de monter un spectacle pour la nuit suivante, de la répéter, de l'éclairer sans que je la dérange. Je ne sais point quels sont les rapports de ses ténèbres avec celles qui me donnent des ordres. Si elles leur sont favorables ou défavorables." (3)

1. Ian Oswald in his book on 'Sleep' (Penguin) says that hypnosis is not sleep because it does not have the encephalogram rhythm of sleep. P 37.
2. See next page.
3. Journal d'un Inconnu, op cit. p. 158.

The duality of Cocteau's sources is suggested here, for he can be inspired either within his own memory, his own past or by the sources which often have their roots in mythology, coming from his special powers. The caprice of his memory may operate at any time but the reference to 'la nuit suivante' refers to his idea of the random working of time mentioned in 'La Machine Infernale' (1) This confusion of past and future also appears in 'Le Testament d'Orphée' when the poet says that he has a bad memory for the future. Cocteau may imply that he is going to remember something at some future time as well as the night following an event. His memory operates at night, when he is at rest if not asleep, so that the association between memory and free association or other surrealist methods is in evidence. On the other hand he appears to think that there may be a conflict between the personal events of memory, however the present may distort them, and the mythological ideas suggested by his powers. The personal unconscious and the collective may be functioning on different wavelengths and the poet does not understand how or if they are connected. Sometimes his inspiration springs from memories of childhood. In several of his books of reminiscences - 'La Difficulté d'être', 'Le Cordon Ombilical', 'Le Journal d'un Inconnu', - he features somewhat haphazard accounts of his past, his memories, his friends.

In 'La Difficulté d'être' while talking about his own childhood, he concludes on a note indicating the reality of his memories to himself and the distance between people which prevent him expressing them adequately because his memories belong uniquely to his reality and are unreal to anyone else and so can only be appreciated in a poetic sense:

1. In 'La Machine Infernale', Cocteau uses again an idea which had previously appeared in his 'Essai de Critique Indirecte' (1932) on p. 167.

'Pliez une feuille en éventail; pressez les plis;  
trouez le tout d'une épingle; ôtez l'épingle, dépliez,  
repassez, jusqu'à ce que les plis disparaissent; demandez  
à quelque campagnard s'il est possible  
que ces nombreux trous espacés résultent  
d'un seul coup d'épingle'.

"On ne communique pas davantage cette sorte de souvenirs que les épisodes de rêve."(1)

The dream normally cannot be seized upon and expressed for it fades as one awakes; since memories are so far in the past that they resemble dreams, they become part of the realm of the subconscious and it needs special techniques, reminders or meditation to recall them. Once memories did have a reality in time which only a trick may restore. Dreams had their reality in the mind itself. As far as the present is concerned both are equally unreal and any interpretation takes place in the light of the state of mind of the present or of the power which the subconscious experts on them.

Cocteau considered that in the act of creating a new work he was taken over by it, that the ideas, characters and forms taking shape within him became real:

"Je crois qu'au lieu de s'évader par une oeuvre, on est envahi par elle,"(1) He meant that, rather than giving a part of himself to the paper, he was giving expression to something which already existed. There was a part of himself taken over by the work and to exercise it, he had to record it on tape, paper or film. Thus he described the writing of his poem 'Heurtebise' as giving birth to the poem. The state into which he put himself in order to do his work is very closely related to the trance of the Surrealists, half-waking, half sleeping. In working, he was able to enter such a state, without losing all his conscious control, by the exercise of his gifts as a poet:

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1. La Difficulté d'être, op.cit. p. 12.

"Chez le poète, il doit y avoir la mise en oeuvre d'un inconscient qui ne laisse pas trop réfléchir. Il doit s'exprimer dans une sorte d'hypnose, dans une sorte de sommeil." (1)

From a materialistic viewpoint it appears that he allows his subconscious to manifest itself; a deliberate channelling of the desires and urges of the subconscious is the expression of the surreal which was the objective of Breton and his group, yet Cocteau's interpretation treats creativity in mystic terms, invoking the intervention of the supernatural which in the darkness of his 'nuit' is closely allied with the subconscious, so that it appears more as a vehicle for divine messages than the receptacle for man's hidden fears and desires. In the preface to the 'Testament d'Orphée', the conjunction of ideas making Cocteau's concept of the subconscious resemble Breton's notion of a transcendental point where dream and reality, material and abstract, fall into one: (2)

"Un homme qui somnole, la bouche entr'ouverte, devant un feu de bois, laisse échapper quelques secrets de cette nuit du corps humain qu'on appelle âme et dont il n'est plus le maître." (3)

Whilst describing certain of the aspects of the techniques by which the Surrealists hoped to penetrate the subconscious, Cocteau reveals a belief in the concept of the soul which places some of his cogitation on the subconscious on a metaphysical plane outside the scope of Surrealism. Here he identifies his 'nuit' with the soul, revealing once more that he considers this deep part of his being whence his inspiration springs, where the muses place their inspiring ideas for him to form into his poetry, to be not just his subconscious but the fount of life itself, where his instincts operate on a level beyond his control. The soul is the essential spirit which may have independent existence of the

1. J. Cocteau in Cinéma, un oeil ouvert sur le monde, Clairefontaine, Paris, Undated, quoted by R. Gilson in Jean Cocteau (series, Cinéma d'aujourd'hui) p.117.

Cocteau's article is entitled 'Les chemins de la poésie.' See section<sup>n</sup> on the comparison with Lorca for amplification of this point, and Nietzsche.

2. see p. 239.

3. Preface to Le Testament d'Orphée.

body, the part of man that is divine. Any man has the privilege of controlling the nature of the soul, the poet can also know it; but its fate is controlled from without. Where the Surrealists see only the subconscious as a lost part of the mind, Cocteau develops a grander theory of the subconscious as the soul itself, almost unknowable, yet the point where God and life enter into contact with humanity, the source of life and inspiration and for the poet alone, a window on the universe, which sometimes distorts and sometimes is blacked out, but a source of wonder to the initiate. It follows that his poetry is an attempt to reveal rather than explore. The subconscious in poetry is the soul laid bare. He gave an idea of what he was trying to do in his explanation of 'Sang d'Un Poète':

"Comme je vous le disais tout à l'heure, on ne peut pas raconter un film pareil. Je pourrais en donner une interprétation qui m'est propre. Je pourrais vous dire; la solitude du poète est si grande, il vit tellement ce qu'il a créé que la bouche d'une de ses créations lui reste dans la main comme une blessure, et qu'il aime cette bouche, qu'il s'aime en somme, qu'il s'éveille le matin avec cette bouche contre lui comme un rencontre de hasard, qu'il tâche de s'en débarrasser et qu'il s'en débarrasse sur une statue morte - et que cette statue se met à vivre - et qu'elle se venge, et qu'elle l'embarque dans des aventures atroces." (1)

He stressed that the audience were free to read into his work their own interpretations for the poet did not necessarily have all the ciphers to the messages he transcribed. The distance between the artist and his public is greater than one between artist and his creations. With them, there is a link so close that the creation may even appear as part of the artist. The personal isolation of Cocteau is poignantly revealed in the remark about the chance acquaintance, his inability to form close personal relationships or to know love.

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1. Postface to Sang d'un Poète. 1932.

Since the poet is closer to his work than to other people, it seems quite natural to find statues coming to life as part of his personal mythology reminiscent of the story of Pygmalion and Galatea but with more subtle implications in Cocteau's work. The watching statues in Bête's castle are the eyes of the gods. In 'Sang d'un Poète', the statue has a cold impersonal nature to which eventually it returns. The impossibility of communication and the poet's inability to make a living contact with other people are demonstrated but there is also a hint of the nature of death itself, of the intervention of the supernatural in the life of the poet, the mystery which he must not seek to understand but should just accept. The personal interpretation of the very personal film which is 'Sang d'un Poète' reveals some of the obsessions in the poet's subconscious, which the film portrays on an even deeper level. 'Sang d'un Poète' is an examination of self in a different way from most of Cocteau's other works, so that in this film subconscious, conscious, dream and supernatural are all completely interwoven, resulting in an astonishing penetration into the workings of his mind. Beyond the twilight zone on the edge of the subconscious Cocteau finds the idea of an existing irreality which is what he feels compelled to express as poetry. For a poet, irreality can erupt in surprising ways, occasionally astonishing even the poet himself. The irreality of Cocteau exists but it is outside self, beyond even normal perception. In this sense it is in contrast with the surreal which exists deep within the mind and perception of the Surrealists.

In contrast with those of his poems which come from the poet's night Cocteau published a variety of memoirs and pieces of self justification, his 'Poésie Critique' which is more evidently derived from the poet's day, from his conscious mind. They are apparently aimless ramblings about his past, his home, his friends, his childhood. If they do reveal anything about his subconscious, it is incidentally, in a manner analagous to the 'free association' method of the



psycho-analysts. An incident in 'Journal d'un Inconnu' reveals the technique of deliberate exploration of the past, quite by chance, as it appears, awakening a host of forgotten childhood memories (forgotten but not repressed for they were not deliberately pushed into the subconscious and then prevented whenever possible from re-emerging). He was describing a visit he paid to his childhood haunts and since he could not recall any incidents, he fell to musing about how much smaller he had been then. To place things in the proper childhood perspective he slapped a lamppost, low down, an instinctive and almost subconscious action. The sound of the slap brought the memories flooding back to him;

"J'obtiens la musique du souvenir." (1)

Cocteau was well aware of the tricks of memory and the problem of bringing back incidents lost in time for this was the problem of Proust; how to fix Time in Eternity. In this instance he showed that by an act of intuition in a familiar scene, he could bring back to life memories which had all but faded away. Such memories live in the depths of the mind in the same zones as those guilty fears, thoughts, memories and desires which constitute the subconscious. There is an unresolved problem whether the faded memory has as much effect on the development of personality or whether it can re-emerge as dramatically as one repressed into the subconscious. To what extent are we all affected by the whole of our past? By exercising our imagination it is possible to bring the past so vividly to the present that we can relive pieces of it moment by moment; but that does not necessarily mean that we can re-create the formative effect, or undo the formative effect, which it may have had on us. Cocteau's description throws the problem into vivid relief without supplying any solution. Yet by bringing a

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1. Journal d'un Inconnu . Chapter entitled 'De la Mémoire' p. 153 et seq.

memory directly under the focus of poetry, that slap on the lamp-post was a completely Surrealist poetic act, worthy of the orthodox Surrealists. He thus evinces a poetic insight into the problems of the Surrealists and a possible sympathy but not complete agreement with their point of view. When he acknowledges his subconscious, he describes a form of poetic creation in which the work springs, if not from the very depths of his subconscious, then at least from a superficial level of it, where thought may be subjected to a minimum of conscious direction and control. This may be one of the reasons why there are so many themes, myths and incidents which recur time and time again in his work in an apparently random fashion. A contradiction exists in that usually Cocteau describes his poetry as dictated to him by some force in his 'nuit'. This idea persists in the concept of the poet being invaded by his poetry but it is rare that he allows himself an attempt at identifying where the force lies or whence it comes or derives its strength. He is usually willing to accept mystery as mystery, belonging to the Gods and neither demanding nor requiring interpretation. In 'Journal d'un Inconnu' one of his aphorisms expresses how he sees himself as a vehicle if not the embodiment of his own creation:

"n'ê<sup>^</sup>tre de l'inconscient que les aides".(1)

His poetry stems from a hidden inspiration either deep within or even divinely inspired and exterior to his own being.

If there was something of the Promethean or of the prophet in his attitude, there is also the will to raise maybe not all mankind, but at least the elect company of poets to a higher level, closer to the Gods, through the power and magic of poetry. In the case of Cocteau, the problem of the subconscious and its role in poetic inspiration is all the greater because for him not only the boundaries between the material and the abstract, but also those between life and

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1. Journal d'un Inconnu, p. 209.

death are imprecisely determined and may be crossed in either direction. In a sense Cocteau achieved the objectives of the Surrealists to a greater extent than they did themselves for they became confused by political considerations and too absorbed by the problem of the mental power constricted in the subconscious. They were far from accepting Cocteau's conception of the subconscious, hidden in the poetic night, in the vicinity of the bounds of perception, a living part of the spirit, which could be awakened by the past, the future or the supernatural, into violent outbursts of creative activity under the ironic gaze of the eternal gods.

vii.      MEMORY

Cocteau stressed that memory need not be accurate, that it is selective, so that the poet may remember and record what he chooses to remember and to portray his memories with emphasis on points which interest him. With his philosophy of 'plus d'éternité' (1) he does not feel obliged to keep his memories in a chronological sequence, since time past all merges into one single past. At times his memories become interwoven with other elements deriving from his subconscious so that there is a tinge of fantasy in some of his accounts which he claims to be factual. For this reason it is well to be wary of some of the things which Cocteau says about the past. Sometimes he says what he would have liked to happen or what he feels at the time of writing, rather than at the time of the event. At other times he records his feelings at the time of a past event more accurately than the event itself:

J'hésite toujours à écrire mes Mémoires, Mémoires où les dates se chevaucheraient, s'interpèleraient de telle sorte que les perspectives en deviendraient boiteuses et ne tiendraient pas debout". (2)

In admitting that his memory was fallible he shows that he did not share Proust's determination to seize, record and defeat Time. However in thus altering the past in his memory he allows his subconscious yet another means of expression; perhaps that is why he was so surprised when some of his impressions took new shape, sometimes barely recognizable, emerging as elements of his poetry.

He described how his inspiration came to him at various times when his mind was at rest, stressing that the poet's intelligent reorganisation of his ideas does not help him at that stage. Repose is important in allowing his ideas time in which to build up in his mind. There is a germination period which may vary in duration from years to days:

1. See 'La Machine Infernale' and 'Le Testament d'Orphée' and above page.

2. 'Journal d'un Inconnu' op.cit. p. 153.

"Le matériel nouveau m'arrive pendant les promenades. Surtout ne dois-je m'en apercevoir. Que je m'en mêle, il ne m'arrive plus. Un beau jour le travail exige mon aide. Je m'y abandonne d'une seule traite. Mes haltes sont les siennes. Ma plume dérape s'il s'endort. Dès qu'il s'éveille je me secoue. Peu le gêne si moi je dors. Debout me dit-il, que je dicte." (1)

When the work has finally taken shape in his mind, then it demands his full attention in writing it out. Such a method of composition indicates that Cocteau deliberately allowed his subconscious to form the basis of his ideas, at which stage the task of writing engrossed him in a surrealist type of trance in which his work resembled automatic writing as conceived by the Surrealists but done on a greater scale. He claimed to have written 'La Machine Infernale' in this manner, although we know from the publication of his 'Antigone' more than ten years previously and from his collaboration with Strawinsky on 'Oedipe-Roi', that the ideas had been in his mind for a very long time. Yet there are elements in 'La Machine Infernale' which must have come to the author much nearer the date of writing, such as the scarf of Jocaste in which she was strangled, which is generally considered to have been inspired by the death of Isadora Duncan who was strangled by her scarf in a road accident in 1927. This supports the poet's statement that the features of his works settled in place in his mind over a period of time before being expelled in their final form:

"C'est la vieille rengaine de l'inspiration, qui n'est qu'expiration, puisqu'il est vrai que le poète reçoit des ordres mais qu'il les reçoit d'une nuit que les siècles accumulent en sa personne...." (2)

Cocteau thus vindicates poetically Jung's concept of the collective unconscious and provides additional validation for the place and importance accorded to myth in his work. There need be no comparison in the chronological sequence in which

1. La Difficulté d'être, op.cit. p. 42.

2. Journal d'un Inconnu, op.cit.p. 18.

the ideas arrive and that in which they take place in the finished work, for as the poet stresses, it is a question of accumulating ideas before the actual creation of the work, a final process which Cocteau undertook in a short intensive spell.

The concept of poetry in the case of the Surrealists as a stream of pure thought issuing uncontrolled from the subconscious, thus giving the poet access to the power of primitive thought, is clearly different from Cocteau's ideas of images revealed to him in the night of the soul by divine forces; yet there is a basic similarity in the style of inspiration if not in purpose or in the methods which reduced the images to verbal (or, in the case of some works, to pictorial) form. Thus Breton distinguishes between Cocteau and his own group by drawing attention to the automatic nature of the response of the true Surrealist to the promptings of the subconscious:

"Mais nous qui ne sommes livrés à aucun travail de filtration, qui nous sommes faits dans nos oeuvres les sourds réceptacles de tant d'échos, les modestes appareils enregistreurs qui ne s'hypnotisent pas sur le dessin qu'ils tracent." (1)

Memory for Cocteau was more than the imagination being actively concerned with the poet; it was one of the poet's approaches to the mystery of Time itself. A memory had a real existence in the present for the poet which was more important to him than its function as a shadow reminding him of a past event:

"C'est par le phénomène de la mémoire que nous assistons aux noces du temps et de l'espace, noces qui engendrent la mauvaise perspective qui nous illusionne." (2)

Cocteau's view of a continuum of dimensions not fully understood or even understandable in human terms is in part a reflection of his interest in science

1. Manifestes du Surréalisme. op.cit. p. 40.

2. Journal d'un Inconnu, p. 158. op.cit.

and a nodding acquaintance with Einstein's Relativity theory, but it also goes back to poetic sources which can also be traced in Baudelaire:

".....le monde intermédiaire placé entre l'homme et Dieu est soumis comme nous à la terrible loi du Temps." (1)

However Cocteau views Time as a dimension of space, with the implication that it can be traversed in more than one direction or intersected by spatial vectors at different and not necessarily continuous or ordered points in the apparently random way in which the paths of comets intersect planetary orbits. This is a considerable evolution from Baudelaire's concept of the implaceable Time-monster from whom there could be no turning back and no appeal, for whom the past is irrevocable. The new outlook on time is apparent in the situation of Orphée. The 1926 play moved out of the human dimension into an intemporal one, so that the whole action of the play outside that dimension, occupied only the space of time needed to slip a letter through a box. A similar device was employed in Le Sang d'un Poète where the shot of a falling factory chimney is split by the whole of the film. When the later films were made Cocteau had developed his concept of the intemporal still further. In 'Orphée' (1950) the poet allowed the Princesse to erase totally the action of the plot, by reversing time to the situation at the beginning of the film, so that Orphée and Eurydice would never realise that anything had happened:

"Alors, en route! Remontez le temps.

Il faut que ce qui a été ne soit plus." (2)

The treatment of the theme of Orphée and Eurydice in Anouilh's play 'Eurydice' originally presented in Paris in 1942 has some marked departures from Cocteau's work,

1. C. Baudelaire, Splén de Paris, in Oeuvres Complètes, op.cit, 'Dons des Fées' p. 301.

2. 'Orphée, op.cit, p. 112.



without departing from the basic idea of a life after death. However Anouilh's universe is one in which the afterlife is infinitely superior and indeed preferable to the corruptness of this world; in fact this contrast is his central theme. The play is not surrealist, rather the author seeks to impress by his very mundane realism, with death as the only way of escaping a sordid reality which too few people have the courage, imagination and purity to seek deliberately. In transposing the situation of the lovers to the present day world, the eternal quality of the legend is deliberately devalued and rendered more realistic. An idea from 'Les Parents Terribles' is taken up in that the relationship under scrutiny is that between father and son. Indeed both Anouilh and Cocteau tend to deal in close family relationships. In spite of the title 'Eurydice', the heroine is not the central character; this role is fulfilled by the hero. It becomes clear that Orphée is one of his creator's 'pure' characters and that he cannot accommodate himself to Eurydice's venality in this world. Even so there is no suggestion of a religious aspect to the play; indeed it seems rather that the afterlife portrayed exists purely in the writer's imagination as a dramatic convention rather than a religious conviction and seems to be closely connected in this respect with Sartre's 'La Nausée' or 'Les Jeux Sont Faits' than any of Cocteau's metaphysical speculations which make a real attempt in the mind of the author to examine if not explain the religious phenomenon. In the world of Anouilh, everything derives from the theatre, so that illusion and reality are never far apart:

"C'est de Perdican.....J'ai tant joué" (1)

Vincent cannot believe even his own delusions, let alone the evidence of his eyes. Nevertheless we all have our part to play in life, however sordid or

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1. J. Anouilh, Pièces Noires, Table Ronde, Paris, 1966, 'Eurydice', pp391-558.

(The Original play dating from 1942.) p. 409.

great it might be and we are all in it together. Eurydice lets this slip in a surrealist involuntary pun as the troupe of actors moves on:

"Il n'y a qu'un train, maman, pour les grands et les petits rôles." (1)

The character of the heroine in the Anouilh version has the same worldliness as in Cocteau's contrasted with the poetic nature of the hero, so that both writers see the couple as being incompatible. In 1926 this may have seemed an unimportant consideration, or at least one not worthy of a great deal of attention but in 1942 the author was able to make the relationship an important feature of his play. This may reflect a shift in social attitudes towards marriage and the relationship of the married couple. On the other hand it may mean that the relationship in marriage was only important for Cocteau as a dramatic convention. However his Orphée and Eurydice were married, whereas in the case of 'Les Pièces Noires', we are able to study the beginnings of a relationship which was not destined to end in marriage. For the relationship to become permanent it had to be transformed into a new kind of life totally different from our own in which time is immutable.

Monsieur Henri is a counterpart to Heurtebise an envoy of death but he appears to have no domineering unseen masters to defy or obey. It seems to him that he is acting within the course of his duty in bringing back Eurydice, which he does without her lover having to make any demands or sacrifices:

"Cela ne te suffit pas que le destin fasse une exception énorme pour toi..."(1)

1. J. Anouilh, *op.cit.*, p. 485.

In spite of his unearthly mission, there is an air of reality about him as he checks in and out of the hotel and he is a much more credible personality than Heurtebise, as a man. Yet his task is quite clear and so the fact that he is in touch with the agencies of the next world.

The major difference in characterisation is that Eurydice becomes a quite worthless creature lacking in courage and moral standards, so the contrast between her and the hero is accentuated. The change does not make Orphée seem any nobler; he appears tainted by the corruptness around him, so that his nobility of soul is seen as melodramatic through its very difference from the other personalities in contact with him. Orphée deliberately sent Eurydice back in spite of her cowardly wish to remain in the known world. However he did so as much through jealousy and a selfish desire to preserve a memory of her in a moment of love as through any feeling of magnanimity. Nevertheless he accepts his own fate of his own free will, Monsieur Henri having made it clear to him that he has a choice of staying with his father or of rejoining Eurydice. One can only understand Anouilh's reasoning here from a consideration of the view of death which he expresses and which resembles that of Cocteau:

"Il faut se confier franchement à la mort comme à une amie." (1)

In both cases death is personified and is seen as feminine.

It is important to remember that 'Eurydice' was produced in occupied Paris during the war and liable to the German censorship. There is no reference to the political situation directly but there are some hints by implication. The venality of the heroine and the corruptness, even the poverty of the life of the people can be seen to represent the role of the ordinary folk who were obliged to accommodate themselves to existing under the occupation. Monsieur Henri himself has an atmosphere of the secret police about him by the arbitrary way in which he

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1. J. Anouilh, op.cit. p. 441.

takes his victims, releases them, refuses to tell them where they are or what rights they have:

"Je veux savoir où nous sommes."

- Tu m'as dit que tu n'aurais pas peur.

- Je n'ai pas peur. Je veux seulement savoir si nous sommes enfin arrivés.

- Oui, nous sommes arrivés.

- Où?

- Un peu de patience." (1)

In being different from others and inspiring hope of a new kind of life in the heroine, Orphée becomes a symbol of the spirit of resistance and he goes to his fate voluntarily, without flinching, like a true hero. In this atmosphere the obsession of Vincent with food and restaurants may seem both natural and morbid as well as cruelly comical, a bitter commentary on the living situation for the theatre audience. Such an audience would be able to experience a little relief at the thought that fate might relent occasionally and release a victim and would appreciate the bitter irony of Monsieur Henri's comment:

"Il a fallu que je t'aime bien, hier, pour ne pas fuir aussitôt, comme d'habitude." (1)

That fate can make such exceptions and the emissaries of death can make such personal traditions puts Monsieur Henri in a tradition with both the Sphinx from 'La Machine Infernale' and the Princesse from 'Orphée'. The realism of Anouilh is stylised expressing in art a concept in the author's mind. Like Cocteau, he creates his own reality through his work, but in his case his view is closer to everyday life. Some of this stark realism is apparent in the film of 'Orphée', made just after the war but when Cocteau made his final film on the 'Orphée' theme some years later his style had become once more based on fantasy and a world of the imagination.

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1. J. Anouilh. op.cit. p 485.

In 'Le Testament d'Orphée' the question of time and the intemporal is developed to a science by portraying the poet at different periods of history in search of the Professor, who at one moment only in his life had the secret weapon which would enable the poet to establish himself in his own time zone. The weapon was so dangerous that it was thrown away although the principles of its operation have been rediscovered for presentation to the television viewers of 'Dr. Who' and 'Startrek'. Access to Time provides the poet with a supply of images which he can couple with those from his subconscious. Indeed they may be the same ones or the two sources may be the same or at least they may be closer to each other than is generally suspected:

"Mon intuition (qui n'est peut-être, après tout, qu'une forme inconnue de la mémoire)...." (1)

At times, however, memory appears to work in the conscious mind, thus constituting a mechanism which may interfere with the subconscious and also throw the poetic rigour off guard with results which may be dangerous both for the poetry and the health of the poet. On such occasions it can be misleading to rely on intuition:

"Lorsque la mémoire somnole, c'est d'un oeil et je crains ses farces." (2)

It is possible for the poet to escape the constraints of time as long as he pays proper respect to memory and the tricks it can play on him. Cocteau's frescos on the chapelle of Villefranche are well known and depict many of his treasured images - the Sun, the system of the stars, angels, such fertility symbols as fishes and the sea but prominent in the foreground are two figures of the poet with their eyes directed to the heavens, away from the earthly female

1. La Corrida du Premier Mai. op.cit. p. 28.

2. Journal d'un Inconnu. p. 159.

figures on the other side of the picture. In writing of the composition and work he did on these frescoes Cocteau describes how in the poetic act of composition he was able to set his mind to wander in time among his memories, some of which are memories of events which occurred in his imagination:

"Cette chapelle a été pour moi une sorte d'engin intertemporel, et comme on dit maintenant dans les livres de science-fiction, d'astronef. Pendant un an j'ai vécu somnambule, craignant sans cesse d'être réveillé d'un sommeil où la besogne semblait se faire tout seul selon le mécanisme d'un songe." (1)

The connexion in the poet's mind are indicated here between the semi-sleep condition, rêverie and complete absorption in a piece of work, dreams, and memories; all are qualities which permit the poet to tap the power of his subconscious and express it in a series of poetic images. He also shows that when he is deeply absorbed in his work, he enters a kind of trance in which the exterior visible world counts little for him and has less value than the realm of his imagination, which he is so loth to leave. The will to fix his attention on the chapel frescoes set in motion the mechanisms of rêverie and memory but similar mechanisms can also be started by chance events. Cocteau quotes how thunder brings back happy memories of his childhood because he always associates thunderstorms with pleasant experiences:

"L'orage assurait une maison pleine, du feu, du feu, une journée intime et sans déserteurs." (2)

As an ideal situation the description accords with the sense of order prevailing at the beginning and end of 'les Parents Terribles'. He is also revealing how

1. J. Cocteau 'Préface au Passé' an introduction to the 1958 edition of 'Poésie Critique' by Gallimard.
2. Opium, p. 176 optit.

his personal predilections are expressed in the tightly closed situations in his plays in which tendencies to break out of the closed circle in which the characters move are regarded as disruptive and even fatal. The unity and sense of intimacy towards which this aspect of his nature impells him is suggested too by the intimate setting of many of his plots, a single room in 'Les Enfants Terribles', 'Orphée' and 'L'Aigle à Deux Têtes'. In the case of 'La Machine Infernale', Oedipe is driven by fate to his destiny in the room from which he had been expelled as a child, a symbolic return to the womb. There is a significance based in Cocteau's feeling of affection for the storm as a harbinger of a pleasant day in which all the household is at home in the immediate orbit of the poet, when in 'L'Aigle à deux têtes' the storm drives Stanislas to the Queen's room; in 'La Machine Infernale' the play opens:

"Nuit d'orages éclairs de chaleur." (1)

A similar phenomenon occurs in 'La Belle et la Bête' (2) for it is a storm which drives the Merchant to Bête's castle, thus starting an action in which all his family are in different ways brought into the power of the magic castle. Only the two sisters, representing the pull of worldly forces and the tendency to disorder, remain outside it in the end. Even in 'Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde' (3), when Merlin leaves Camelot at the end of act I, thus enabling the castle to return to its natural state and be purified of the evil which had ensnared it, the scene is accompanied by a storm. Time, memory and the subconscious are inextricably interwoven in Cocteau's work in a subtle mesh where one aids another or occasionally interferes in the production of the poet's images. Even the storm scenes are not merely, as in Shakespeare, contrived manifestations of the supernatural which serve to create an atmosphere of mystery and awe, but

1. Stage direction as the curtain rises in 'La Machine Infernale' .
2. J. Cocteau, La Belle et la Bête, film. op.cit.
3. ibid. Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde, Paris, 1938.- in Brasset, Théâtre Complète. op.cit.

have an additional source embedded in the poet's childhood.

Cocteau's attitude to time has points of comparison with that of Proust, with whom he had been very friendly at one time, and whose method he described as seizing and crystalising moments in Time as they passed by, whereas his own power lay in being able to recreate the past through the exercise of his memory:

"Sa chambre était une chambre noire où il développait des clichés dans un temps humain où l'avenir et le passé se chevauchent." (1)

However Cocteau's ability to step outside Time and to create a new universe real only in his imagination, yet based on impressions conveyed in his subconscious is far different from Proust's concept of the duty of a poet "to plunge to the heart of his impressions" (2).

Cocteau's intuitions were far more deeply hidden in his mind than the impressions which Proust recreated so painstakingly. In looking upon his inner world as a newly revealed form of personal reality, Cocteau achieved an escape from the world which was Proust's objective; yet in Cocteau's case the intention was to establish human contact with the hidden universe, unreal because it was beyond the perception of the ordinary person. Proust was trying to hide from the world in an atmosphere which he knew was unreal, yet Maurois used of him the same image of monasticism which Cocteau later used of himself in the introduction to 'Le Requiem':

"All that remained for him was to escape into the unreal. Marcel Proust was to enter literature as others enter religion". (3)

Cocteau's attitude to the reality of memories is different from Proust's because of his conception of Time as a physical dimension, cognate with space. The idea of recalling point in Time or revisiting a place to recreate a memory

1. Journal d'un Inconnu. op.cit. p. 23 footnote.

2. A. Maurois; The quest for Proust. Tr.G. Hopkins. London. 1950. p. 32.

3. The Quest for Proust. op.cit. p. 129.



is contrary to the spirit of Proust:

"It is in vain that we return to the places we once loved. We shall never see them again because they were situated not in Space but in Time." (1)

Because Proust saw Time in quantitative rather than vectorial terms his technique is based upon a quest of 'discovery made within ourselves' (2) and this voyage is made in 'reservoirs of time' (2) situated in our unconscious. Cocteau's vectorial principle gives him a wider scope, a contact with the Gods and the universe as well, as a deeper knowledge of the nature of the soul which is his own peculiar contribution to literature.

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1. *ibid.* p. 172.

2. *ibid.* p. 174.

CONCLUSION

ASPECTS OF THE SURREAL

IN THE WORK OF

JEAN COCTEAU

CONCLUSION

Cocteau consistently saw himself as a poet but his concept of poetry was one of his own creation. He saw poetry as embracing all the arts but his philosophical concept of his art was that of a visionary. Poetry was the truth of the Gods revealed to mankind. The poet had the power of penetrating the web of secrecy with which the Gods surround themselves and had a duty to reveal the secrets to everyone. He is thus a very special person gifted with visionary powers but he is not necessarily also a creative artist, for the role of the poet is essentially that of an intermediary, taking down a kind of spiritual dictation coming from secret sources, which reveal the truth about life itself. Even the poet does not know what these sources are but he feels their vibrations deep within himself and is obliged to respond:

"Il n'est pas moins frappant de voir Cocteau reprendre et développer avec prédilection, une image chère aussi à André Breton; celle de l'électricité poétique, du poète conducteur d'ondes: la poésie y revient sans cesse, "est une électricité."\*\* Le poète baigne dans ce fluide fabuleux, il le concentre et le transmet; son rôle est d'être non pas un créateur, mais un intermédiaire."(1)

The resemblance with the Surrealists is striking because of the appeal of similar images on either side, yet the similarity is misleading for it conceals some basic differences. The Surrealists cultivated and claimed that anyone could cultivate that same visionary power which Cocteau claimed as a special power granted as a birthright to certain select individuals who henceforth were destined to be poets. Cocteau was aristocratic where the Surrealists were revolutionaries. Moreover the Surrealists considered that the powers which they were placing at the service of mankind were within man himself and unique in each individual whereas Cocteau's vision enabled him to generalize and suggest that he was drawing

1. Dr. S. Bernard op.cit. p. 691.

\*\* She is quoting from 'Le rappel à L'Ordre' 'D'un ordre considéré' p. 254.  
Paris. (Stock) 1923.

on the totality of human and even divine experience. This is the reason which time and time again lead him to express himself in myth and to borrow and transform legend into a new kind of poetry. Paradoxically Cocteau's method enabled him to present a poetry of intense interior sentiments in a closed refined world in which the interplay of basic emotions became a dramatic exposition of the various components of individuality whilst the Surrealists' experiments tended to reflect aspects of the exterior real world in which we all move. Equally paradoxically is the way in which the intensely personal poetry of Cocteau expresses aspects of emotion which we all feel but the work of the Surrealists became incomprehensible to all but the initiated and are seen by many nowadays as eccentric experiments in form and colour rather than original ways of expressing original ideas.

It would seem that Cocteau's success as a creative artist was almost in spite of his philosophy instead of by virtue of it and to take issue with him on that point is to incur the risk of claiming a greater knowledge of the purpose of existence that he had or a more privileged view of the working of the mind. His attitude to poetry explains why he could call his critical and autobiographical work 'poésie critique'. It is poetry because it derives from his idea of poetic inspiration, no matter what the form of expression may be. Without claiming a privileged insight into his work one can express the belief that much of his inspiration came from within himself. If the poetic inspiration itself owes something to the divine, to the collective unconscious, to the invisible link between the author and his readers, the vehicle for his ideas is very much of his own devising and whether on the stage, the screen or in the printed word, it bears a hallmark of careful and original craftsmanship. His own definition of the creative force shows his awareness of the need of the artist to be sensitive and receptive to all forces and currents of ideas which play upon him as he moves through society, so that the preoccupation with self becomes a crystallisation of the emotions, feelings and contacts with other beings:

"Dans le Secret Professionel, Cocteau a longuement développé cette idée d'un fluide fabuleux où baigne le poète, fluide qui préexiste en lui et autour de lui comme une électricité, véritable élément dormant dont l'histoire de l'humanité prouve la force lorsqu'un artiste le concentre en lui et lui fabrique un véhicule." (1)

Cocteau agrees with the Surrealists that poetry has a social impact but for him that impact has to do with helping man to know himself and his potential as an individual, to perceive an end in life, and very little to do with what became an objective of the Surrealists; to use art and literature to help man construct a better society for himself. It is curious to find in such works as *'Belle et la Bête'* or *'Les Parents Terribles'* that Cocteau can focus attention so closely on the emotions of personal relationships that we derive an insight which so does credit to the ends of the Surrealists that we can be tempted to ascribe his work and theirs to a closely allied mode of thought and inspiration. This temptation is further compounded because Cocteau makes use of similar stylistic techniques to the Surrealists but he uses them for different purposes. In his exploitation of chance his concern is to show a kind of determinism in the universe, a very different thing from Surrealistic exploitation of chance for its own sake or with a view to examining the randomness of the universe and deriving what one may from the results of that randomness.

He later used this analogy as a basis for his play *'la Machine Infernale'* and it reveals his concern with time as a dimension to be traversed at varying rates, his belief in the connectedness of apparently unrelated events, which only a poet can reveal and his power of expressing an idea in a telling image which can fix it in the imagination of his readers. These are not ideas which inspired the Surrealists to any great extent although they had a similar objective in the area of the attempt to fix an image in words. The difference here is that

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1. S. Bernard *op.cit.*, footnote to p. 691, quoting from Cocteau, *'Le rappel à l'ordre'* *op.cit.*, p. 216.

Cocteau was expressing a poetic concept born of his own poetic power whereas the Surrealists were hoping to go beyond poetry into the realm of philosophy and science by cultivating a power to reveal an image which was born within their basic instincts. Perhaps Cocteau and his rivals come closer in the use of metaphor to transform experience than anywhere and it is because of the apparent similarities lent to their work by the use of such techniques that it is difficult to perceive the more essential differences in philosophy. Further problems of discrimination arise because both Cocteau and the Surrealists admired many of the same predecessors and drew inspiration from them although in differing ways. Baudelaire was a common source of inspiration, yet whilst the Surrealists admired in him his originality, his revolt, satanism and determination to find a purely human justification for living, through sensuality if possible, Cocteau was more impressed by Baudelaire's technical mastery, his sense of wonder at beauty, the necessity of the poet to suffer for his art and to be misunderstood by the public, the totality of poetic commitment and his permanent awareness of the proximity of death:

".....faut-il éternellement souffrir, ou fuir éternellement le beau.....  
L'étude du beau est un duel où l'artiste crie de frayeur avant d'être vaincu."(1)

Cocteau was able to transform Baudelaire's concept of beauty as conflict into one of beauty as a power to give a totally new meaning to life and towards the end of his life he was able to reconcile his commitment to beauty as a new form of perception with his own obsession with death which from being the lover in the 'Orphée' film became 'La Bonne mère' in 'Le Requiem' (2). Both Cocteau and the Surrealists share with Baudelaire's view of infinity. However

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1. Baudelaire: Spléen de Paris III; le confiteur de l'artiste, p. 276. Oeuvres. op.cit.

2. Cocteau, Le Requiem, p. 43.

once more their viewpoints diverge, the Surrealists seeking to bring the infinite into the compass of human understanding, Cocteau exploring it with trepidation but admitting that it is too great a concept for man to comprehend:

"Il est de certaines sensations délicieuses dont le vague n'exclut pas l'intensité et il n'est pas de pointe plus acérée que celle de l'Infini. Toutefois, ces pensées, qu'elles sortent de moi ou s'élancent des choses, deviennent bientôt trop intenses." (1)

Baudelaire had also felt the burning power of poetic intuition. Although he had as much difficulty as Cocteau in establishing the origins of his thoughts, he was not willing to ascribe them to God but rather to a correspondence in external reality. The Surrealists on the other hand were eager to ascribe the sources of their inspiration to forces at play within their own personalities. Comparison with Baudelaire also highlights the attitudes of Cocteau and André Breton's group towards the poetic state, in which poetic thought is possible:

"Dans certains états de l'âme presque surnaturels, la profondeur de la vie se révèle tout entière dans le spectacle, si ordinaire qu'il soit, qu'on a sous les yeux. Il en devient le symbole." (2)

In the poetic state, the mind can comprehend anything in a poetic way for it is a state of heightened sensibility to the ordinary. Breton did not believe that there was anything supernatural in such a condition but he was also sensitive to the peculiar trance-like state which made it possible for some one to produce the strange dreamlike poetry of automatic writing. However once again the attitude of the Surrealists prevented their taking full advantage of the technique which they placed at their disposition for they turned it inward on themselves

1. Baudelaire. *ibid.*

2. Baudelaire, *Fusées*, (in *Oeuvres Complètes*, *op.cit.*). p. 1159.



whilst Baudelaire expressly states that it is a way of contemplating the exterior world in a new way:

".....l'atmosphère surréaliste créée par l'écriture mécanique, que j'ai tenu à mettre à la portée de tous, se prête particulièrement à la production des plus belles images." (1)

Breton did not look for visions reflecting the purposes of life; he sought images for his poetry which would be beautiful in themselves, whether significant or not; his concern was with the aesthetic and he wanted all men to be able to appreciate a beauty found in the inner recesses of the mind. Cocteau was aware too that the poetic state enabled him to achieve a more profound contemplation of self but unlike Breton he wished to make a conscious use of his powers to examine selectively and to transform his thoughts into highly controlled images:

"Dans 'le Sang d'un Poète', j'essaie de tourner la poésie, comme les frères Williamson tournent le fond de la mer. Il s'agissait de descendre en moi-même la cloche qu'ils descendent dans la mer, à de grandes profondeurs. Il s'agissait de prendre l'état poétique." (2)

Cocteau is thus much closer to Baudelaire in respect of his concept of the poetic state than he is to Breton. However the superb image of the diving bell which illustrates perfectly how well Cocteau could make use of metaphor not merely for beauty's sake, but also for poetic effectiveness, shows that he sought to look around not only in his subconscious but in his whole experience to find incidents, memories and emotional scenes which could form the basis of poetry. He is not only a poet of the inner self but he has also stored up images of the exterior world to make into poetry. Cocteau's poetry has thus a time-bomb effect

1. A. Breton, Manifestes du Surréalisme, op.cit. p. 51.

2. Cocteau, Postface to 'le Sang d'un Poète', p. 99.

whereas Baudelaire indicates that his own response to stimulus is immediate. Cocteau's poetry is still similar to Baudelaire's in that it is a new way of looking at the familiar, giving a different and possibly revealing insight into the nature of things:

"Voilà le rôle de la poésie. Elle dévoile, dans toute la force du terme. Elle montre nues, sous une lumière qui secoue la torpeur, les choses surprenantes qui nous environnent et que nos sens enregistrent machinalement." (1)

A new look at things was what the Surrealists experiment was attempting but with the preoccupation with images, the subconscious and self, it was rarely possible for the Surrealists to reflect on the exterior world; indeed they were more likely to be concerned with projecting themselves upon it. Cocteau's new look is a transformation of an external experience through poetic vision into a kind of poetry which makes the reader see the world in a new way. One may be conscious particularly in the case of Surrealist painting of looking not at an image of something in the world but at a work of art which has an existence in its own right, which is an experience in itself. Very few Surrealist artists succeeded in transcending this barrier and in forcing the viewer to transform all his traditional ways of looking at things. Two of the most successful in this respect were Picasso and Salvador Dalí. Picasso's 'Guernica' has all the force of what Baudelaire had called a symbol of the 'profondeur de la vie' (2) Such artists were not able to work wholly within the restrictions of the doctrines of a school, and a great deal of their work owed little to Surrealism; its restricted outlook put too tight a rein on artistic creativity.

Cocteau saw that the poet's capacity for seeing more than the objective reality of things was a kind of double vision amounting almost to schizophrenia

1. J. Cocteau, in Le Secret Professionnel ; quoted in a passage in Lannes op.cit. p. 148.

2. See previous page.

in which the artist himself is likely to lose the thread of reality so that the world of imagination and the world of reality become confused:

"Je ne supposais pas que la puissante drogue espagnole des arènes, que les visions qu'elle détermine, relevassent du phénomène hallucinatoire que les personnes qui les éprouvent ont plus vite fait de prendre pour une grâce fatteuse que pour les premiers symptômes de la schizophrénie, tout poète digne du nom étant déjà un schizophrène au petit pied." (1)

Hence he was able to consider the corrida in the light of his own daydream of a combat and love affair with the Lady of Death, in which the poet reveals more of his secret thoughts than of his vision of the bullfight. In this instance the corrida and its atmosphere serve to set his poetical mind to work, inducing the trance of the poetic state. Yet he recognizes that he is starting from a vision of a real event and that his account of it is virtually abnormal. Nevertheless his narrative is controlled and elaborate, not at all based in his subconscious mind and going on to speculate about the very non-surrealist area of the supernatural. However it is important to note that Cocteau considered this inherent quality of the poet to see beyond reality as a product of a schizoid tendency, that there is in the poet also a touch of madness, which enables his genius to flower. Mental stability was not a trait of Baudelaire or of several of the Surrealists such as Dalí, Desnos, Vaché or Tzara; so that in this at least Cocteau shares some ground with the Surrealist.

It is perhaps unjust to suggest that the viewpoint of the Surrealists was entirely subjective for they tried to take account of the real world but, as Breton explained, by the practice of Surrealist techniques they tried to absorb all consciousness of the outside world into their own vision of their subconscious. so that the result is an image even more suffused with their personal fears,

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1. J. Cocteau, La Corrida du Premier Mai, p. 20.

phobias, and obsessions than was Cocteau's:

"Je ne parle pas de la conscience poétique des objets, que je n'ai pu acquérir qu'à leur contact spirituel mille fois répété." (1)

Breton appears to be attempting to know, describe and portray an inner nature of objects, a knowledge of their spiritual essence through the practice of Surrealism in dreams, automatic writing and the other techniques which he cultivated deliberately to gain access to his subconscious. The method appears similar in practice to Cocteau's but does not rely as his does upon inspiration coming almost unbidden to one who has that special gift.

The difference between Cocteau and the Surrealists in the matter of the comprehension of the exterior world is that Cocteau left himself a method of escaping from self into contact with the exterior world. If one is secure in reality the same method of escape into unreality this time, is available. The transcending power of love acts as a catalyst of precipitating unheard of magic:

"Seuls l'amour et la Foi nous permettent de sortir de nous." (2)

Although his heightened emotional state at the time of his conversion caused him to add faith to love as a catalyst for escape, his work generally portrays only love in this role, for example when Belle is able to escape, from the ordinary reality of the Draper's household and take her father with her. The same kind of love had already broken Bête's spell. In the case of Orphée, the power of his love made it possible for him to enter the next world to bring Eurydice back to earth. Such privileges were not granted to Oedipe who had to suffer the rigours of his fate because of his lack of the transcending virtues. The difference between Orphée and Oedipe is that the former was a poet, whereas

1. A. Breton, Manifestes du Surréalisme, op.cit, p. 47.

2. J. Cocteau, Lettre à Maritain, Oeuvres, op.cit.p. 52.

the latter was entirely human. Orphée recognized the 'Princesse' as an agent from the other world and loved her in part for the power she had over him. Oedipe's profound humanity made him insensitive to the Sphinx who placed herself in the same self sacrificing position before him as the Princesse to Orphée. The marriage of Oedipe was based on a preexistent tie, not on the love which linked Orphée and Eurydice in a personal communication. Oedipe became a poet with second sight in the dénouement of the play in which he was blinded. Maybe Cocteau could not see how Orphée and Oedipe represented different aspects of his struggle to realise his own nature, deep within his subconscious but he certainly was aware of the power of their myths to reveal fundamental human problems, yet typically he ascribed his insight to poetic intuition:

"Son amour pour Orphée et l'amour d'Orphée pour elle figurent cette profonde attraction des poètes pour tout ce qui dépasse le monde qu'ils habitent." (1)

He thus identifies himself with the poetic aspect of Orphée's nature by suggesting that he and Orphée share a curiosity in the supernatural world and believed that it was possible for poets to penetrate it. The ability of Cocteau to exercise his perception by bringing it to bear not only in the inner world of self, or even on the material world, but to encompass a realm outside the scope of either is the great divide between him and the Surrealists. Whenever they sought to penetrate the mysteries of time, space and the world of the spirit, they were hampered by their own materialism; all their perceptive ability centred on reality and on ways of bringing all aspects of it within the compass of mind and imagination; a vast scope but more limited than Cocteau's, or even Dalí's.

Cocteau's restless curiosity was driven by a desire to know the meaning of life whereas the Surrealists wanted to know more about its nature, to express

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1. J. Cocteau. Introduction to the 'Orphée' film. *op.cit.*

aspects of it in art, in ways accessible to newly revealed modes of comprehension and to establish a control over the material universe, in which Cocteau evinced relatively little interest:

"His protagonists are men in search of their destinies, in search of the meaning of their lives. They are usually men who understand themselves imperfectly and who find during the course of the action someone to answer their questions, to offer them some explanation of the drama in which they find themselves involved. Orphée is helped by the female figure of Death and by Angel Heurtebise, incarnated as a window repairer. The Sphinx as a young girl explains the riddle to Oedipe."(1)

Although the promptings to both questions and answers lie in the subconscious, they also concern all mankind, a consideration which imparts to Cocteau's work a universality lacking in the Surrealists who are regarded as an esoteric clique. This is ironical because they saw themselves as revolutionaries in literature, making available new modes of perception for everyone, whereas Cocteau was single-minded in his dedication to his own introspective kind of poetry. Because Cocteau's closed world has similarities with the secret worlds of each one of us and because his method of expression is clear and well formed, his poetry enlarges the perception of his readers and audiences; his secrets are accessible whereas the Surrealists imagery tends to remain obscure to the non-initiated:

"Le rôle du poète n'est pas de prouver mais d'affirmer sans fournir aucune des preuves encombrantes qu'il possède et d'où résulte son affirmation. Par la suite, la lente découverte de ces preuves donne au poète sa place de devin." (2)

The poet is both seer and prophet, with the twin gifts of vision and expression. He has no need for self-justification: purely a need to create and to be read.

1. W. Fowlie, History of a poet's age, op.cit. p. 57.

2. J. Cocteau, Opium, p. 78 op.cit.

Yet because he is a person apart he may well have to bear ostracism to be isolated. Such isolation was avoided by the Surrealists even if only because they were able to work as a group, so having less need for outside appreciation. A poet's world is a world of the imagination, and his work is an expression of his vision. Poetry consists of the twin elements of perception and form. In the case of the Surrealists there was an attempt not only to expand the bounds of perception but also to present the perceived idea in a form, as identical as possible with the perceived form; hence the use of such 'ready made' objects as bicycle wheels in their exhibitions. Cocteau realised that traditional forms had a value because they formed a framework for transferring a perceived notion from his own mind to his audience's or reader's and that too dramatic a change in the traditional form would cause a breakdown in the slender chain of communication. The fleeting perceived image had to crystallise into a recognisable shape, drawn out of time through the imagination:

"Chaque instant touche à chaque instant, dans l'imaginaire, et à peine l'on est mort, l'on s'en va rejoindre avec la vitesse de la lumière les centaures et les anges." (1)

The realm of the imagination which is the home of the poet is seen to have a resemblance both to the realm of death and the timelessness of the collective unconscious.

Yet in Cocteau's poetry the exterior elements are fused with the interior ones, as though memory has not the power to distinguish whether events happen to oneself or to others, whether they occurred yesterday or three thousand years ago. His poetry figures personal conflicts mingled with classical mythology in such a way that surrealistically he managed to break down the idea of past time as a

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1. P. Valéry, Petite Lettre sur les Mythes. op.cit. p. 129.

linear dimension or progression and realized a new concept which diagrammatically might be expressed as a space within which the poet wanders, rather than a progression which he accepts:

"Je montrerais ces couleurs d'orange qui ont hanté mon enfance et qui sont les rues des familles qui ne sortent jamais de chez elles." (1)

The events of the remote past and the personal past of the poet and the present all merge into a new tableau in the poetry he creates. Yet he is still able to present his portrayal of an intimate inner world of the secrets of the mind because he is working not only on a basis of personal experience, but on a basis of the problems which concern everyone:

"Lorsque vous entendez dire d'un artiste, d'une femme, qu'ils sont angéliques n'y cherchez pas l'ange de vos images de première communion. Désintéressement égoïsme, tendre pitié, cruauté, souffrance de contacts, pureté dans la débauche, mélange d'un goût violent pour les plaisirs de la terre et de mépris pour eux, amoralité naïve, ne vous y trompez pas; voilà les signes de ce que nous nommons angélisme et que possède tout vrai poète qu'il écrive, peigne, sculpte ou chante."

(2)

The artist reacts to every stimulus and the more sensitive he is to stimuli, the higher is the quality of his work and the more he is involved with the world around him. He is likened by Cocteau to an angel, which suggests a desire to save and protect, a different thing from the artistic revolution postulated by the Surrealists. The artist suddenly seems more like a biblical prophet than a revolutionary, seeking to bring mankind back to the right path rather than to turn it into a completely new one. To all practical purposes, however, for the non-initiate, Cocteau's hopes are very like the Surrealists'. His morality is one of

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1. J. Cocteau, Entretiens avec André Fraigneau, op.cit. p. 96.

2. J. Cocteau, Le Rappel à l'ordre, p. 203.



fidelity to his good poetry. However the major difference is in Cocteau's conviction that poetry is not for everyone and that for those fortunate enough to be touched by it, it is an elevating factor:

"Un poète est plus qu'un homme". (1)

is how he phrased his conviction and the phrase hints at not only the Promethean stealing of fire from the Gods but a little at a notion of divinity being manifest in poetry and in the person of the poet. For this reason Cocteau departs from Surrealist ideas and allows his inclination to a personal kind of mysticism to overwhelm him. He even on occasions removes poetry from the market place and suggests that poets can only be understood by other poets although they still have a duty to the rest of mankind:

".....les vrais poètes redeviendront ce qu'ils n'auraient jamais dû cesser d'être, des mandarins penchés les uns vers les autres et confient des secrets à l'oreille." (2)

Cocteau evidently thought that at some time poets had abandoned the true course of their art and that it was high time they returned to it. Such a thought is likely to have been aimed at the Surrealists who were the very opposite of mandarins and certainly never spoke in whispers. The secrecy of the poet is necessary because of his privilege in participating in the secrets of the Gods but also because the poet reveals part of his inner self in his art. Although there may be a kind of catharsis in this kind of exhibitionism, there are occasions on which Cocteau wishes either to choose his audience, or at any rate to veil his true intent in a cloud of mystery. Thus the oddities of form have a dissimulating effect whereas in Surrealism they reflect a new kind of perception. Cocteau was interested in their experience, because he was seeking Truth with the same zeal as

1. Orphée (Film). p. 68.

2. Lettre sur la Poésie. (écrit à Robert Goffin).

the Surrealists and partly with the same resources:

"Even in his use of puns and in his role of poet-actor, Cocteau is the explorer of himself, in 'Opéra' the investigator of his subconscious, the poet who in one line summarises the harassing paradox of the man who in his social life has to lie (Je suis un mensonge) and who, as the man, in his discoveries of the poems, speaks the truth. (qui dit toujours<sup>a</sup> vérité.) " (1)

There is therefore an ambivalence, on the one hand going into the radius of the supernatural and on the other going deep into the heart of his own personality. Yet he rarely examines the real world with an objective eye, but more usually with the transforming eye of the poet. He thus goes beyond reality into realms of metaphysical speculation, in contrast with the Surrealists whose ambition lay more in transforming the perception of reality and hoping thus to transform reality itself. To the outsider the result is the same; a bizarre yet strangely beautiful transformation of reality which often permits one to have tantalizing and intriguing glimpses of a world which *without* their poetic vision would have remained unrevealed. Cocteau was aware of the slender connection between perception, vision and reality and in his view a justification for exploiting cinema as a medium lies in these very qualities:

"Une pièce de théâtre est plus convaincante qu'un film parce qu'un film est une histoire de fantômes, Les spectateurs n'y échangent pas d'ondes avec des êtres en chair et en os. La force du film est d'afficher ce que je pense, de le prouver par un subjectivisme qui devient objectif, par des actes irrefutables parce qu'ils se produisent devant les yeux." (2)

He shows his awareness that the film is not real, that it does not happen on stage, there is no audience feedback because the work is already complete

1. W. Fowlie, History of a Poet's Age. p. 73.

2. Journal d'un Inconnu. p. 94.

and even the image on the screen is not tangible or real. However it has the advantage of fixing permanently, at the time of making, the thought of the poet and giving it a form visible to the eye and perceptible to the ear, which the spectator knows to be a reflection of an image in the poet's mind which has been fixed on celluloid. Moreover the poet is not nearly so dependent on the interpretation of his cast, for during filming, the director is able to exert a fairly rigid control, so that he can be sure that the finished product is his.

Although a film may only be an image to the audience, it has still its own kind of reality, which they are obliged to accept:

"Ce film n'a rien d'un rêve, sauf qu'il emprunte au rêve son illogisme rigoureux, sa manière de rendre la nuit, aux mensonges du jour, une sorte de fraîcheur qui fait notre routine. Il est en outre réaliste dans la mesure où le réalisme serait de peindre avec exactitude les intrigues d'un univers propre à chaque artiste et sans le moindre rapport avec ce qu'on a coutume de prendre pour la réalité." (1)

The presentation of the film, the falsified time scale which focuses attention on the important parts, may be dream-like. It is like a dream too by presenting to an audience, fixed in a kind of trance, in a short intensive session, all the obsessions which haunt the poet permanently. However the dream quality underlies the realist one which is only realist in that it is a faithful reflection of the concepts in the mind of the artist himself, which are real to him, even if he has difficulty in communicating them to others. The question of objective reality does not even enter consideration. Cocteau is convinced of the value of individual poetic inspiration so that he places considerable value on individuality and a personal world found in introspection. For him the poet is an isolated figure, whereas the Surrealists worked as a group, shared dreams even, scarcely believed

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1. Préface to 'Le Testament d'Orphée'.

in the existence of a realm of thought within consciousness, but instead sought an outward universalised conception of consciousness, verging on a collective appreciation of exterior reality, through a transforming instinctive imagination. If such a pointed contrast can emerge and yet superficially the works of art remain similar, the question remains whether the Surrealists were deceiving themselves and were really unable to penetrate the outer world and were actually doing what Cocteau claimed he was doing; transforming reality and re-examining it inside his own mind in that peculiar realm of thought which is the individual property of every human being, or whether the Surrealists' reality had found a way of discovering and exploring a kind of collective unconscious common to all men and even to Cocteau. Such a collective unconscious is at once both external and internal and one in which Cocteau shared equally with the Surrealists. Both he and they had access not only to the secrets of the Gods but to the secrets of all consciousness and of all time. The idea is breathtaking and it is small wonder that the artistic achievements of Surrealism appear confused and uncertain by comparison. People fail to understand or appreciate, form deteriorates and the Surrealists themselves suffered mental confusion. Likewise the impenetrability of Cocteau, the tremendous discipline he felt he had to impose on himself, the suffering caused to him by the creation of his artistic works, his own periods of mental confusion, all become understandable, for the undertaking is of superhuman dimensions. Although his discipline imposes shape on his vision, which helps the reader or spectator to penetrate into and even participate in the mystery, his world is as closed as his rivals. The impression remains that mankind is on the edge of a tremendous philosophical and metaphysical development, yet may well never actually realise its potential, may even turn away altogether in a different direction. One can half hear the ardonic laughter of the Gods who once again have tantalised man by permitting a glimpse of the divine, then closed up the avenue of perception again.

In spite of its cosmic intent, the poetry of Cocteau is never far from himself, with perception turned inwards instead of outwards. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Orphée cycle in which the poet appears to have a mystical self identification with the poet of Greek legend and uses the same analogy at a number of times during his life:

"Ainsi avec le testament d'Orphée se referme la boucle, et le commentaire, lu par Cocteau, conclut: 'De ce sommeil dormi debout je m'éveillai', au moment où il va s'enfoncer dans l'invisible. Guidé par Cégeste, ultime incarnation de Radiguet, que, rappelons-le, Cocteau connut chez sa mère, rue d'Anjou, ici personnifié par Édouard Dermit, le poète va retourner à son origine, retrouver sa Mère, - la Princesse - et son père - l'Inspirateur -, l'Absent dont toute sa vie il chercha à travers ses amis la présence." (1)

In Cocteau, perception of self and of mythology appears to be linked in a series of analogies of a theatrical nature, in which the poet casts himself in a leading role. It is not essential that he himself should fully understand the importance of his analogy and it may well be so veiled in mythology that the reality for the poet becomes his created world of fiction where the anxieties of the real world have their faithfully reproduced counterparts from which he cannot escape. As Brosse shows, all his memories, especially the most traumatic of them, combine together and reemerge into a fictitious dream world in which all the elements which in reality had occurred over a long period of time, find themselves fused together in a binding new reality of myth and poetry. Of course some of this new world is perceived instinctively and in a fashion of dreaming; this aspect of the creation of Cocteau is the side which approaches nearest to

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1. J. Brosse, Cocteau; Orphée, Théâtre et Cinéma, p. 126. Bordas, Paris, 1973.

Surrealism for it is reaching into the subconscious. It is Cocteau's intensely deliberate artistic structure and form which takes it back into the realm of the conscious and away from the Surreal. Cocteau's technique also raises the question which seems to have been avoided by the Surrealists of whether by self contemplation through dreams or any other means of plumbing the secrets of the subconscious, it could ever be possible for a poet to perceive anything but an image of himself and whether any such image derived from the subconscious can possibly be a reflection even of anything ever perceived in the real world. It would seem that the Surrealists can on the one hand only produce images of the inner self and on the other of exterior reality transformed by memory, perception and imagination. Whether they can actually perceive an aspect of reality beyond the compass of normal comprehension is a different question altogether. They certainly thought so, but they may have fallen so far short of their objective that what they in fact achieved was a refinement of perception so that they were able to re-interpret the perceived world in a new vision. If this is so then they are closer to Cocteau than they would like to admit or dare to think, and the point does not detract in any way from the quality of their art, their originality or their contribution to our knowledge.

The poet is thus able to claim for his film 'Orphée' that it was a film of reality:

"Il n'y a dans ce film ni symbole, ni thèse.....C'est un film réaliste." (1)

On the level of the poet's perception of himself, it is a question of the psychology of the poet himself and of the world which his imagination has constructed for him as a kind of cathartic expression of his most deep seated fear,

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1. Cocteau's Introduction to the film 'Orphée'. op.cit.

memories and obsessions. However if the film is realist for him it may still be perceived by us as symbolist, the symbols representing for us the expression of the poet's imagination. We require a symbol to enable us to visualise and to conceptualise what is real in the poet's mind, but having no objective reality in itself, can only be communicated through symbols. Cocteau was thus in error in suggesting that the audience and the cineaste could dream the same dream together. By talking of reality and realism Cocteau appears to be moving away from the concept of the Surreal; but inasmuch as he is talking about reality as seen in his mind's eye, and transformed by his own poetic vision the difference is once again more one of intention than one of fact and certainly, since the outward result is very similar to an outsider, it is quite understandable that one should see both kinds of work in a similar light. If Cocteau's work has any permanence, it derives from the quality of universality he imposes on his personal mythology by the use of dramatic form and transformed imagination:

"'Le Sang d'un Poète' parce qu'il fut décalqué d'une autre réalité que celle des phénomènes visuels et doté d'une agressivité venant de l'esprit, parce qu'enfin il plongea dans le concret une méthode poétique parfaitement exercée dans le dedans de soi-même, résiste aujourd'hui mieux que la plupart des films de cette nature et de ce temps." (1)

Cocteau always maintained that art was universal and that poetry could be expressed through any of the forms of art. In making this affirmation he once more stressed his belief in imposing a structure of art forms. Whilst film was one way in which he felt he could give a kind of permanence to poetic thought which it would be hard to distort in transmission, it was not the only unconventional form of dramatic representation which interested him. From his

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1. R. Lannes, *op.cit.* p 61.

beginnings in the theatre he had been interested in the ballet and in various forms of musical expression. Ballet interested him because it was the marriage of musical and dramatic presentation; dance fascinated him and so did the concept of mime. He also saw a point in the universality of the ballet in which the spoken word was not important and hoped that there might be a direct communication of thought between the poet and his audience without the necessity of first transforming thought into word for the sake of communication and then changing it back into thought:

"Un ballet possède en outre, ce privilège, de parler toutes les langues, et de supprimer la barrière entre nous et ceux qui parlent celles que nous ne parlons pas." (1)

He was conscious too of a fundamental brotherhood of mankind and thought of poetry, not especially as a French pre-occupation but as a universal one, even though he accepted that in terms of language he was restricted to French. Yet his travels to Spain and America, his interest in jazz and in the Russian ballet, his travels to the near East, his interest in things Greek and his involvement in the plastic arts as well as painting all pay tribute to his universality. Whilst these interests share points in common with the Surrealists, they also demonstrate how much he was interested in form and in communication and in the problems arising from its absence. For Cocteau three features of poetry were basic; its conception, its formation and its communication, the poet having to pay attention to all three aspects. In this he was a long way ahead of the Surrealists who concentrated their efforts on the conception of poetry, appearing to place much less emphasis on form and expression.

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1. La Difficulté d'être. op. cit. p. 168.



Cocteau's poetic concepts also owe their origin to some extent in the works of Nietzsche for whom he had considerable admiration. The Surrealists worked as a group and tried to help each other with their inspiration. Cocteau worked alone most of his life though he did find some rare individual minds which appeared to function on the same wavelength as his own; people like Radiguet and Jean Marais for instance. For the most part he accepted that the poet would be a kind of lonely prophet despised by the masses because the inspiration he brought was intimidating and esoteric. Although living next to the Gods in an atmosphere of beauty he would be condemned to be unable to share his treasure with the rest of mankind except at rare and special moments and by the practice of special virtues because of a fundamental problem of a communication barrier between the minds of individuals. Nietzsche gives an echo of exactly the same feeling in Zarathustra:

"Injustice and filth cast they at the solitary; but my brother, if thou wouldst be a star, thou must shine for them none the less on that account." (1)

The image of shining light itself is not usually one associated with Cocteau for his world is so often half lit, hidden amid shadows or darkness or inside closed rooms. Indeed starlight would probably be too closely associated with the fatal image of the moon for Cocteau but in the treatment received by Orphée in the film there is a clear parallel with Zarathustra.

Orphée was present in at least three incarnations in Cocteau and he appears associated with the idea of Phénixologie whereby Cocteau suggests that the poet is immortal in some way or is able to present himself in multiple incarnations. This idea too is mirrored in Nietzsche in a way that may explain the enigma of Cocteau's references to the Phoenix:

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1. Nietzsche, Thus spake Zarathustra, op.cit. p. 118.

"Ready must thou be to burn thyself in thine own flame; how couldst thou become new if thou hast not first become ashes." (1)

Nietzsche here presents the idea of rebirth through fire which is central to the myth of the Phoenix and suggests the notion which Cocteau may well have taken up that the prophet or the poet need to pass through this process to merit his pre-eminent position and may pass through it many times.

The idea of death is fundamental in Cocteau's work, appearing in most of his plays, ballets and much of his poetry. The Phoenix theme is but one aspect of death in Cocteau and just as it can be shown to have a counterpart in Nietzsche so can the Messianic tendency with which Cocteau imbued some of his work, for instance, Opéra, La Machine Infernale, and Orphée or such critical work as Le Secret Professionel. This too is an inclination which can be traced back to Nietzsche:

"In your dying shall your spirit and your virtue still shine like an evening afterglow around the earth; otherwise your dying hath been a failure." (2)

There is the theme of Requiem but better known perhaps in his treatment of Orphée where the poet deliberately chooses death by looking at Eurydice and then by facing the fury of the mob. By his heroic self sacrifice he regains his independence of spirit and his poetic virtue, so that he dies poetically and creates a myth which lives on after him, as a permanent reminder of his vision and message. It is this side of Cocteau which the Surrealists found so difficult to accept. Moreover if they liked some of Nietzsche's materialistic ideas, the kind of spirituality thrusting the responsibility for the universe back onto man was not part of their conception either. Cocteau's concept of man exercising

1. id. p. 127.

2. Nietzsche, *op.cit.* p. 157.

his free will in combat with the will of the Gods, being their rival, on this earth, if their subject by the nature of things in the next, was not their concept of reality or of the Surreal which they liked to consider independently of any spiritual connotations. Their efforts to free man from religion only resulted in making him prey to the material, however transformed it might be. Cocteau had a grander concept, if a more fantastic one, of man's role in the universe and it is clear that some of these notions had much in common with Nietzsche as well as with ideas derived from more orthodox faiths and from the classics as well as from sources common to both himself and the Surrealists and even a few taken from the Surrealists themselves. Cocteau's originality was to see a salvation where even Baudelaire and Lautréamont had failed; in poetry itself:

"But I live in mine own light, I drink again into myself the flames that break forth from me." (1)

The poet-phoenix is emotionally self-sufficient and, bathed in his own light lives a Narcissistic kind of existence in which the mirror holds a special position not merely as a reflector of light or of images or even of the poet's own image, but as a reflector of beauty and a portent that the poet will one day achieve a divine beauty that may not yet be his:

"Thou sublime being, one day shalt thou also be beautiful, and hold up the mirror to thine own beauty." (2)

There is hope for mankind and for poets. The Beast shall one day see himself reflected as beauty in a mystic communion and identification with a feminine alter ego saving him from the worst in himself.

Yet the poet must be aware of the power of poetry and the malefice of the

1. id; p. 169.

2. Nietzsche; id. p. 169.

Gods. It and they have the power to destroy as well as to create; he can be deceived as to their true purpose and may have to pay the penalty of Oedipus. He may suffer the fate suggested by the statue in the film 'Sang d'un Poète' and suggested by the ubiquitous presence of statues in Cocteau's work:

"Ye venerate me; but what if your veneration should someday collapse? Take heed lest a statue crush you." (1)

When such a direct reference is to be found, it lends strength to the notion that there is a direct textual influence on Cocteau in the works of Nietzsche and that this is one of the prime instances of a distinction between Cocteau and Surrealism.

Cocteau's originality with other writers or his dependence on his sources is perhaps most clearly shown in his attitude to his works once they have been completed. At times he thought in terms of giving expression to a thought, but already in 'Heurtebise' he was describing the process as one of giving birth. By the time that he wrote 'Le Cordon Ombilical' he had amplified this idea into a theory that created works had an independent life and bore a relation to him that a child might to a father, subconsciously perhaps expressing his own need of a father figure and his search for a family in which his own position could be secure. He felt this permanent link with his creation to such an extent that he came to think of the process in terms of giving flesh and blood to his thoughts:

"Nos pensées une fois inscrites ne sont plus tout à fait nos pensées. En tant que pensées elles sont déjà fantômes de nos croyances. C'est pour leur donner chair et os que nous les inscrivons." (2)

1. id., p. 131.

2. J. Cocteau; Le Testament d'Orphée, op.cit. p. 35.

There may be something startlingly Surrealistic in such a surprising metaphor which goes so obviously beyond reality, yet the idea is peculiarly his own and could not be Surrealistic because the Surrealists were seeking ways of expressing their own thoughts, and were satisfied when they expressed them that they had created a work of art for which they had no further responsibility. The Surrealist Act was the act of creating and the different sexualities of the different writers may possibly be glimpsed through the manner of looking at the created work. Once again Cocteau appears able to lose himself in a poetic reality in which the imaginary becomes more vivid and living than the real. The act of making thought into poetry by transcribing it in itself is a process powerful enough to turn a ghost into a living creature, to bring the world of the spirits into mortal compass. Until this happens thoughts are merely beliefs; afterwards they have real existence which vindicates the beliefs, a cyclic process which in a strange way justifies both the mirrors and the phantoms in his work, not to mention the whole structure of the supernatural and the statues which represent thoughts crystalised. The creative process thus incorporates many of Cocteau's cherished myths; even that of the phoenix can be seen as having a cyclic structure analogous to the creative genesis of poetry in the mind of the poet.

Sometimes Cocteau seems less sure that he is personally responsible for his work. If he is suggesting that he has found a source of inspiration to tap within his subconscious, then he is on the same wavelength as they are; but he has gone beyond that not only when he has suggested that the Gods have dictated his work to him, but even on occasion when he has suggested that his work has come to him unbidden from sources entirely independent of his will:

"Bien sûr les œuvres se font toutes seules. Qu'elles rêvent de tuer père et mère." (1)

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1. Le Testament d'Orphée, op.cit. p. 35. see p 223.

The work can be independent enough to be parricide and to have dreams of its own; in this idea one can see once again the glimmerings of the poet's sexuality emerging as well as the idea that the creation is not his own work, that it comes spontaneously to life and only needs a form given to it by the poet in a paroxysm of violent effort. Once again one sees here the conviction Cocteau had that he was a poet and that poets are chosen people with special powers and privileges to which the ordinary being cannot hope to attain. Privileges which had in them their own hidden dangers. For some authors success has destroyed their creative urge or the fact that they have been typed as a writer in a particular genre, for instance in science fiction, has prevented them gaining recognition in other fields. Occasionally a writer attempts to break the cycle by writing under a pseudonym in a field for which he is less well renowned; so Cocteau's comment can have a certain pertinence in it, especially as he himself refused to be typed in any particular way. He claimed that his method of allowing poetry to work itself out in his unconscious mind was taught to him by Radiguet, which implies that he was already using the technique by the time that Surrealist ideas had crystallised. It also indicates a basic similarity of inspiration between Cocteau and his Surrealist rivals, whatever the differences which subsequently emerge:

"Il (Radiguet) m'enseigna la grande méthode. Celle d'oublier qu'on est poète et d'en laisser le phénomène s'accomplir à notre insu." (1)

Since elsewhere he makes it clear that producing his work is an exacting and fatiguing task, he can only be referring to the inspiration here which comes of its own volition to the poetic mind, to be shaped into artistic form by the

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1. La Difficulté d'être. op.cit. p. 17.

artist's vision. His process is not the automatic writing of the Surrealists since he is seeking ideas and intends to impose his will and form on them. What is clear is that he does not lose sight of the notion of the independence of the created idea which he sees as imbued with a life and will of its own. He does not consider that these ideas represent himself or his subconscious and indicates what is tantamount to a fear of them as coming from a power which is beyond him and greater than him. While he is in the grip of his muse he feels that he is not free, which is directly contrary to the spirit of Surrealism which seeks to break away from accepted forms and ideas in order to free the mind and allow it into completely new and unrestricted channels of thought:

"J'ai peu de mots dans ma plume. Je les tourne et je les retourne. L'idée galope devant. Lorsqu'elle s'arrête et regarde en arrière, elle me voit à la traîne. Cela l'impatiente. Elle se sauve. Je ne la retrouve plus. Je quitte le papier. Je m'occupe d'autre chose. J'ouvre ma porte. Je suis libre. C'est vite dit. L'idée revient à toute vitesse et je me jette au travail." (1)

The poet may be master of his art but he cannot force his inspiration; for that he must be in a receptive mood and when he is, there is no difficulty in finding inspiration; indeed it comes seeking him out. The mood must be receptivity; he cannot sit down with a pen in his hand and allow it to write words that exist somewhere in the depths of his own being. If he is properly receptive, a quality only given to poets, he can receive ideas and express them in art form. Occasionally he even doubts that he himself is the creative artist and gives his muse credit for the form as well as the inspiration for his work:

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1. La Difficulté d'être. p. 19.

"Peut-être bien que je me flatte de pouvoir donner un contour à ce que j'expulse et le puis-je si peu que cette force que j'expulse s'y oppose et décide jusqu'à la forme de son contour." (1)

Of course if one cannot accept the idea of spiritual inspiration, then there is virtually no difference between Cocteau's mode of working and the Surrealists' and the result may certainly bear resemblances. However Cocteau's method does not preclude and even may demand of him an examination of the supernatural to a very much greater extent than is likely in the case of the Surrealists. A corollary of the idea that Cocteau is inspired by his muse is that the Surrealists are wrong and there is life after death. Equally if he is really speaking from his own subconscious, then Jung is right, that there is a collective mythology accessible to all. In either case the ideas are not Surrealist. What is established is that the poet is free and his mind independent— even of his work.

Whatever the artists thought of the method and source of their work, they were to some extent deceived by their own visions and hallucinations and in practice their methods of perception were very close indeed. It is only when one accepts both the basic premises of Cocteau and of the Surrealists that there appears to be a significant difference between them. The outsider who judges both from the same standpoint has difficulty discerning any difference in some of the forms of their art and indeed some of their universality may derive from the fact that any observer in these art forms is to some extent obliged to participate in an artistic venture and that he sees some of himself mirrored in the venture even to the extent of viewing his own personality in a new light. The poetic movement in France during the 1920's represents an attempt to get away from the

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1. *ibid.*



objective and scientific which was threatening to overwhelm society and to find a form of insight and expression which would transcend reality to achieve a new view of the universe, both that of the interior spirit and that of the outer reality. To this Cocteau added his own unique and controversial attempt to depict the ultimate reality which he saw as being in the supernatural rather than in the surreal. He himself became very aware of the possible conflict and confusion realizing that it is not possible to distinguish in the subconscious between reality, supernatural and personal or collective subconscious; all these elements fuse together and are perceived as a whole by the poetic eye which transforms them into the new reality which is poetry itself, independent and immutable:

"Le poète, croyant écrire avec objectivité, se mêle à cette écriture objective de manière inconsciente. Mais cela ne veut pas dire que le poète affirme une opinion, penche à droite ou à gauche, cela veut dire que, quoiqu'il fasse, il exécute son propre portrait. " (1)

Even here the words of the poet leave a doubt which reflects a doubt in the poet's mind, whether he is painting or destroying his picture of himself; the sovereign nature of poetry overrules his own will. Perhaps it was respect for the power of poetry which made him choose as a favourite vehicle for it the cinema where the reality is a flickering shadow which the poet can execute as he wishes:

"Vive la jeune muse Cinéma car elle possède le mystère du rêve et permet de rendre l'irréalité réaliste." (2)

In the dream we all find a new reality in which our soul is free.

In Cocteau's work one may find that although the inspiration is personal

1. J. Cocteau; 'Démarche d'un Poète' in 'Poésie Critique'; Gallimard op.cit. p. 16.

2. Gilson; op.cit. p. 105.

and may involve an account of events in his life, these events are transformed into a new form by the poetic imagination of the writer. It is not that he has no regard for history or for fact but rather that when considered in the light of poetry, events take on a new reality and a new significance so that mere fact ceases to be vitally important in the literal sense of the term. Cocteau demands the right to shape poetry in the course of creating it into a truly poetic form with its own reality:

On pourrait citer bien d'autres pièges de la mémoire dans l'oeuvre de Cocteau; ils concernent tous des événements ou des faits étroitement mêlés à une création poétique. Dès que la vie se mélange au poème, le poème envahit toute l'âme de l'homme et chasse littéralement la réalité objective. Ainsi la poésie ne cesse de métamorphoser le réel. (1)

What Cocteau sees as a metamorphosis of reality (the expression here is not his) comes very close indeed to that venture into the unknown aspects of perception which is Surrealism but Surrealism is an exercise in heightened perception. Cocteau's view of poetry is to perceive something which is created in the imagination and to make pure thought into some kind of reality. If at times the Surrealists go beyond the limits which they imposed on themselves, it is almost by a kind of Surrealistic accident and they would argue that they were still in the realm of the finite whereas Cocteau never limited the aspirations of poetry to such a banal level, always seeking ways of knowing and penetrating the infinite. There is a vivid contrast between Kihm's concept of the poetic process in Cocteau's work and that of Carrouges in his review of the genesis of

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1. J.J.Kihm. op.cit. p. 50.

Surrealist ideas in poetry:

"Certes le dévoilement qu'opère la poésie n'est précisément pas de même nature que celui de la prose. Il ne progresse pas dans la ligne des perspectives habituelles de la vie. Il se place au contraire à l'opposite, pour souligner la présence de certaines lueurs insolites et fulgurantes qui radiographient les apparences usuelles. La poésie est une plongée de la conscience dans les zones abyssales d'où la vie se révèle autre qu'elle ne semble. Elle se place au zénith de la vie ou parfois au nadir, et chaque fois elle fait apparaître à la vision les espaces célestes qui se proposent à la conquête de l'homme en dépit des nuances noires qui ensèrent souvent la vie sous leur toit." (1)

Cocteau starts with the visions which come to his consciousness and instead of accepting that the inspiration itself is poetry, shapes his thoughts into poetry.

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1. M. Carrouges; André Breton et les Données fondamentales du Surréalisme.  
op.cit. p. 335.

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1945. Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne. Directed by Robert Bresson. Script by  
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1947. Ruy Blas. Directed by Pierre Billon. Scenario, adaptation and script  
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1947. L'Aigle à deux têtes. Directed, produced and scripted by Jean Cocteau.
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1948. La Légende de Sainte Ursule (Leggenda di s Orsola). Directed by Luciano  
Emer. Commentary by Jean Cocteau, published in Poésie Critique I, 1959.
1949. Orphée. Scripted and Directed by Jean Cocteau.
1950. Les Enfants terribles. Directed by Melville, adapted from the novel  
by Cocteau who helped in the filming.
1951. Le Rossignol de l'Empereur de Chine. Puppet film by Trnka. Commentary  
written and spoken by Cocteau.
1952. La Villa Santo-Sospir. 16mm film by Cocteau.

1954. Une Mélodie, cinq peintres. Short by Hergert Seggelk, featuring Cocteau.
1957. A l'Aube du monde. Short by René Lucot. Commentary by Cocteau.
1958. Le Musée Grévin. Film by Jean Masson. Sequence improvised by Cocteau.
1959. Le Testament d'Orphée. Directed and devised by Cocteau. Scenario, texts and illustrations by Edns Rocher, Monaco, 1960.
1961. La Princesse de Clèves. Directed by Jean Delannoy. Adaptation and script by Cocteau.
1965. Thomas l'Imposteur. Directed by Georges Franju. Adapted by Cocteau Michel Worms and Franju.

#### BALLETS & MIMES

1917. Parade. Music by Erik Satie, Decor and costumes by Picasso.
- 1920 Le Boeuf sur le Toit ou 'The Nothing-doing Bar.' Music by Darius Milhaud.
1924. Le Train bleu. Operetta danced by Cocteau, with music by Milhaud.  
Théâtre de Champs-Élysées, 20 June 1924. Ed Heugel.
1946. Le Jeune Homme et la Mort. Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, 25 June 1946.  
Published in 'Paris-Théâtre' No 89 and in 'La Difficulté d'être'.
1950. Phèdre. Ballet, decor and costumes by Cocteau. Music by Auric.  
Théâtre national de l'Opéra, 14 June 1950.
1952. Oedipus Rex. Decor, costumes, masques and movement by Cocteau. Music by Strawinski. Théâtre des Champs-Élysees, 14 June 1952.  
See 'Journal d'un inconnu'.
1953. La Dame à la Licorne. Ballet by Cocteau, music from 16th century.  
Gartner Theater, Munich, 9 May 1953 and Théâtre National de l'Opéra ,  
28 January 1959.
1959. Scenario of 'Le Poète et sa Muse'. Music by Menotti. Festival de Spolète, June 1959.

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1932. 'Villa Blanche' belonging to the Bourdet Family at Tamaris.
1950. Villa 'Santo Sospir' belonging to Mme Francine Weisweiler.
- 1956-57. Chapelle Saint-Pierre, Villefranche-sur-Mer.
1957. Salle de mariages de la mairie de Menton.
1958. June. Two panels for Exhibition 'Terre et Cosmos' , Paris.
1959. Chapelle Saint-Blaise-des-Simples, Milly-la-Forêt.
- Chapelle de la Vierge in the Notre Dame de France Church in London.
1962. Open air theatre at Cap-d'Ail.
- Drawings for windows of the Church Saint Maximin at Metz.

RECORDINGS: Preserved by the French Radio tape library.

1943. 11 November. Talk on Raymond Radiguet.
1947. 3 January. Notes on L'Aigle à deux têtes and Souvenirs du Nouveau-Cirque.
- 29 January. Cocteau introduced 'La Voix humaine' , played by Berthe Bovy.
- 17 March. Cocteau introduced the ballet 'Le Jeune Homme et la Mort'.
1949. 20 February. Cocteau spoke in a programme, 'Hommages à Christian Bérard'.
- 31 December; Interview on the films of 'Orphée' and 'Les Enfants terribles'.
1950. Interview on the film 'Orphée'.
- 23 February. Memories of Christian Bérard.
- 21 March. Talk with George Ribemont-Dessaigne on poetry.
- 28 November. Talk about the lycée Condorcet in 'Potaches et Labadens'.
1951. 26 January to 28 March. 'Entretiens avec Jean Cocteau' By André Fraigneau. Published 1965; see bibliographical section.
- 20 December; Interview before the Première of Bacchus.
1955. 1st January. Reading of a few poems from 'Clair-Obscur'.
- 18 October. Interview in Pierre Lhoste's programme 'Tels qu'en eux mêmes'.
- 20 October. Report on Cocteau's admission to the Académie Française, with his speech and André Maurois reply.
- 25 October. Cocteau's speech on admission to the Belgian Royal Academy.

1956. 21 June. Interview with Cocteau about Jean Dauven's book

'Jean Cocteau chez les Sirènes'.

Programme with Robert Mallet on 'Le Grand Écart'. 6 August.

1957. 14 January. Interview about the decoration of the chapel at

Villefranche-sur-Mer.

1958. Broadcast of 'Les Armes secrètes de la France', given in the French

Pavillion at the Universal Exhibition in Brussels.

1959. September. Interview by Roger Pillaudin on 'Le Testament d'Orphée'.

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<u>Film Scenario.</u>	Viaje a la luna.	1929 (unpublished.).

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La Zapatera Prodigiosa.	1930.
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Transcendental Meditation

The world has come a long way since the first 'Manifeste du Surréalisme'. In spite of a prevailing contemporary obsession with material science and with travel in space, there still remains an interest in forms of perception akin to Surrealism. Its art forms live on in the everyday world around us, in psychedelic wallpapers, abstract sculpture, modern design of fabrics and everyday articles. Perception has been heightened, people are more aware of political rights and take a more active part in decisions affecting their lives. To this extent the cultural movements arising from World War 1 have had a tremendous part to play.

The interest in perception has spilled over into the area of extra-sensory perception, serious experiments being now conducted in telepathic communication, water-divining, dreams and even into claims about transmigration. Frequent articles, often rather sceptical, in the popular press are proof of the general interest in these phenomena. Out of this interest, which has resulted in a revived attention to Oriental religions, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has derived a very considerable following for his cult of transcendental meditation. In many respects *transcendental* meditation resembles the Surrealist trance and also the half-wakeful state of which Cocteau spoke.

"The subject sits comfortably, closes his eyes and sounds in his mind a word, the mantra. He lets his attention passively follow the mantra as it is repeated internally, remaining sufficiently alert to allow his attention to go inwards and so remains uninvolved with thoughts which may arise in the mind."  
(1)

A meditator carries out this process twice a day for twenty minutes each time and is thus supposed to have made available to him the creative energy of the universe and thus to have his life enriched and to be more in tune with people and nature.

There is a body of theory upon which transcendental meditation is based known as 'the science of creative intelligence', (2)

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1. Article in Times Educational Supplement on Meditation. 17.5.74.
  2. Peter Fenwick. '100,000 Meditators can't be wrong'. TES 17.5.74.

This science is defined as; "an interdisciplinary study drawing upon the arts and sciences which gives understanding of the nature, growth and development of creative intelligence in life." (1)

There is a strong resemblance between this definition and those of Surrealism and Coctelian attempts to express the nature of perception. Such a science clearly owes more to philosophy and to the arts than to modern scientific method although it does suppose a unity underlying knowledge which perhaps contemporary culture tends to obscure, but which thinkers of the Surrealist type wanted to exploit.

Medical investigations into the nature of this type of meditation do indicate that unusual things occur during it. Both the rhythms of sleep and wakefulness are present, so that the subject appears to be balancing consciousness and unconsciousness, a state that normally occurs when someone is falling asleep, but only momentarily. This state does seem to encourage great creativity and

"solutions to problems may come unbidden to the mind". (2)

The mind can also become sufficiently alert to make this state dangerous for sufferers of epilepsy. There are accompanying physical changes to those of the mind. Breathing becomes much slower and skin resistance falls and other features of relaxation occur. It is also claimed that meditators feel less need to use drugs, so that the practice of meditation can be of great value in reducing stress on individuals.

It would seem therefore possible that the Surrealists and Cocteau discovered or rediscovered a way of inducing a creative state of mind that has become widely practised in recent years through an entirely different agency.

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1 & 2. Article by Peter Fenwick .op. cit.

Massine and Dhiagelev. Adapted from an article in the "Guardian" 3.473

Massine was the choreographer of Dhiagelev's 'Ballet Russe' which had so much influence on Cocteau in the period immediately before and after the production of 'Parade' in 1917. Two works which had been performed by this company were revived in 1973 - the 'Three Cornered Hat' and 'Gaité Parisienne'. The revival gave rise to an article on Massine and an interview with him in which he quoted principles from manuscript notes left with him by Dhiagelev. Massine expressed his preoccupation with the link between music and dance steps, insisting that a dancer must thoroughly understand the purpose, nature and soul of the music and was not simply an athlete. Dhiagelev had been profoundly influenced by myth and especially by Greek mythology, civilization and literature, having a particular admiration for Sophocles and Aeschylus:

"This drama if we look into the essence of it is not the artificial subjective creation of one genius but a result of the collaboration between the artist and all humanity. This was the splendid and tender flower of Greek genius." (1)

The source of classical Greek drama lay in mythology and heroic deeds, derived from the poetic imagination of all people. Uncomprehending primitive man assigned such stories to the mysterious supernatural being which he has created after his own image and to the mysterious side of elemental half understood passions which he found in himself. He thus sees a distorted picture of nature derived from his own fantasies. Drama is therefore nothing but:

"myth made simple and compact in its turn by the all-observing fantasy of the artist and brought through this process to its essence and interpreted in vital form in front of an audience." (1)

At the time of the interview Massine was working on a project to present a series of performances embodying his theories concerning the fusion of the



arts, including architecture, sculpture, painting and dance. These of course are some of the elements which Cocteau himself wanted to include in the framework of his own poetry and his theories of the 'preuve par neuf' are clearly connected with his association with the Russian Ballet. One can also detect a similarity of thinking in the matter of Greek legend and mythology. In this case it could be that the thought came from Cocteau to Dhiagelev rather than the other way round, or that both were strongly influenced by a general current of the period. At any rate, it is interesting that this item should come to light at the particular moment it chose and almost makes one believe in the Surrealist concept of 'objective chance' or divine coincidence in which Cocteau believed so firmly.

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1. The quotations are from the 'Guardian' article.