

GRAVITY AND LIGHT :
looking *through* the architecture of JEAN COCTEAU

Terrance GALVIN
School of Architecture
McGill University, Montreal

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ABSTRACT:

The thesis examines a select amount of *poésie* by the artist Jean Cocteau, and through interpretation, explores the *architecture* of his work. This process of interpretation poses two questions: What is the role of the architect today, compared with his role as understood throughout history? How does the production of architecture today reflect the mechanisms of capitalism with its division of knowledge and labour, compared with an architecture which is inclusive and reconciliatory?

A clear message emerges from Cocteau's *poésie* as a response to the two aspects of Orpheus: the first is represented by the processes of individual creativity, and the second by the collective realization of a project, whether it be a work of theatre, the production of a film, or the design and realization of a building.

A work does not end in handing it over for someone else to finish.

RÉSUMÉ:

Cette thèse étudie ce que j'appelle l'architecture de Jean Cocteau, en partant de l'examen de certaines des oeuvres de l'artiste. Une telle interprétation soulève deux questions plus générales. La première concerne le rôle de l'architecte aujourd'hui et donc la compréhension historique de sa place dans la société. La deuxième questionne les productions architecturales qui reflètent les divisions du savoir et du travail propres au capitalisme, et s'opposent à une architecture qui serait inclusive et réconciliatrice.

La *poésie* de Jean Cocteau offre un double message parfaitement résumé dans le mythe d'Orphée. La créativité personnelle doit être mariée à un projet collectif. Qu'il s'agisse d'une oeuvre théâtrale, d'un film ou d'une construction, un travail ne s'achève pas au niveau du projet. On ne peut séparer conception et réalisation en laissant à d'autres le soin de terminer.

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Frontispiece: Portrait of Jean Cocteau, (Man Ray, 1922).

Acknowledgements:

This work represents an attempt to connect ideas from various disciplines and bring them to bear on a re-casting of the traditional role of the architect within the *praxis* of architecture. The sources and credits for this process of investigation are numerous, but I would like to acknowledge a few associations :

I wish to thank Dr. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, Director of the History and Theory Program at McGill University, for his advice and inspiration. In addition to the group of colleagues in the program, I especially credit visiting critics Dr. Marco Frascari of the University of Pennsylvania, and Professor Steve Parcell from The Technical University of Nova Scotia, who furthered my thinking about wonder and magic. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the guidance and support of Dr. Essy Baniassad, as both professor and friend over the years.

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In terms of the content of this thesis, which argues that knowledge and life are inextricably linked, I am indebted to that long line of poets which includes Jean Cocteau who triggered my musing, and the poet Leonard Cohen (a modern day Orpheus), who continues to live and write just around the corner. Like any other individual, Cocteau had only a few ideas which he kept unravelling and retying. This idea is expressed lucidly by Bruno Schulz in a passage that I keep returning to like a familiar conversation :

I do not know just how in childhood we arrive at certain images, images of crucial significance to us. They are like filaments in a solution around which the sense of the world crystalizes for us....They are meanings that seem predestined for us, ready and waiting at the very entrance of our life...Such images constitute a program, establish our soul's fixed fund of capital, which is allotted to us very early in the form of inklings and half-conscious feelings. It seems to me that the rest of our life passes in the interpretation of those insights, in the attempt to master them with all the wisdom we acquire, to draw them through all the range of intellect we have in our possession.

These early images mark the boundaries of an artist's creativity. His creativity is a deduction from assumptions already made. He cannot now discover anything new; he learns only to understand more and more the secret entrusted to him at the beginning, and his art is a constant exegesis, a commentary on that single verse that was assigned him. But art will never uncover that secret completely. The secret remains insoluble. The knot in which the soul was bound is no trick knot, coming apart with a tug at its end. On the contrary, it grows tighter and tighter. We work at it, untying, tracing the path of the string, seeking the end, and out of this manipulating comes art...¹

Finally, I have to recognize my many books who are indeed my friends; and Angel(a), who allowed me the act of recognition within the mirror of her soul.

t.g.

Montreal, 1990

¹ Bruno Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles*, trans. Celina Wieniewska (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977), pp. 19-20

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Prologue

Looking *through* the architecture of Jean Cocteau:

Architecture is a continual attempt to reconcile the question of distance. There are at least two ways to go about this: the first to aim directly at it by following a linear course. The second attitude is to talk around the subject, and in doing so, speak about the 'thing' which is just beyond our field of vision. It is the latter method I am intending in this work. Rather than write a biography of Cocteau, which several authors have done most adequately, I propose to use Cocteau's interpretation of the myth of Orpheus as a *vehicle* by which to approach the discipline of architecture.

This choice is deliberate; for the direct gaze of Orpheus epitomized his impatience and his subsequent loss of Eurydice. The indirect gaze is much more forgiving. It requires patience, and is closer to the role of Hermes, and the derivative science 'hermeneutics' which involves a process of continual *exegesis*; of interpreting the works of Cocteau within the discourse of his own universe. Cocteau understood all his creative work as *poésie*, apart from the specifics of

the media. He distinguished six types of *poésie* : poésie, poésie de roman, poésie critique, poésie de théâtre, poésie graphique, and poésie cinématographique. When criticized for changing media frequently, Cocteau replied with the metaphor that he jumped from branch to branch, but always within the same tree, that of Poetry.

Throughout this study, I have used the concepts of the poet and of the architect as interchangeable, for my belief is that the task of the architect is poetic. In the same way that the protagonist in *Le Sang d'un Poète* represents the poet/artist, the subject of this study is the poet/architect. Thus, the choice of Orpheus as a symbol of the archetypal poet is intended as an analogy for the Orphic qualities of the artist in general. Through this metaphor, I will try to examine the nature of architecture, and the symbolic role of the architect. If the poet's matter is the human condition, the architect's *prima materia* are *gravity* and *light*. In this sense, works of architecture are most certainly artistic production; for the life of a building not only encompasses the design and construction phases, but continues into its public life, where the idea of Architecture comes to represent the 'Other' within a given culture.

One could conceive of both the architect and the poet as story-tellers, recalling certain themes such as *eros* (love) or *thanatos* (death), themes that are constant aspects of the human condition. Framing these situations is the task of the architect, since the bias of this thesis is that the substance of architecture resides in the humanities. The schism that occurred in the late eighteenth century between the arts and the sciences; culminating in the division of the École des Beaux Arts and the École Polytechnique, increased the role of technology from being a tool, to becoming an end in itself, divorced from the subtleties of the human condition. The architect as raconteur or shaman recalls that the act of making architecture is nevertheless a kind of incantation - the pre-requisite is to hold the world in a state of wonder. This is the foundation of the idea of play in culture, for along with being *Homo Sapiens* (one who seeks wisdom), and *Homo Faber* (one who makes), Man is also *Homo Ludens* (one who plays).

In the following chapters; through the examination of Cocteau's *poésie*, we will expand on the notion of play as an adult creative act, linking the role of the architect throughout history to that of the demiurge, magician and shaman. The



Like Jacob, Cocteau wrestles with the angelic Heurtebise
(Eugène Delacroix: Sketch for *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*).

architect was never a mere builder, nor was he a servant of the bureaucracy as he often appears today. Like Orpheus, his persona was multivalent: magic, fireworks, inventive machines and ephemeral events were part of his repertoire as story-teller and shaman. This role has been increasingly diminished to the point where our discipline has largely lost the elements of humour, irony and symbolism that were traditionally integral to the content of architecture. The human spirit is always necessary as a reference point in making architecture, more so in our contemporary condition where the traditional notion of God has been superseded by the importance of Man. Reflecting this philosophical shift, the artist/poet becomes Cocteau's central figure of man the creator.

Since Cocteau considered himself foremost a man of letters, his poetry and essays reveal the themes in his work which he pursued in all mediums as an artist. I will examine two early poems, *Dos D'Ange* (1922), and *L'Ange Heurtebise* (1925) in order to interpret and examine the recurring theme of angels within his oeuvre; for like Jacob, Cocteau was continually struggling with his own angels and demons, with the concurrent Narcissistic and Orphic tendencies of any artistic production. The thrust of this work will attempt to discuss an attitude of reconciliation using the trilogy of Orpheus, Eurydice, and Hermes as our paradigm. The messenger Hermes will play an important role throughout our reflections, as he did for Cocteau as symbol of the *angelos*; sometimes as Hermes the psychopomp and other times as 'Heurtebise', the celestial angel. Tracing Cocteau's 'testament' throughout his career reveals a re-casting of classical mythology within a framework which addresses the necessity of the poet as the collective memory of a culture, while acknowledging that this century's angst and existential questioning are implicit in the re-casting of any myth.

This study begins with a comparison of the two films *Le Sang d'un Poète* (1930), and *Orphée* (1950), since the Orphic quality of the poet and the personal act of creation are recurring themes in the struggle of modern poets such as Rilke and Cocteau. A second comparison is made between Cocteau's literary intentions within the dramatic version of *Orphée* in 1926, and its subsequent transformation by the 'cinematograph', placing an emphasis on physical invention (*technêi*) in the film *Orphée*. The challenge of writing about film poses the question of transformation, since writing inevitably freezes the sequential image. Cocteau exercised the reverse process, where he began with a text and created what he

termed the *ciné-roman*. In this spirit, the images used throughout this work are intended as mnemonic devices in order to trigger the reader's storehouse of memory.¹ Following Cocteau's use of "the mystery of accidental synchronization" in his cinema, one can begin to 'construct' this work through the triadic juxtaposition of image, text and reader.

Cocteau's process was clearly within the spirit of surrealism, regardless of the political distinction enforced by Breton and his manifestos. Surrealism largely drew its inspiration from poetry, in the same way as did Man Ray's *ciné-poèmes* and Cocteau's *ciné-romans*. Like other surrealists, Cocteau's *poésie* revolves around an obsession with shadows and the juxtaposition of objects in order to produce an ambiguity of scale, as the dream-world held an ambiguity of time. The personification of inanimate objects runs throughout surrealism as it does in primitive cultures through magic, and in early Greek and Roman civilization through mythology. Most importantly, surrealism condoned wild irrational 'love', expressing a striving for the Other, which Cocteau's angelology and Orphic mythology explores. These ideas constitute a shared *ethos* in the work of Cocteau and the surrealists; dealing with the personal versus the inter-subjective, the dreamscape as a state of being in the world, and a belief in fighting against rationalism and reductivism of any kind.

An important lesson can be distilled from the work of Cocteau in relation to contemporary works of art and architecture. My interest in Cocteau's *poésie* lies in changing the production of architecture. By using the term *production*, I mean to call into question the processes through which buildings become designed and erected within a late-capitalistic society. As Cocteau re-casted myth, this study attempts to re-cast the role of the architect as one of reconciling form and content in architecture. Conversely, today's postmodern works of art are largely about themselves, whereas the process and production of Cocteau's work was based on collaboration, and spoke about the *Other* as much as about the *self*. This difference is essential, since an issue at the forefront of architectural criticism today is determining whether we may hope for an architecture of optimism, or accept an architecture of pessimism and self-referentiality.

¹ Ideally, this thesis would be read along with viewing the two films *Le Sang d'un Poète* and *Orphée*, in order to provide a context for this exegesis.

My own belief about this issue has been clarified through readings on phenomenology. A common human conflict arises from creating polarities rather than dualities, from separating the subject and object through reflective action. In his *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, Sartre wrote "phenomenology is the study of phenomena - not of the facts. And by a phenomena we are to understand that which announces itself, that of which the reality precisely is the appearance."² Following the important writings on the total act of perception by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this definition offers a reconciliation of polarities into dualities. Dualities posit things in a constant state of metamorphosis: the subject and object, form and content, body and soul are considered as inter-dependent twin phenomena. Ultimately, this realization has important implications in relation to our contemporary situation of architectural criticism and theory, where deconstructivist tendencies move towards a plurality devoid of any transcendental meaning. The ideas of *epiphany* and *transcendence* are to be found in everyday objects, as the descriptions of these objects and events are found in the prose of Joyce or the poetry of Francis Ponge. This argument will take time to unfold, as does every *histoire*.

I prefer to think of the following pages as *reflections* upon the work of Jean Cocteau; where we do not gaze directly upon architecture, but through invoking our Muse, come to feel that we are closer to the 'thing' we are pursuing with Cocteau/Hermes as our guide.

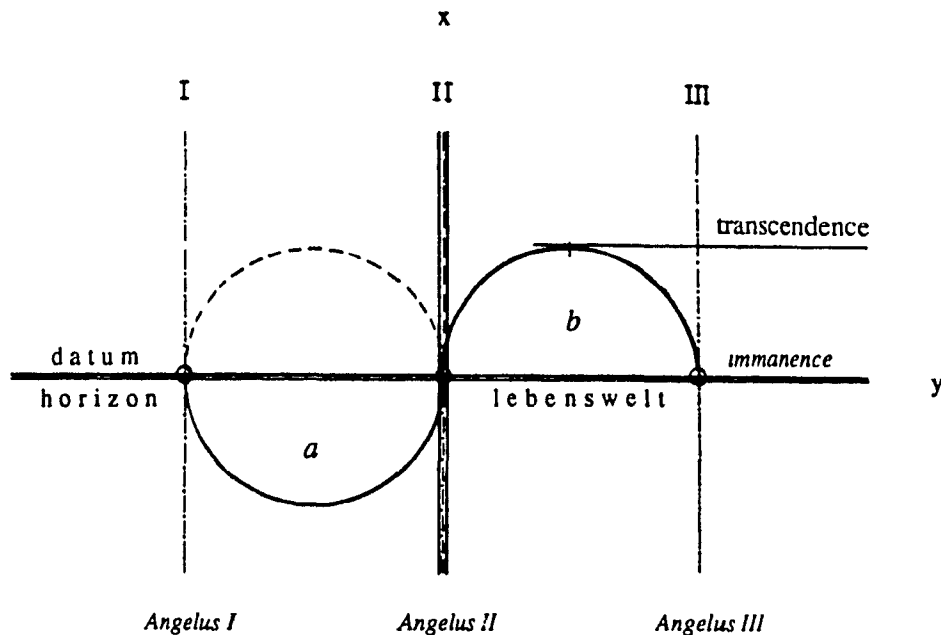
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² Jean-Paul Sartre, Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 25.

*Angelus Domini Nuntiavit Mariae **

* *Angelus*: a devotional exercise commemorating the Incarnation in which the angelic salutation is thrice repeated, said by Roman Catholics at morning, noon, and sunset, at the sound of the bell. (O.E.D.)

COCTEAU: the Orphic journey: descent and ascent (*a*)
the Angelic journey: transcendence and immanence (*b*)



This work is divided into two parts: the first part covers the descent of Orpheus, and the analogous descent of the self within the act of creation. The second part deals with the idea of transcendence as possible only through the Other. The final projection suggests the return; a return to dwelling (*im-manere*) in order to recognize the cipher for what it is: the thing in itself.

The structure of the work is one of double transformation: the Orphic journey is represented by the descent into Hades, and the return to this world. The angelic journey is represented by a heavenward reach in the act of *apotheosis* - with a final return to our datum, the *lebenswelt*. It is this plane of the earth upon which we begin and end the thesis.

The image is one of a rotated ouroboros. The two axes can be viewed as mirrors through which we reflect (upon) the work.

ANGELUS I

Through an exploration of the myth of Orpheus, the questions of love, the Other, and reconciliation are represented by Eurydice, the mirror, and Hermes respectively. This work deals with these three images as metaphors for the making of architecture through Cocteau's Orpheus, who is re-cast as the artist/poet.

Integral to poésie, the act of translation is essential in taking an idea from one media and expressing it in another; just as the act of transformation takes place in Cocteau's interpretation of the myth of Orpheus, from its original source in Ovid's first century work.

The poet's task is to conceive, in order to live in it, a universe where time, space, and volumes are not organized as in the human universe. The result is a kind of invisibility.

jean cocteau

OID: ARCHITECTURE AND TRANSFORMATION

The opening line of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is beautifully clear with respect to architecture: "My purpose is to tell of bodies which have been transformed into shapes of a different kind." ¹ The phrase states the central theme of the collection of Ovid's stories, in which the idea of transformation was still essential. Ovid foreshadows his account of the myth of Orpheus; for the story of Orpheus, Eurydice, and the *angelos* Hermes is one of continual transformation. Ovid recounts the tragic story of Orpheus and Eurydice in *Book X*. The Tracian Orpheus invites Hymen to attend his marriage, but the God remains gloomy and preoccupied - omens of a bad start. While Eurydice is wandering in the meadows, a serpent bites her causing her death. Mourning his loss, Orpheus descends into the realm of the shades, crossing the Styx with the help of the ferryman Charon, finally reaching Persephone and Hades. With the poet's sweet words and musical lyre, Orpheus pleads with the Deities of the underworld:

I came because of my wife, cut off before she reached her prime when she trod on a serpent and it poured its poison into her veins. I wished to be strong enough to endure my grief, and I will not deny that I tried to do so: but Love was too much for me. He is a God well known in the world above; whether he may be so here too, I do not know,... I beg you, by these awful regions, by this boundless chaos, and by the silence of your vast realms, weave again Eurydice's destiny, brought too swiftly to a close. We mortals and all that is ours are fated to fall to you, and after a little time, sooner or later, we hasten to this one abode. We are all on our way here, this is our final home, and yours the most lasting sway over the human race.²

¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Mary Innes (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955), p. 29

² *Ibid.*, pp. 225 - 26.

Having traversed the Other world as a mortal, Orpheus decides that he no longer wishes to live without Love :

*I ask as a gift from you only the enjoyment of her; but if the fates refuse her a reprieve, I have made up my mind that I do not wish to return either. You may exult in my death as well as hers !*³

The power of Orpheus over the music of the spheres is illustrious, for he manages to reach the shades:

*As he sang these words to the music of his lyre, the bloodless ghosts were in tears: Tantalus made no efforts to reach the waters that ever shrank away, Ixion's wheel stood in wonder, the vultures ceased to gnaw Tityus' liver, the daughters of Danaus rested from their pitchers, and Sisyphus sat idle on his rock. Then, for the first time they say, the cheeks of the Furies were wet with tears, for they were overcome by his singing.*⁴

Unable to refuse Orpheus, Persephone and Hades summon the limping Eurydice, and give her back to Orpheus on condition that he must not look upon her until they emerge from the valleys of Avernus. Punishment for breaking this pact would be their separation forever:

*Up the sloping path, through the mute silence they made their way, up the steep dark track, wrapped in impenetrable gloom, till they had almost reached the surface of the earth. Here, anxious in case his wife's strength be failing and eager to see her, the lover looked behind him, and straightway Eurydice slipped back into the depths. Orpheus stretched out his arms, straining to clasp her and be clasped; but the hapless man touched nothing but yielding air. Eurydice, dying now a second time, uttered no complaint against her husband. What was there to complain of, but that she had been loved ? With a last farewell which scarcely reached his ears, she fell back again into the same place from which she had come.*⁵

Was Orpheus' impatience due to love ? Did it indicate the fallen condition of man, or was it merely the impatience of the artist ? In any case, Eurydice's second death was irreversible - Orpheus tried once more to cross the Styx to no

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid.

avail. For seven days he sat on the banks of the river in grief and shock. During the following year he retired to the mountains, shrinking from women, preferring instead to turn his affection to young flowering boys. In playing his lyre, the poet moved rocks and trees into proximity: "There was ivy too, trailing its tendrils, and leafy vines, vine-clad elms, and mountain ash."⁶ Even the creatures of the wild had gathered around Orpheus, when the Thracian women first heard and saw the poet, attacking him as "the man who scorns us!" Initially their rocks and spears could not wound Orpheus, but as their cries overpowered the sound of his lyre, the 'music of the spheres' was overcome in the wake of their fury with its "clamorous shouting, Phrygian flutes with curving horns, tambourines, the beating of breasts, and Bacchic howlings..."⁷

Savagely murdering the creatures, tearing the trees, and hurling the rocks, the horde of women continued their Bacchic frenzy. Finally tearing apart the oxen in the field, and using their horns to attack the poet,⁸ "his last breath slipped away and vanished in the wind"⁹ while his head and lyre remained floating down the river Hebrus. The lyre delivered a plaintive song, and the oracular head murmured as it floated downstream, causing the banks of the river to lament in reply. Other transformations occurred as well. The birds wept, the trees shed their leaves in mourning, and the rivers were swollen with tears. Finally, his head and lyre were washed up onto the shores of Lesbos, where Orpheus' exposed head was almost attacked by a serpent; thus completing the tragic cycle, had it not been for Phoebus(Apollo), who petrified it in its action. Through his sacrificial death Orpheus makes his second chthonic journey:

*...he recognized all the places he had seen before and, searching through the fields of the blessed, found his Eurydice, and clasped her in eager arms. There they stroll together, side by side: or sometimes Orpheus follows, while his wife goes before, sometimes he leads the way and looks back, as he can do safely now, at his Eurydice.*¹⁰

⁶ Ibid., p. 227.

⁷ Ibid., p. 246.

⁸ The form of the horns of the oxen or bull have a curious resemblance to that of the lyre, and the stone at the Palace of Knossos in Crete. Cocteau uses the bull's horn as the lyre in the closing images of *Le Sang d'un Poète*.

⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, p. 247.

¹⁰ Ibid.

At this point in the story, Bacchus intervenes, instigating other transformations as punishment for the commitment of this heinous crime by the Bacchantes:

...all the Thracian women who had watched the wicked scene were fastened to the ground, there in the woods, by means of gnarled roots. The god drew out their toes, as far as each had followed Orpheus, and thrust the tips down into the solid earth.... so each of the women, as she became rooted to the spot, went mad with fear, and vainly tried to flee, while the tough root held her fast, preventing her attempts to pull herself away. Each one of them, as she looked for her toes, her feet and nails, saw wood spreading up her shapely legs: when she tried to smite her thighs, in token of her grief, she struck against the bark of an oak tree. Their breasts too, and likewise their shoulders turned to oak; their arms appeared to have been changed into long branches, as indeed they were - it was no illusion.¹¹

This recounting of the original myth illustrates that Ovid's universe was constantly in motion, represented by the *spiritus* Hermes.¹² Forever an *angelos*, Hermes is the patron of travellers on earth, and between worlds he is the shepherd of shades. Associated with Hermes' role as shepherd are the *hermai*, phallic shaped dolmen or guide posts. Hermes thus represents both column and path, fixity and motion, in creating a continual process of renewal :

*The god of faring and of distant message,
The travelling-hood over his shining eyes,
the slender wand held out before his body,
the wings around his ankles lightly beating,
and in his left hand, as entrusted, her.¹³*

The idea of bodies, or buildings, being transformed from one thing to the next, involves change of substance as well. Transformation is represented by the number three; the characters Orpheus, Eurydice, and Hermes form a Greek

¹¹ Ibid., p. 248.

¹² Other attributes of Hermes are: the invention of writing, his acting as guide through the text as on a journey, and his association with both earth and fertility (eros), as well as with death (thanatos), suggesting their symbolic relation. See The Origin of the Cult of Hermes, by Rendal Harris (1929) for further discussion on the role of Hermes.

¹³ Rainer Maria Rilke, "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes ", Selected Poems, trans. J.B. Leishman (New York Penguin Books Ltd., 1964), p. 40.



*Orpheus, Eurydice, and Hermes ,
(Museo Nazionale, Naples).*



*Orpheus and Heurtebise: the flight into Hades. Note Cocteau appearing in the alcove.
(Orphée, 1950).*

trinity, as Rilke's poem *Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes* suggests. Rilke describes Orpheus undergoing the process of metamorphosis:¹⁴

*In front the slender man in the blue mantle,
gazing in dumb impatience straight before him.
His steps devoured the way in mighty chunks
they did not pause to chew; his hands were hanging,
heavy and clenched, out of the falling folds,
no longer conscious of the lightsome lyre,
the lyre which had grown into his left
like twines of rose into a branch of olive.*¹⁵

Orpheus has undergone continual renewal throughout the course of history - his character represents primary aspects of the human condition. The character of Orpheus has undergone many transformations: Orpheus was cast as a minstrel in medieval mythology, through Christian interpretation Orpheus was pictured as a Christ figure, and through the Renaissance interpretation of Orpheus by Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino, he was portrayed as a magus.¹⁶ Following Claudio Monteverdi's opera *Orpheo* in 1607, the interpretations of the Romantic period recast Orpheus as the lover. This century's interest in Orpheus by Rilke and Cocteau presents the poetry of Orpheus as a form of *technê*, pursuing the theme of man the artist, imitating the actions of the Divine Artificer and Demiurge. Cocteau's interpretation of the creative act starting from within is linked to Apollo's dictum 'know thyself.' Out of this creative force flows all art, poetry, music, and architecture. In *Orpheus and Ficino*, John Warden asserts that Orpheus "enables Ficino to hold the balance between the ordered and stable cosmos of antiquity and the Middle ages, and the new dynamic concept of man, the restless creator, Proteus and Chameleon."¹⁷ Cocteau's fascination with the myth of Orpheus in both *Le Sang d'un Poète* and *Orphée* recasts the poet/artist in a contemporary context, following Ficino's existential interpretation.

¹⁴ See Rilke's poem *Orpheus Eurydice. Hermes* for this understanding of the triad under transformation. Curiously, Rilke was to translate Cocteau's *Orphée*, but died before it's completion.

¹⁵ Rilke, *Selected Poems*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁶ Other representations of Orpheus are as shepherd, poet, musician, orator, and a mysterious blend of all these qualities.

¹⁷ John Warden, "Orpheus and Ficino", *Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth*, ed. John Warden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 103.



The artist-poet calls life into the statue,
(Cocteau filming *Le Sang d'un Poète*, 1930).



The hands of Jean Cocteau,
(Berenice Abbot, 1927).

In *Le Sang d'un Poète*; where the artist/poet is releasing the statue out of its block of stone, the artist as demiurge¹⁸ is represented through the creative act, operating a kind of theurgic magic. Since Man is created with both Divine and mortal attributes, his privileges are manifested in his power to create, and his ability of artifice. "Man shares these powers to the highest degree in the creation of gods, i.e. the bringing alive of statues."¹⁹ It is through this act that the statue becomes animated in *Le Sang d'un Poète*, instructing the artist to descend into himself in a soul searching creative process which takes the artist on an analogous journey to that of Orpheus in search of Eurydice. In this case, the artist is in search of himself and these sources from which his creative forces flow. The film is autobiographical in that the sources stem from Cocteau's early experiences in the Lycée; his memories of the bully Dargelos, and his impressions of human violence through suicide and war.

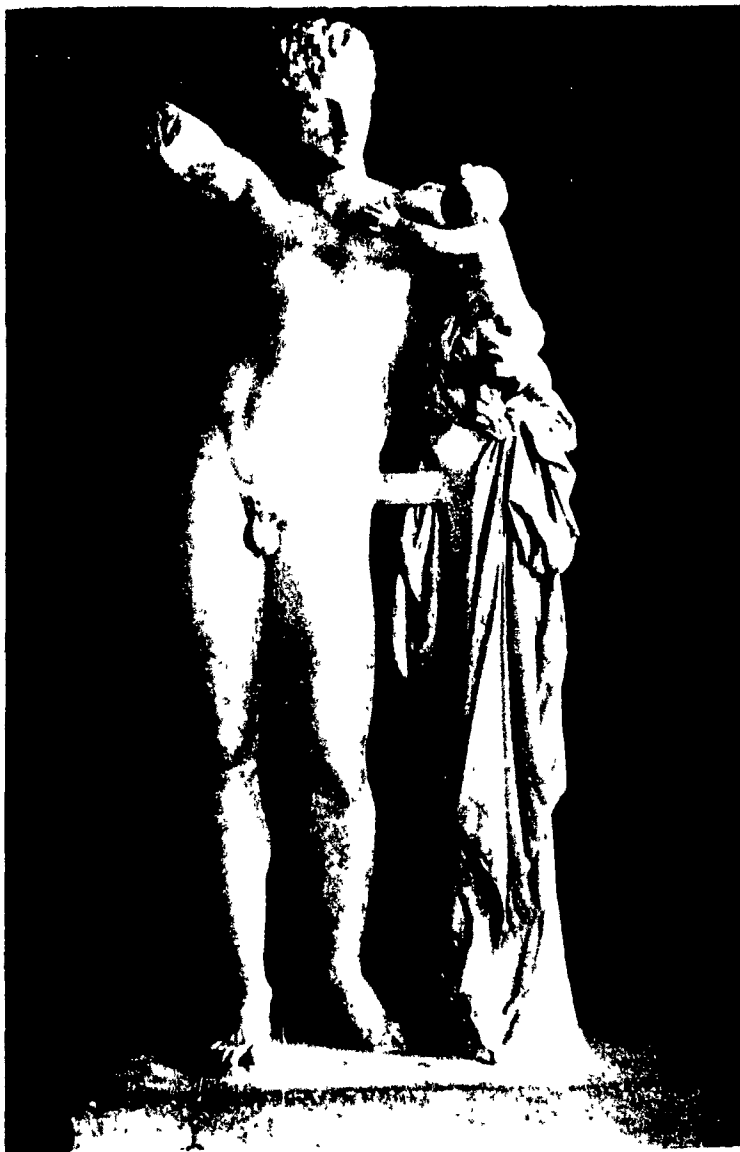
Orpheus is the archetypal poet and artist; teacher of Pythagoras and Plato; he appears along with Virgil, Euclid and Homer in Canto IV of Dante's *Inferno*. His powers of music and oratory are essential for the act of transcendence. The mortal Orpheus and the divine Hermes share similar qualities. In the essay *Orpheus among the Christians*, Patricia Vicari discusses the importance of the lyre as a talisman, like the magical objects in Cocteau's *ciné-poèmes* :

In the magical tradition, three ideas about Orpheus are emphasized. First he is psychopomp and controls the afterlife of the soul because he is allied with or knows how to manipulate celestial or chthonic powers or both. Secondly, his lyre is the clue to his power. Its seven strings symbolize the seven planets, seven heavens, seven archons, and the divine cosmic harmony. It is not merely symbolic of harmony, however, but magically able to induce it, for a symbol, to the magically minded, is never a mere representation, but also a means of producing an effect. Thirdly, Orpheus is often called a healer, which is to say in a different way, a master of natural forces and producer of effects. ²⁰

¹⁸ Demiourgos was the Architect of the Universe. An angel, like God, the Great archon Demiourgos formed the world at the instant of the Unknowable. (Gustav Davidson: Dictionary of Angels).

¹⁹ John Warden, Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth, p. 99. Theurgy of Giordano Bruno and Pico della Mirandola was inspired by *The Corpus Hermeticum*, which relates that Angels could be called down into statues.

²⁰ Patricia Vicari, "Orpheus Among the Christians", Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth, ed John Warden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 73.



The Hermes of Praxiteles

In *Orphée*, a connection is revealed between Orpheus and the *angelos* Hermes. Orpheus becomes a mortal psychopomp, as Hermes a divine guide of souls. The lyre, which Apollo gave to Hermes, and Hermes supposedly gave to Pythagoras, is an important symbol of incantation :

The Lyre, even apart from Orpheus, was supposed to be able by the sound of its music to help the soul return to its celestial home, for it imitates (or encapsulates) the music of the spheres and puts the soul in time with the celestial orders through which it must ascend if it is to escape from the earth. ²¹

The relationship between Orpheus and Hermes in Cocteau's work continues: for Orpheus, the unity of the cosmos is achievable through the language of poetry or musical harmony, for Hermes this harmony is represented by the soul as a triad comprised of *anima*, *spiritus*, and *corpus*.²² The *spiritus* is the agent of reconciliation, whether it operates as the *spiritus humanus* within the individual soul, or the *spiritus mundi* interconnecting the microcosm and macrocosm which 'mirror' each other. Poetry is eloquence and music combined. "Music, by itself, lacks one particular angelic function: the Logos."²³ Thus, Hermes is also accredited with the invention of writing; his lyre, coupled with the Logos, defines the act of the poet. "The inspired poet stands like a prophet, between his people and the spiritual world, a Janus with one face turned to earth, and the other to the celestial spheres."²⁴ The Music of the Spheres is the language of the intermediary world, therefore Poetry is associated as the language of prayer and spell. The poet mounts a Jacob's ladder to the world of the Imagination indicating that "in poetry, man reaches the language of the angels."²⁵

Orpheus' lyre has an equivalent role to that of an angel; a messenger by which man attains the Divine. Since the theatre was traditionally a reflection of the cosmos, a combination of poetry and ritual; like poetry, ritual is angelic, "because it belongs neither to this world, nor to the Divine essence beyond form,

²¹ Ibid., p. 74.

²² Warden is commenting on Ficino's use of the triad. This is consistent with his Renaissance Book of Life. Book 3 is entitled "On making your Life agree with the Heavens", where Ficino makes an analogy between the individual *anima*, and the *anima mundi*.

²³ Peter Lamborn Wilson, Angels (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1980), p. 101.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

but plays an intermediary role between the two. The purpose of the rite is to transcend itself, penetrate its own symbols and induce a state of intuition which illuminated the verities."²⁶ A revelation from the *angelos* is not unlike the invocation of the Muse, for they are both 'revealers' of truth. The analogy between love and music is well established in Orphic mythology. "What artists or craftsmen in their various craft seek to achieve is a state of love."²⁷ Orpheus is "the musician who tries to discover which intervals are harmonious, which notes show greater or less love for which notes so that they should become as friendly as possible. Every art indeed is an expression of love, since it is an endeavor to impose order upon formlessness."²⁸ Recalling the Neoplatonic idea that love is an attraction between forms, and that lack of love is their repulsion, the power of Orpheus is that of the creator who produces harmony and order from chaos. The ultimate search for order through creation is love, since "Love is the power that produces harmony in all things."²⁹ Thus, both Love and Architecture represent man's search for order in a chaotic universe.

The aspect of Orpheus as lover is also symbolic of the relationship between the artist and object. At its origins, architecture was meant to bring together *poiesis* and *technêi*. This invocation of artifice was expressed in Plotinius' statement that "it was possible to provoke astral influences - by prayers either delivered in a simple straightforward way, or through *technêi*, artistically, with special skill."³⁰ Cocteau's *poésie* is closer to the original meaning of *technêi-poiesis* as integral to the idea of making. The later division of dramatic arts from technical artifice can be seen as represented by the two figures of Orpheus (*poiesis*) and Daedalus (*technêi*), as two aspects of channelling the Divine through human artifice.³¹ Like the lyre of Orpheus, the caduceus of Hermes is also a magical instrument. The wand, with its two entangled serpents, allows Hermes to 'sleep the waker' in this world, and to 'wake the sleeper' on the other side. A similar

²⁶ Wilson, *Angels*, p. 163.

²⁷ Warden, *Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth*, p. 102.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

³¹ For this discussion on the role of the architect as *arche-tekton* and craftsman, see Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "The Architect's Métier: an exploration into the myth of Dedalus", *Section a*, vol. 2., no. 5/6 (1985), pp. 26-28.

symbolic role is given to the instruments of the architect. Through inscription, the architect emulates the Divine Geometricians in the demiurgic act of creation :

*the demiurge bent the straight line into a circle; this single circle he divided into two circles united at two common points; one of these he subdivided into seven circles. All this implies that the movements of the soul are identified with the local movements of the heavens.*³²

The domain of Hermes is the world of Imagination, although the emphasis on cosmic harmony has shifted by the time we encounter Cocteau's interpretation of Orpheus. The journey to the outer horizons has been replaced by the journey to the inner world. In *Orphée*, the creative process is more than ever a search into the inner self, and the Orphic journey that Cocteau pursues in *Le Sang d'un Poète* follows the doctrine that he who gazes inward will achieve his *apotheosis* through Gnosis. As Art mirrors Nature, man reflects the Source and Essence of Light through mimesis, creating and performing the *ars poetica*. Cocteau's mimesis through *technêi*, and his idea of working with the reality behind the visible, can be felt in his description of the masks for his production of *Oedipus Rex* (1952):

The masks of Oedipus Rex were fashioned so as to be seen from below. Seen head on they were unreadable. Most were Ovoid, studded with eyes stuck on the ends of cones or rods. The hairpieces were made of raffia. Cork baffles, wires and cushions, set off from the surface were used for noses, ears, mouths.....The fact that an arm seems smaller next to a mask isolates it and magnifies it fourfold, not in size but in visibility. ³³

Although Antonin Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty' remains more radical than any work by Cocteau, his statement that "an idea of theatre has been lost",³⁴ could be appropriated to describe Cocteau's search for *Poésie*. The idea that "ritual must be a direct reflection of actions perceived in the spiritual world"³⁵ is a theme that

³² Introduction to Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House Inc., 1947), p. 158. In "De Anima", Aristotle is quoting from Plato's *Timaeus*.

³³ Jean Cocteau, *Diary of an Unknown*, trans. Jesse Browner (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1988), pp. 219-20.

³⁴ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, trans. Mary C. Richards (New York: Grove Press inc., 1958), p. 85.

³⁵ Wilson, *Angels*, p. 117.

Cocteau amplifies in his ritualistic performance of the contemporary Orpheus in two different forms. The stage version of *Orphée* deals with Orpheus as a literary work, and subsequently, the film *Orphée* transforms Cocteau's *poésie*, channelling it through invention and through the magic of the camera.

ORPHEUS: THE PLAY (1926)

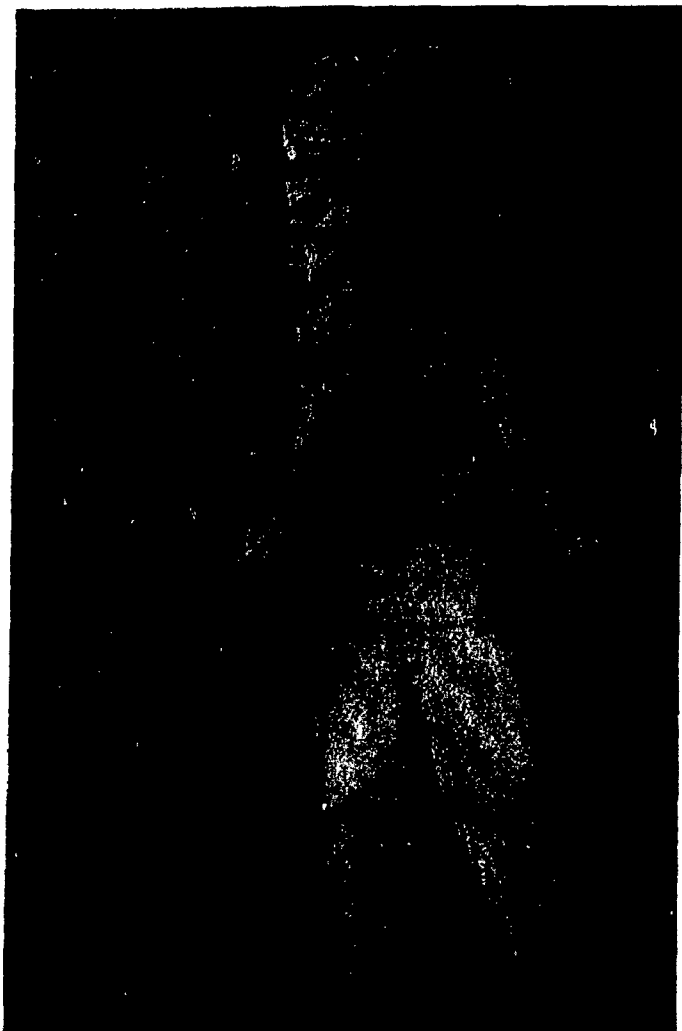
In his rewriting of the Orpheus myth for the theatre, Cocteau transformed many aspects of the original myth to address the reality of the twentieth century, which the author critically comments upon through his use of irony throughout *Orphée*. As a result, the founding of a 'new realism' in theatre reflected the technological, angst ridden and 'surreal' aspects of the contemporary condition. The performance unfolds among a field of poetic ciphers, as a horse emits messages to Orpheus by stamping out letters of the alphabet. The horse spells M.E.R., then M.E.R.C.I, but the key phrase that it keeps repeating is *Madame Eurydice reviendra des enfers*.³⁶ The acrostic of the phrase spells M.E.R.D.E., a word that the modern Bacchantes derive from Orpheus' poem which begins the wild frenzy of his death. Listening to the poetry of his surreal Muse, Orpheus asserts: "Who is to say who's talking - him, me, or nobody at all. We bump into each other in the dark; we're up to our necks in the supernatural, playing hide-and-seek with the Gods. Who really knows anything at all?"³⁷

As part of the ritual of *la vie quotidienne*, Eurydice breaks a window pane in order to have a visit from the glazier Heurtebise, who is the unknown guardian angel to Orpheus and Eurydice. As Heurtebise stands on a chair to fix the window pane, Orpheus enters and removes the chair, leaving Heurtebise suspended in mid-air, causing Eurydice to exclaim: "Heurtebise, you're a magician. For a full minute you were hanging between heaven and earth."³⁸ This action discloses Heurtebise's true character as Hermes. When pressed to answer, Heurtebise responds: "It must have been an optical illusion - the light reflected on

³⁶ "Madame Eurydice will return from hell."

³⁷ Jean Cocteau, "Orpheus", *The Infernal Machine and Other Plays by Jean Cocteau*, trans. John Savacool (New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1963), p. 108.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.



The transformed Hermes:
Cocteau as Heurtebise the glazier.
(*Orphée*, 1932).



Mercury/Hermes: The alchemical symbol of the union of opposites.
(*Museum Hermeticum Reformaum et Amplificatum*, 1678).

my back to the window. Objects sometimes fool us that way."³⁹ A transformation of Hermes, the 'glazier' Heurtebise guides Orpheus on his chthonic journey in *Orphée*.

The subtle interplay between Orpheus and Eurydice, through the figure of Hermes, is manifested through the character of Heurtebise. Transforming the narrative of the original myth, Eurydice's Death is begun by licking a poison envelope that the Bacchante Aglaonice has sent through Heurtebise. Death is a seductive figure for the poet. She is accompanied by Azrael and Raphael dressed as surgeons :

*Low syncopated drumbeats accompany the dialogue of the following scene. Death enters through the mirror, followed by her two assistants. She wears a formal gown, and evening wrap. Her assistants are dressed in surgeon's uniforms. We see only their eyes; the rest of their faces is covered with gauze. Rubber gloves. Each carries a large and expensive-looking suitcase. Death walks in rapidly and stops abruptly in the center of the room.*⁴⁰

Since one minute to Death is a whole hour to mortals, her chronometer surgically and rapidly removes the soul. Princess Death absentmindedly leaves behind the gloves that allow her to traverse the two mirror worlds. Heurtebise instructs Orpheus to don the gloves, and guides him through the mirror in pursuit of Eurydice, disclosing the power of mirrors to Orpheus:

*Mirrors are doors. It's through them that Death moves back and forth into life. You're not to tell anyone. Besides, spend your life looking at yourself in a mirror, and you'll see Death at work like a swarm of bees storing up honey in a hive of glass.*⁴¹

In his desire to retrieve Eurydice, Orpheus is guided by Heurtebise through the mirror portal. The entire journey to Hades takes place in an instant, as revealed by the delivery of a letter by the postman as Orpheus enters the mirror. Upon reclaiming Eurydice from the 'shades', he affectionately calls Heurtebise an angel, confirming our suspicion that the glass panes strapped to the back of the glazier are indeed reflecting surfaces in the form of angel wings. The exit from

³⁹ Ibid., p. 117.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 120.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 128.

the mirror, back into the room, is marked by a repetition of the postman's arrival just taken place. Through this device, Cocteau illustrates the frozen temporality of the Other world, as he does in *Le Sang d'un Poète* by the opening image of a tower being levelled, which is again repeated in the closing sequence⁴², enabling the viewer to understand the film as the space of a waking dream, outside of normative spatiality and temporality.

When Orpheus asks Heurtebise where he learned the tricks with mirrors, Heurtebise responds that 'glass' is his business. Cocteau expanded this symbolism of Hermes/Mercury by playing the role of Heurtebise in the 1926 stage production of *Orphée*. It is not by chance that Cocteau identified himself with both Heurtebise and Orpheus; as Death's attendants Azrael and Raphael could be considered two aspects of the same figure. Our interpretation in this work suggests that Heurtebise the glazier is a cipher for the *angelos*, represented by the union of glass and mercury which creates the mirror. This symbol becomes fully realized in the production of the film *Orphée*, where the mirror becomes the central filmic metaphor, symbolic of the skin which separates microcosm from macrocosm. Thus, Cocteau magically transforms the figure of Hermes into the character Heurtebise, who represents the desire for reconciliation in his chaotic universe. This interpretation places Heurtebise in a similar position to the angel of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*. Both Rilke and Cocteau's angel is not the angel of Christianity, but represents the essential striving for hope in the Other; an expunging of boundaries between inner and outer, and between visible and invisible.

The polarities of the individual against the collective is represented by Orpheus, a priest of the sun and disciple of Apollo, compared with the moon-worshipping Bacchantes. The modern Bacchantes send Orpheus a letter in mirror writing, which he holds up to the mirror in order to decipher. They are offended by the poem's hidden message - MERDE, which has enraged the judges of the poetry contest, and the entire public. As Eurydice was friends with the Bacchantes before these events, the impatient and irritable Orpheus argues with Eurydice, where he warns her not to "mention the moon in my house again." Cocteau's

⁴² This opening scene from the copies of *Orphée* which I have seen is now lost, and like the mistakes of the copyists, transforms the story or film even further. This often happened in transcribing the names of angels from one manuscript to the next, or from one language to another.

irony abounds when Eurydice retorts "I should have stayed dead." Their argument ultimately leads to Orpheus tripping, thus losing his balance and turning his gaze towards Eurydice as a result of chance.

After the Bacchantes have torn Orpheus to pieces, the line between theatre and reality, between the real and the surreal, is fused by Cocteau, who interchanges his own identity with that of the oracular head of Orpheus. The police arrive to investigate the incident, and begin interrogating Heurtebise after the death of Orpheus. The police attribute a swing in public opinion to an eclipse of the sun,⁴³ favouring Orpheus, who will now have a state burial to rival that of Victor Hugo, confirming that "the death of a poet requires a sacrifice" to ensure his immortality, and usual fame after death. As Heurtebise enters the mirror to return to Hades, the head of Orpheus transforms into the author himself, and finishes answering the questions as Jean Cocteau, offering his Paris address for that of Orpheus'. When the commissioner turns to address the departed Heurtebise, the clerk cries "magic", to which the prosaic commissioner responds: "I refuse to believe in Magic. An eclipse is an eclipse. A table is a table. An accused is an accused."⁴⁴ Unable to find the accused, the police take up the head of Orpheus, which they perceive to be a bust executed by an unknown sculptor, and then proceed on their way. The closing scene is an Orphic prayer recited by Orpheus:

*We thank you for having sent Heurtebise to guide us, and we are ashamed for not having recognized him as our guardian angel. We thank you for having saved Eurydice - since, for love of me, she killed the devil in the form of a horse and died a horrible death. We thank you for having saved me - since I worship poetry and poetry is what you are. AMEN.*⁴⁵

Often misinterpreted as only a piece of iconoclastic theatre, in *Orphée* Cocteau confesses that his religion is poetry; for both poetry and religion move toward the spiritual, a sentiment that Cocteau's contemporary Jacques Lipchitz held in writing : "Art is man's unique way of fighting death and achieving immortality.

⁴³ Another reference to Apollo.

⁴⁴ Cocteau, *The Infernal Machine and Other Plays* by Jean Cocteau, p. 148.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 150.

And in this continuity of art, of creation, and denial of death, we find God."⁴⁶ Following the *belle époque's* attack on 19th century academic art, and as a reaction to the mentality of the 'encyclopaedists', Cocteau consciously called into question "who's to say what is poetic and what isn't". Thus, he focused on reality as consubstantial, sharing the concerns of the surrealists:

*the invisible behind the visible,
the immeasurable behind the measureable,
the unspoken behind the spoken,
the shadow behind the object.*

For Cocteau, this undisclosed dark side of reality was essential in re-constituting a single revelation, as darkness is integral to *light*, and flight only possible through *gravity*. Cocteau also shared a surrealist preoccupation with multiple images and reflections. The *ciné-poème* of Man Ray and Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un Poète* began with literary ideas and married them to visual images in an attempt to create a 'fusion'. It was revolutionary to start from literary ideas and transmute them first into visual images, and then further transform them into sequential images through cinema, which Cocteau called the "Tenth Muse". *Orphée* explores the use of sound through 'the mystery of accidental synchronization', where the music could be synchronous with the narrative, or form another layer in the construction, adding further to the architecture of the double in Cocteau's work. In the film version, these ideas were transported from the theatre stage to the 'magic' of the moving image, where *technêi* could be explored through his *poésie cinématographique*.⁴⁷

ORPHÉE : THE FILM (1950)

Not relegated to the level of magical effects, other aspects of the play *Orphée* underwent transformation as Cocteau pursued his Orphic analogy in the media of the 'cinematograph.' The mature Cocteau divided the character of Orpheus into

⁴⁶ This reference is from a text presented at the Jacques Lipchitz retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario, during the winter of 1990.

⁴⁷ Cocteau still called film the *Cinématographe*, after the device that made its debut in Paris in 1895, the year following Edison's Kinetoscope.



The 'recording' angels of Death,
(Cégeste and Heurtebise), claim Orpheus.
(*Orphée*, 1950).

سبحان من هو الله رب العالمين
والخامس لا ينفك الليل ولا النهار ولا الكفار
وهي قوله تعالى لا يلدن بالدين وان يلدن بها الدين



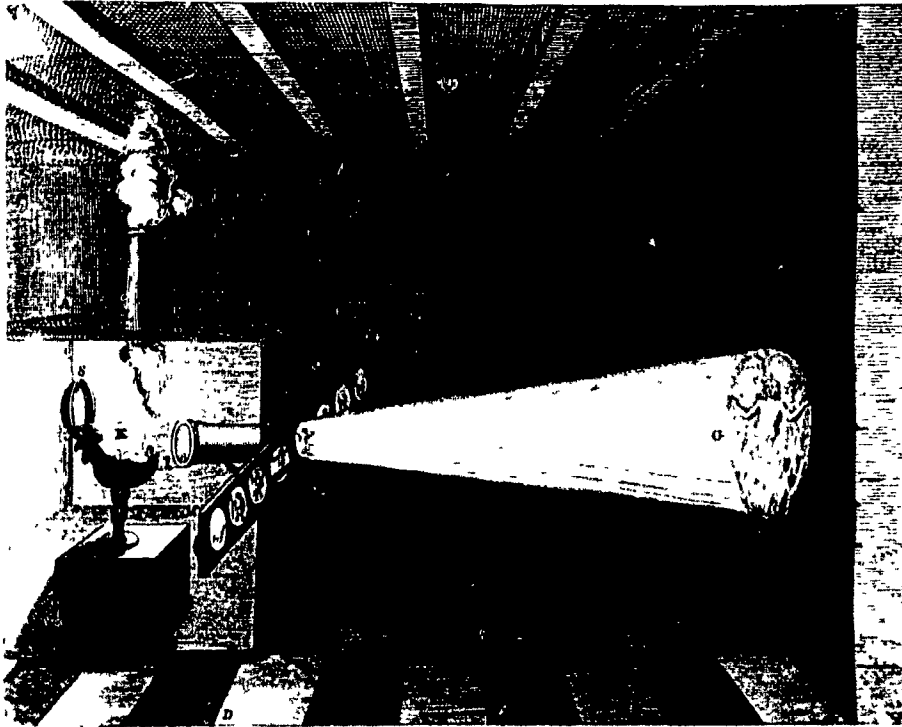
The Recording Angels
(Al - Qazwini, 1208).

two distinct characters; the aging poet Orpheus who is falling out of public favour at the *Café des Poètes*, and the younger Cégeste who, like Jarry or Lautreamont, represents the avant-garde poet who dies young and thus achieves immortality. Just as the two figures Orpheus and Hermes have shared characteristics, the two films *Le Sang d'un Poète* and *Orphée*, can be viewed as re-enactments of the creative Orphic descent into the self. Each time, this descent involves passing through the skin of a mirror into the Other world. Related to the question of altered time mentioned earlier, the question of altered space is handled beautifully in the sequence where Orpheus and Heurtebise journey to Hades, swimming through a dream-like space where images move in and out of depth, and sound travels in echoes, like stones dropped into a pond. The two characters move through space, half flying; Orpheus battling the air as if moving through water in a transformation of gravity and light.

In both the play and the film *Orphée*, the figure of Death is aided by two attendants, forming an unholy trinity. The prophetic role of the horse in the stage production is replaced by the Rolls Royce of Princess Death in the film. The automobile, with its winged figure on the hood, foreshadows the fateful moment when Orpheus indirectly sees Eurydice's reflection in the rear view mirror, breaking the pact that he made in the Underworld. The motorcycle police escorting Death's Rolls Royce are 'hell's angels' Azrael and Raphael. Since Cégeste and Heurtebise act as Death's attendants in the film, why did Cocteau choose to name the two angels Azrael and Raphael out of the Celestial Hierarchy, to act as the attendants of Death in the stage production, and as her escorts in the film ?

These angel police also act as ciphers, foreshadowing the death of Cégeste and reappearing to dispatch Eurydice. According to the *Dictionary of Angels*, Azrael in Hebrew means "whom God helps." Like Hermes, Azrael was appointed to separate body from soul as a result of being the one, among all the Angels, who provided seven handfuls of earth for the creation of Adam. He is thus the traditional Angel of Death (*angelus mortis*). "When the soul sees Azrael, it Falls in Love, and its gaze is thus withdrawn from the body, as if by a seduction."⁴⁸ Represented as having 70,000 feet and 4,000 wings, Cocteau ingeniously

⁴⁸ Wilson, *Angels*, p. 85.



The 'Magic Lantern', projecting images onto a smoke screen.
(Athanasius Kircher, *Physiologia Kircheriana Experimentalis*, 1680).



The 'magic lantern' instilling fear and wonder in 19th century audiences.
(From Erik Barnouw · *The Magician and the Cinema*).

transforms Azrael's persona into the great speed of the motorcycle police.⁴⁹ Azrael is also a recording angel, forever writing in a large book and erasing what he writes. He writes the birth of a mortal and erases the death of a mortal. Cocteau transforms this aspect of Azrael into police bureaucracy on earth, and the equally bureaucratic tribunal of the Other world.

The second angel Raphael is derived from the Hebrew meaning "God has healed." He is one of the seven holy angels, and also one of the Watchers⁵⁰ from the Celestial Hierarchy. Raphael, like Hermes, is a guide in 'Sheol' (Hades), and Dürer portrays Raphael as guardian of the west wind and one of the four pillars that hold up the heavens and the earth.⁵¹ Like Apollo, Raphael is also portrayed as the god of healing, reminiscent of Cocteau's portrayal of the two attendants as surgeons in the play. Together, Raphael, Azrael and Death form the unholy trinity; they are three aspects of the same Being, which Cocteau divides in order to create another trilogy mirroring Orpheus, Heurtebise and Eurydice.

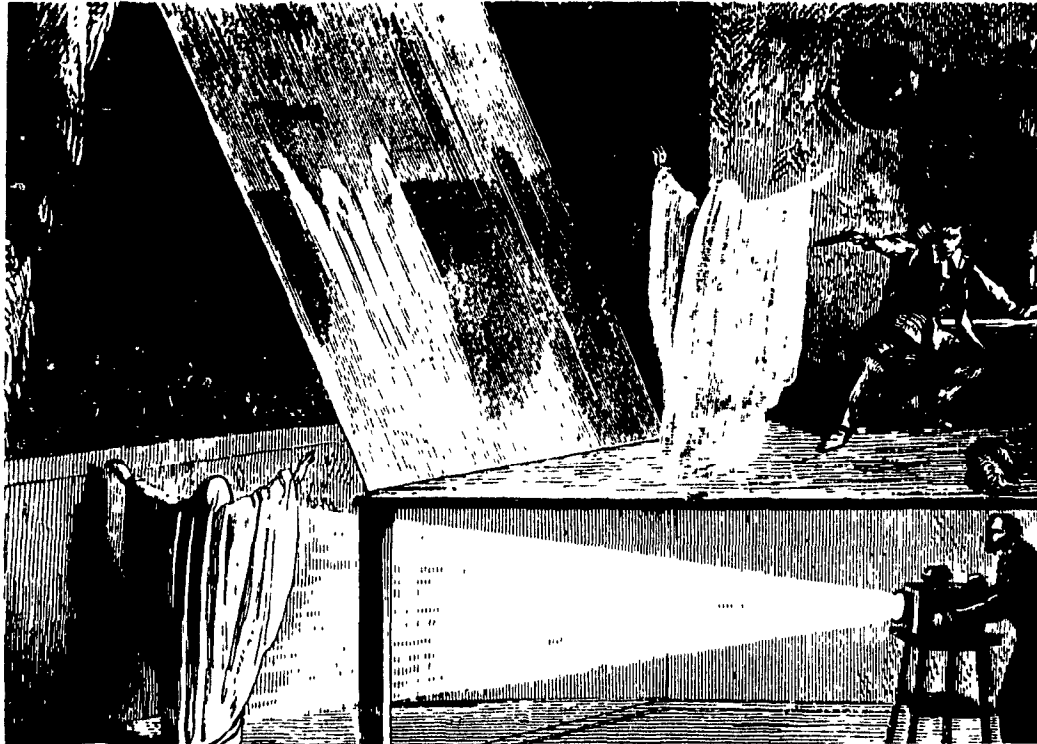
The mirror in *Orphée* not only represents "the door through which Death comes and goes", but also the symbol of Hermes as the agent of 'amalgamation'. The mirror has a history of being a magic device, dating from the alchemical process of 'foiling', to the use of reflecting surfaces placed at 45 degrees in early magic performances, still found in the mechanism of the single lens reflex camera. A precursor of the cinematic projector and planar film screen to come, in the 1790's in France the "magic lantern" projected phantom like images onto smoke screens amidst the audience, creating fear and wonder among the spectators.⁵² The reflection of a ghost or projected image from these early "magic lanterns"

⁴⁹ The figure Azrael appears once again (in another form) in Cocteau's *L'Aigle à Deux Têtes*.

⁵⁰ See *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, trans. Michael Knibb (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1978), for a description of the Fall of the Watchers. We will return to the significance of the 'Watchers' in Angelus III.

⁵¹ See Dürer's engravings for *The Apocalypse* (1496-98), in *Albrecht Dürer: Woodcuts and Wood Blocks*, ed. Walter L. Strauss.

⁵² The "Magic Lantern" appears as early as Athanasius Kircher's device in *Physiologia Kircheriana Experimentalis* (1680), to Ingmar Bergman's recent autobiography entitled *The Magic Lantern*, where he recalls his first 'projector'.



Early magicians used mirrors placed at 45 degrees to project images onto the stage. The angled mirror was used in magic involving revealment and concealment. (Erik Barnouw: *The Magician and the Cinema*).



The development of the 'magic lantern' finally became 'rear-projection', still magic to the early film audiences. (Erik Barnouw: *The Magician and the Cinema*).

involved a reflecting surface at the angle of the angel's wings.⁵³ An account of a magic lantern show in London in 1838 reveals the image:

*A Polytechnic performance sometimes utilized an enormous sheet of glass tilted at a 45 degree angle to the stage. Through the control of light this could at one moment allow a view of whatever was behind it, and the next moment show (instead or in addition) a different image, generally projected from below, as from the orchestra pit. The audience was not conscious of the glass sheet as such. The stage could now seem to be occupied by people actually on the stage, and by others not there at all. Man and ghost could seem to confront each other.*⁵⁴

The relationship between 'image' and 'magic' can be traced through the history of the camera as a drawing instrument. I would like to point out the connection between 'silvering' the mirror, which was replaced by silver nitrate, and the use of this same chemical in the production of wet plates and daguerreotypes in the early stages of photography, around 1839:

*The daguerreotype was made on a highly polished surface of silver, plated on a copper sheet....To develop the image, the plate was placed, again silver side down, in another box, this one containing a dish of heated mercury at the bottom.. Vapour from the mercury reacted with the exposed grains of silver iodide on the plate. Wherever light had struck the plate, mercury formed an amalgam, or alloy, with silver. This brilliantly shiny amalgam thus made up the bright areas of the image. Where no light had struck, no amalgam was formed; the unchanged silver iodide was dissolved away in sodium thiosulfate fixer, leaving there the bare metal plate, which looked black, to form the dark areas of the picture.*⁵⁵

Similar to the image of the mirror, silver nitrate produced an image which shifted according to the viewer, "depending on his angle of view and the direction of the light striking the photograph",⁵⁶ such that a viewer on the right of a daguerreotype would see an image in half positive and half negative. The middle viewer would perceive the image as all negative, and only the person in the 'correct' position would see the positive image. The backing of the film, like the

⁵³ Two 45 degree angles symmetrically placed around a central axis produces the diagram of the angel's wings as well as describing a right angle.

⁵⁴ Erik Barnouw, *The Magician and the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 27.

⁵⁵ *Light and Film*, ed. Time-Life Books (New York: Time-Life Books, 1970), p. 50.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62. See "The Several Faces of a Daguerreotype."

backing of the mirror, created a depth of two images (one 'behind' the other), to be perceived according to the shifting position of the viewer.⁵⁷ Both the *camera obscura* and the *camera lucida* explored optics through light entering a box, and reflecting off a mirror in an attempt to 'project' an image from another location. This transposition of images was traditionally the domain of magicians, and remained so in the early stages of the cinema. In the study entitled *The Magician and the Cinema*, Erik Barnouw explains how magicians incorporated "projecting images" as part of their performances. Soon this magic became accessible to non-magicians, who capitalized on the rapidly developing technology of the movie-camera, until the magician was replaced by the technician. Shortly thereafter, cinematographers could project images and create special effects through the mechanism of the camera, removing its original association from the shaman who could create images through magic.

Cocteau's magic with mirrors continued the *technêi* of magicians who turned to cinema such as Houdini and Georges Méliès. In the early stages of cinema, magician George Méliès transferred his art to the "magic of cinema", employing ingenious effects in films such as *Baron Maunchausen's Dream*, *Conquest of the Pole*, *Trip to the Moon* and *The Magic Lantern*, crafted between 1902 and 1912. Barnouw argues that the magician went the way of the dinosaur as the "special effects" cameraman superseded the theurgy of the magician's spell over the audience, and "magic turned into media." Slow motion, accelerated motion, reverse film image, upside-down sequences and exaggeration of scale all became technical tricks, but the initial idea of "calling forth an image", or the concealment of this same image, remains the origin of *technêi* and of the camera as a magic device.⁵⁸

In order to build this mirror-image in *Orphée*, the cinematic taumaturgy of Cocteau included the construction of two identical sets. The viewer doesn't see the reflection of the room in a mirror; the 'mirror' is actually a door frame through which we see an identical room, perceiving the image of a reflection.

⁵⁷ This mechanism of the 'shifting image' still occurs in the complex use of mirrors to separate light and then reconstitute it in the creation of holographic plates today.

⁵⁸ The brownie and the single lens reflex camera continued to use the 'magic' device of a mirror placed at 45 degrees, in order to transport an image, and it is in this spirit that *Le Sang d'un Poète* captures the naive ingenuity of the first wave of magician cinematographers.



Heurtebise leads Orpheus through the mirror to the Other (World).
(*Orphée*, 1950).



The mirror is the symbol of Hermes/Mercury as well as "the door
through which Death comes and goes."
(*Le Sang d'un Poète*, 1930)

The gloved hands are seen melting into the mirror with an accompanying tuning fork echo. Finally, the figure passes through the mirror, followed by the psychopompic Heurtebise.⁵⁹ When montaged, the three aspects of this shot project two figures walking through a mirror, when in fact they walk through a doorway separating 'mirrored' rooms. Whereas in the film *Le Sang d'un Poète* the actor enters the mirror through a bathtub of water, in the film *Orphée* Cocteau made use of the properties of a thousand pound tub of mercury, reinforcing the theme of Hermes/mercury in his work. More so than the stage version of *Orphée*, the cinema allowed Cocteau to expand his theurgic magic through his use of mirrors.

Appropriating the symbolism of the mirror, Cocteau intentionally represented the mirror worlds in *Orphée*. The two poets Cégeste and Orphée, the two attendants Raphael and Azrael, and Death's twin servants symbolize the double which define the hinged portal of the mirror connecting the two worlds. In fact, Heurtebise and Eurydice, and Orpheus and Death form two sets of doubles; although Orpheus and Eurydice are together, and Heurtebise and Death form a pair. Death loves Orpheus, and Heurtebise loves Eurydice, as a complicated mirroring of relations takes place. Cocteau presents the universe as a gigantic machine which is set in motion by some invisible force, whose power is triggered by language as a form of incantation, having the same effect that the transmitted messages over the car radio produce in Orpheus. In this manner, the artist/poet simultaneously reveals a reality, but conceals another truth behind the visible one. The cryptic messages from the Other world which are transmitted over the radio require Orpheus' power as hierophant:

A single glass of water lights the world....

Silence goes faster backwards....

The bird sings with its fingers....

These ciphers leave Orpheus thinking that this modern music of the spheres is more profound poetry than any previously heard. Related to Cocteau's use of language, which explores poetry's dual oral and aural tradition, words have

⁵⁹ On the return journey to Hades, the order is reversed. Orpheus leads Heurtebise, allowing Heurtebise to remain a bridge between the two worlds.



The gaze of Orpheus is reflected from the automobile's rear view mirror to Eurydice, fulfilling the myth.
(*Orphée*, 1950).

double meaning since Cocteau uses phrases as much for the sound as the sense. In *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau*,⁶⁰ Crowson points out that Cocteau's work takes on the form of an initiation rite, during which the characters, including the spectators, suffer until they learn -- usually too late, how to decipher the hidden codes. Following the role of Orpheus as demiurge, "the poet, consequently takes the place gods occupied previously: he controls man's view of reality and makes existence bearable."⁶¹ In the film narrative, Orpheus finds existence unbearable, he is in love with Princess Death, pursuing her throughout the city. Cocteau's theatre has been criticized for not being intellectual, but as Heurtebise tells Orpheus: "you try too hard to understand, and that is a mistake."

This metaphor of the mirror is also a symbol of the Orphic qualities of the poet/artist. The crafting of the mirror sequence in *Orphée* developed out of the autobiographical *Le Sang d'un Poète*, where the descent into the mirror was revealed by the poet/artist entering through a wall of water, creating a much less convincing effect. The obvious connections to the mirror capturing the soul of the person through one's reflection, and breaking a mirror as a foreshadowing of death, add further irony to Cocteau's re-casting of the myth. The last reference to the mirror - the eyes being the mirror to the soul; concerns the gaze of Orpheus. This gaze is ironic because, although the vision of the poet is profound, Orpheus is forever looking 'past' his embodied experience. Cocteau transforms this idea into an Orpheus, who in the service of poetry, prefers a car radio to his wife's actual pregnancy, their own collective act of creation.

The origin of Orpheus' impatience could be attributed to his inability to see what was before his eyes. Orpheus' preoccupation with Death and his fascination with cryptic messages, rather than with Eurydice and *la vie quotidienne*, affirms his disembodiment and denies the gaze of the poet, which sees beyond the visible reality, while celebrating the concreteness of the *lebenswelt*. When she is taken away he retrieves her, but his impatience still stops his focus on everyday life. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Eurydice's second death is final, whereas in *Orphée*, Death has mercy a second time due to her love for Orpheus. It is only in the final

⁶⁰ See Lydia Crowson, *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau* (New Hampshire: The University Press of New England, 1978).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

scene that Orpheus comes to realize his embodiment. In the stage production of *Orphée*, this realization is represented by the Orphic hymn, thanking Heurtebise for guiding the poet first through *transcendence*, and then through Hades in the reverse journey, so that his *immanent* return is informed and embodied. The trilogy of Orpheus, Hermes, and Eurydice is central to our interpretation. In order to decipher his universe, Orpheus requires the figure of Hermes (Heurtebise), who is necessary to bring Orpheus and Eurydice together in a second rebirth.

Cocteau's Orpheus is aware that the death of the poet is necessary to ensure his immortality; the figure of the modern tragic hero who breaks the taboos and refuses to appease the public. The re-casting of Orpheus is a familiar archetype: the destruction of an individual who goes against the rules of the collective, traditionally represented by the martyr or Christ figure. Here lies the seed of Cocteau's image of Orpheus, the poet as angel in turmoil, with Death actively pursuing him, and the Bacchante public acting as jury, assigning him to death. *Orphée* continues the motif of the double, for in Cocteau's re-casting of the myth of Orpheus, the poet represents the Fall of Man and of the Fallen Angels. The emphasis in the film on the trial of Orpheus is a kind of *Procès-Verbal*, referred to in Cocteau's poem *L'Ange Heurtebise* of 1925.

Although the act of creation is personal, once any work is born it has a role in the public realm, which is represented by the outward looking gaze of Orpheus. The work of art acts as the *spiritus* between the self and the Other, where the art-objects of Cocteau allow us to recreate his universe, and gain a glimpse of the poet's intentions through our exegesis. The Orphic quality of handing over one's art to the public represents the triad of artist/art-object/public,⁶² forming a hermeneutic triangle.

Since the artist cannot distance himself from the world in the same way that the philosopher does, are not the Orphic qualities of the priest, the poet, and the oracular head of Orpheus after his death, proof of the poet's dual role of creator/orator ? Cocteau's obsession with the role of the poet and the process of

⁶² See Lydia Crowson, *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau*, p. 7 for her formulation of this triad which defines the space of hermeneutic interpretation.

I creativity, are what make his critical writings part of contemporary thought. Never content with just *being* a poet, Cocteau was forever conscious of the Bacchante public awaiting his slip-up on the tight-rope, alluding to his metaphor of the artist/acrobat which we will pursue in the following chapter on angelic flight.

ANGELUS II

The last chapter spoke about Cocteau's transformation of the myth of Orpheus, revealing Orpheus and Hermes as the two key figures from his autobiographical interpretation of the myth Orphée.

*The major difference between Cocteau's re-casting of Orpheus in a contemporary condition, and his transformation of the figure of Hermes into the angelic figure Heurtebise is that the latter transformation is an invention; Cocteau 'builds' the character Heurtebise. He is a surreal fusion of the Greek psychopomp, with the immortal angelos. Reforged within the context of the contemporary situation, Cocteau does not refer to the traditional Angel, but following the modern philosophy that "man creates his life as a project"¹, the 'terrible' angel Heurtebise can be seen to represent poetic making. The image of Cocteau building the angel for the film *Le Sang d'un Poète* is another example of this transformation through technê, as a commentary on contemporary making.*

Cocteau's attitude towards irony and humour are manifested in his crafting of images, through his invention and building of 'wonderful' devices in an architectural manner.

¹ Ortega y Gasset's metaphor that man has to make his own existence at every single moment - what he calls the 'project' of life, can be found in the essay "Man the Technician".



The Angels rushing up and down Jacob's ladder represent the dream of Epiphany.
(*The Poetical Works of John Milton*, 1794).



The Angelic Muse "*Metaphysic*",
(Giambattista Vico, *Scienza Nuova* , 1744).

It is within this borderline between the visible and the invisible that everything exists, and upon it that everything wavers, so that anything that approaches it does not shrink, yet remains small.

j.c

THE POET AS ANGEL

The source of the name Angel refers to its role as *angelos* ² in revealing the Divine Mysteries. They "are pre-eminently worthy of the name Angel because they first receive the Divine Light, and through them are transmitted to us the revelations which are above us."³ As the image of the soul is the mirror, the Angel's wings become refraction devices; two images which Cocteau translates into his *poésie* of the cinema in the film *Orphée*. Continuing his use of irony as a form of revelation, in *Journal d'un Inconnu*, Cocteau contemplates the french words for angel (*ange*) and angle (*angle*). He reflects that by adding an 'l' (*aille*) to an *ange*, we have constructed an *ang(l)e*. The *aille*, which sounds 'l' in english, means 'wing' in french, completing the image in both languages. This association between Angel and Angle enables Cocteau to comment upon the properties of the double image, which may be expressed as the following fourfold:

Angel	>	Reflection ⁴
Angle	<	Refraction ⁵

The Angel represents 'Becoming' for both Cocteau and Rilke. Cocteau's struggle with the Angel Heurtebise can be seen as a struggle with the poetic Muse, or with Poetry itself. In this light, the role of the poet and architect is to reveal reality through poetry, which "unveils in the fullest sense of the word. It reveals naked, and lit by a light which arouses the mind from its torper, all the surprising things

² The Angel in this chapter continues the idea of the *angelos* Hermes, who is the divine messenger from Greek mythology.

³ Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies*, trans. editors of the Shrine of Wisdom (U.K.: Garden City Press Ltd., 1949), p. 33.

⁴ *Reflection*: to bend back light, heat, or sound (O.E.D.)

⁵ *Refraction*: to bend a ray of light at the point where it enters water or glass, etc., obliquely (O.E.D.)



Curtain for Cocteau's ballet *Parade* . The image of flight predominates through the symbols of jacob's ladder, the acrobat, angelic wings and celestial star. (Picasso, 1917).



The acrobat acts as 'intermediary', or mortal *angelos* , in aspiring to the role of the Angel. (*Wings of Desire*, 1988)

by which we are surrounded, and which our senses registered mechanically."⁶ In accordance with Rilke's comment that "every Angel is terrible",⁷ Cocteau defines the qualities of the angelic poet as : "Disinterested, selfish, tender, pitying, cruel, shrinking from contacts, pure in the midst of debauchery, taking a violent delight in, and at the same time despising, earthly pleasures, naïvely a-moral".⁸ In other words, a duality of opposites, or a *monstre-sacré*, as is the angelic figure in the poem *Dos D'Ange*. Cocteau asserts that only another poet can recognize these angels, which the Other world is constantly trying to recover through "murder, hospitals, love, or opium - it will employ any means to finish them off, and so recover its lost children."⁹

The earthly poet is aspiring to the role of the Angel, for they both dwell in the intermediary realm. The poet/artist is an intermediary, reconciling objectivity and subjectivity; he dwells in a realm akin to the region of the "zone"¹⁰ in *Orphée*. Cocteau's Orpheus is acutely aware of his own mortality, which produces his impatience. "The consciousness of death, which was to him what the pleasure of giddiness is to speed, sickens him with the spasm of a sudden fall."¹¹ This consciousness also becomes embodied through the act of creation; the only realm that the artist/poet has at his command. The metaphor of the artist being suspended over the void, not unlike the acrobat, can be seen in Picasso's painted curtain for Cocteau's collaborative ballet *Parade*¹² in 1917. The flying horse, the angelic little acrobat, and the Jacob's ladder allude to the desire and danger of flight. Cocteau's form of revelation is through the association of opposites and by the metaphor of the circus acrobat, constantly striving against gravity :

⁶ Jean Cocteau, *Cocteau's World: an anthology of writings by Jean Cocteau*, ed. & trans. Margaret Crosland (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1972), p. 368.

⁷ See Rilke's *Dumino Elegies*, trans. by J.B. Leishman, (1939). The Second Elegy begins with the line "Jeder Engel ist schrecklich", which contains the same meaning as Cocteau's angel Heurtebise. See note 1, p. 44 for clarification.

⁸ Cocteau, *Cocteau's World: An anthology of writings by Jean Cocteau*, p. 360.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

¹⁰ The area that joins (or separates) this World and the Other World, is an interpretation of Hades, a no-man's land which Cocteau calls the zone.

¹¹ Cocteau, *Cocteau's World: an anthology of writings by Jean Cocteau*, p. 371.

¹² Produced by Serge Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*; the collaboration in the production of *Parade* included Erik Satie (score), Picasso (sets and costumes), Cocteau (scenario), Leonide Massine (choreography), and Apollinaire who wrote the program notes, naming *Parade* a ballet "Sur-realist."

*The contemporary theatre is decadent because it has lost the feeling on the one hand for seriousness and on the other for laughter; because it has broken away from gravity, from effects that are immediate and painful - in a word, from Danger. Because it has lost a real sense of humour, a sense of laughter's power of physical and anarchic dissociation.*¹³

In a collection of aphorisms about poetry and the role of the poet, Cocteau gives advice to the younger generation of poets on how to *construct* a poem while liberating the creative force. His advice to young poets stems from a deep search for a way of working outside the conventions of nineteenth century literature that he was exposed to in his early years:

*...they should write upside-down, join the letters together, look at the sheet of paper in the mirror as they write, make a geometrical design, place the words at the point where the lines meet and fill the spaces afterwards, turn a famous textbook upside-down by inverting the meaning, etc.; in this way they become athletes and develop the muscles of the mind.*¹⁴

One could argue that this surreal type of iconoclasm produced the most profound explorations in twentieth century art; however Cocteau was not rooted in iconoclasm for its own sake. His montage in film, or juxtaposition of sound in his poetry; similar to the mechanism of collage in the photographs of Man Ray or Philippe Halsman, create magic realms in which the intention is to erase the borders between two aspects of reality. During this development, Cocteau remained consumed by re-casting myth through the uncovering of the original Greek theatre. "The absence of rules in poetry forces the poet to find methods for himself which give his work the prestige of a ritual from some sacred cult."¹⁵ Sacred objects such as the lyre of Orpheus or the caduceus of Hermes, become transformed into morse code and gloves in *Orphée*, or the white stallion and the magic rose in *La Belle et la Bête*. Juxtaposition became a radical reaction to all forms of taxonomy and reductivism allowing Cocteau's modern mythology to become ritualistic. There is always a meal, and a sacrifice. There is always the invisible presence of Eros in Cocteau's work.

¹³ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, p. 42.

¹⁴ Cocteau, *Cocteau's World: an anthology of writings by Jean Cocteau*, pp. 467-68.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

A comparison between Cocteau's search for new poetry and drama can be found in Artaud's *The Theatre and its Double*, where he argues that "the actor is an athlete of the heart."¹⁶ Artaud carries the relation of language and magic to the *mise-en-scène*, where the music, gestures, intonations and architecture come together in one occult fusion. His ideas about language are not unlike those Cocteau pursued in his ballet *Parade* and *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*. Artaud's re-casting of sound and gesture for the theatre included:

*To make use of language in a new, exceptional and unaccustomed fashion; to reveal its possibilities for producing physical shock; to divide and distribute it actively in space; to deal with intonations in an absolutely concrete manner, resting their power to shatter as well as really manifest something; to turn against language and its basely utilitarian, one could say alimentary, sources, against its trapped-beast origins, and finally, to consider language as the form of Incantation.*¹⁷

The introduction of *La Belle et la Bête* states that children "have implicit faith in what we tell them."¹⁸ That they believe in wonder and magic because they see beyond the visible is another way of framing Cocteau's belief in the role of the poet, who asks the public "to have the same kind of simple faith."¹⁹ "What we have to do is to show him (*the public*) the things which his mind and eye pass over every day, but from such an angle, and at such a speed that he seems to be seeing them and experiencing them for the first time."²⁰ The idea of the gaze that does not see is reminiscent of surrealist author Louis Aragon, writing in *Paris Peasant* :

Men pass their lives in the midst of magic precipices without even opening their eyes. They manipulate grim symbols innocently, their ignorant lips unwittingly mouth terrible incantations, phrases like revolvers. It is enough to make one shudder to see a bourgeois family taking its morning coffee without ever noticing the unknowable that shows through the tablecloth's red and white

¹⁶ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, p. 133.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁸ Jean Cocteau, *Three Screenplays*, trans. Carol-Martin Sperry (New York: Viking Press Inc., 1972), p. 195.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Cocteau, *Cocteau's World: an anthology of writings by Jean Cocteau*, p. 369.

*checkered pattern Not to mention the ill considered use of mirrors, obscene signs scrawled on walls, the letter "W" employed carelessly these days,...*²¹

In a structuralist study on the *poésie* of Cocteau entitled *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau*,²² Lydia Crowson touches on several issues of poetic making, which she defines in terms of the triad, artist/art-object/public. The author lists several important characteristics of Cocteau's work which include "the ubiquitous figure of the double, a fascination with games, codes and deception, a highly fluid use of language; and the multi-layered composition of his works - all point to a fragmented real that is becoming rather than being,..."²³. However, the author fails to realize that Cocteau's critique is expressed through his work, following the understanding that artists react to the world *through* their very being. A story by Cocteau illustrates an important distinction between the action of the artist and the pre-reflective action of the philosopher:

Imaginons une fable. Des insectes enfermés dans une bouteille ronde couchée sur une table y vivent et pullulent. Au bout de quelque temps, un des insectes découvre que leur univers est plat. Quelque temps après, un autre qu'il est cubique. Quelque temps après...qu'ils vivent libres, mais retenus contre une surface bombée. Ainsi de suite. Un insecte, poète, écrit, pour rimer avec onde:

Moi, pauvre prisonnier d'une bouteille ronde.

*Il a tout décourvert, mais il ne renseigne personne.*²⁴

First and foremost, Cocteau's work represents the embodiment of the artist; for he seemed incapable of placing an intellectual distance between himself and the world. Cocteau's *poésie* demonstrates that, compared with architects, poets never undergo this type of 'distanciation',²⁵ and that poetry remains in the phenomenal world with its objects of everyday experience. This notion of

²¹ Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, trans. Simon W. Taylor (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1980), p. 190.

²² Although Ms. Crowson's study is one of the only serious examinations of Cocteau's work I have encountered, her methodology of identifying deep structures in his work tends to be reductive, departing from the hermeneutic approach attempted here.

²³ Crowson, *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau*, p. 6.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 164. Our translation follows: "Let's imagine a fable. Some swarming insects, enclosed in a round bottle laying on a table, live and multiply. After some time, one of the insects discovers that their universe is flat. Some time later, another that it is cubic. Some time later... that they live in freedom, but held against a convex surface. And so on. One insect, a poet, writes, to rhyme with *onde* (wave): Me, poor prisoner of a round (*ronde*) bottle. He has revealed everything, but he has informed no one."

²⁵ In this context, 'distanciation' refers to all types of Cartesian separation or theoretical reductivism.

embodiment can be found in the profound drawings and objects of Giacometti, and in particular synthetic cubist paintings by Braque.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF L'ANGE HEURTEBISE

Well into this research, I discovered Cocteau's commentary on *Orphée*, where he states that "there are no symbols or messages in this film, that Heurtebise is by no means an angel, as he is in the play, nor that the Princess symbolize death." Upon reflection, I realized that in the text of *Le Sang d'un Poète* the same author wrote:

*Tout poème est un blason
Il faut le déchiffrer.²⁶*

Like a modern Sphinx, Cocteau speaks in riddles, creating an invisible smoke screen, which he expects the initiate to see beyond. The notion that "Death is the back of life", or that the invisible is present within the visible, is central to his interpretation of the myth of Orpheus, and of the Angel Heurtebise. The aspect of duality in Cocteau's work is characterized by the mirror, the amalgam, and the monster,²⁷ three symbols which re-unite the two worlds in *Orphée*. A short poem entitled *Dos D'Ange*, composed in 1922, deals with the monster/angel who dwells simultaneously within us.²⁸ The idea of shade and shadow being consubstantial is central to the poem. A reference to this idea can be found in *Purgatorio* (Canto VII), when Dante and Virgil meet Sordello in the land of 'shades'. Dante realizes that since he is alive and still has a soul (shade), he will cast a 'shadow', giving away his mortal identity.²⁹ The soul evokes two strong metaphors: first that it is a mirror reflecting the Divine Light, and second, that an object cannot be ensouled without casting a shadow. Just as the poet walks with one foot in either realm, we discover the poetic fact that the monster is at the back of the Angel:

²⁶ "All the poem is a crest, it is necessary to decipher it".

²⁷ This duality is what Cocteau refers to as his *monstres-sacrés*.

²⁸ Much later in his work, Cocteau develops this idea into the Beast in *La Belle et la Bête* (1950), shown in the illustration opposite p. 39.

²⁹ In Oscar Wilde's *The Fisherman and his Soul*, the protagonist goes down to the sea, casts his shadow, and cuts its silhouette away from his body, thereby releasing his lamenting soul.



The Beast/Prince portrays the monster/angel duality. (*La Belle et la Bête*, 1946).



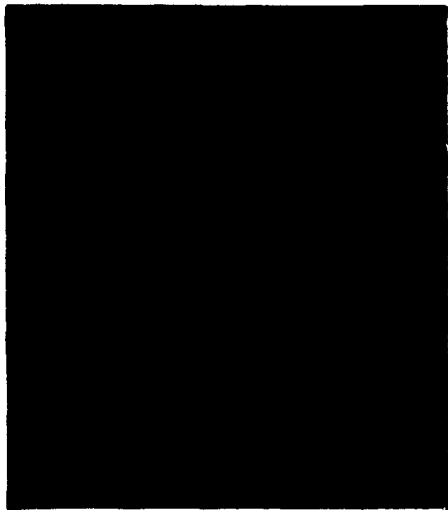
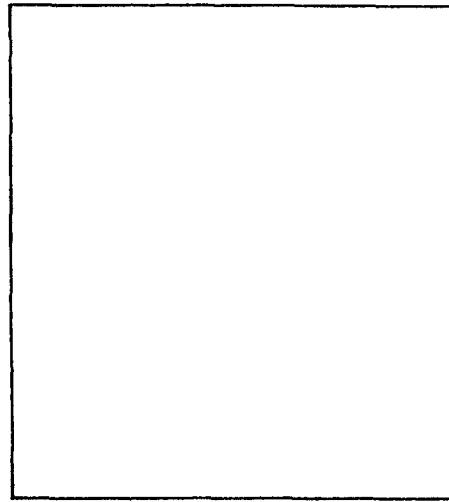
The object and its shadow signify the monster behind the angel in *Dos D'Ange* (George Krause, *The Shadow*, 1963)

DOS D'ANGE

Une fausse rue en rêve
Et ce piston irréel
Sont mensonges que soulève
Un ange venu du ciel.

Que ce soit songe ou pas songe,
En le voyant par dessus
On découvre le mensonge,
Car les anges sont bossus.

Du moins bossue est leur ombre
Contre le mur de ma chambre.



BACK of the ANGEL ³⁰

A false street in dreaming
And the unreal piston
Are lies that lift
An angel who came from the sky.

That it be dream or not dream,
Seeing him above
One discovers the lie,
Because the angels are hunchbacks.

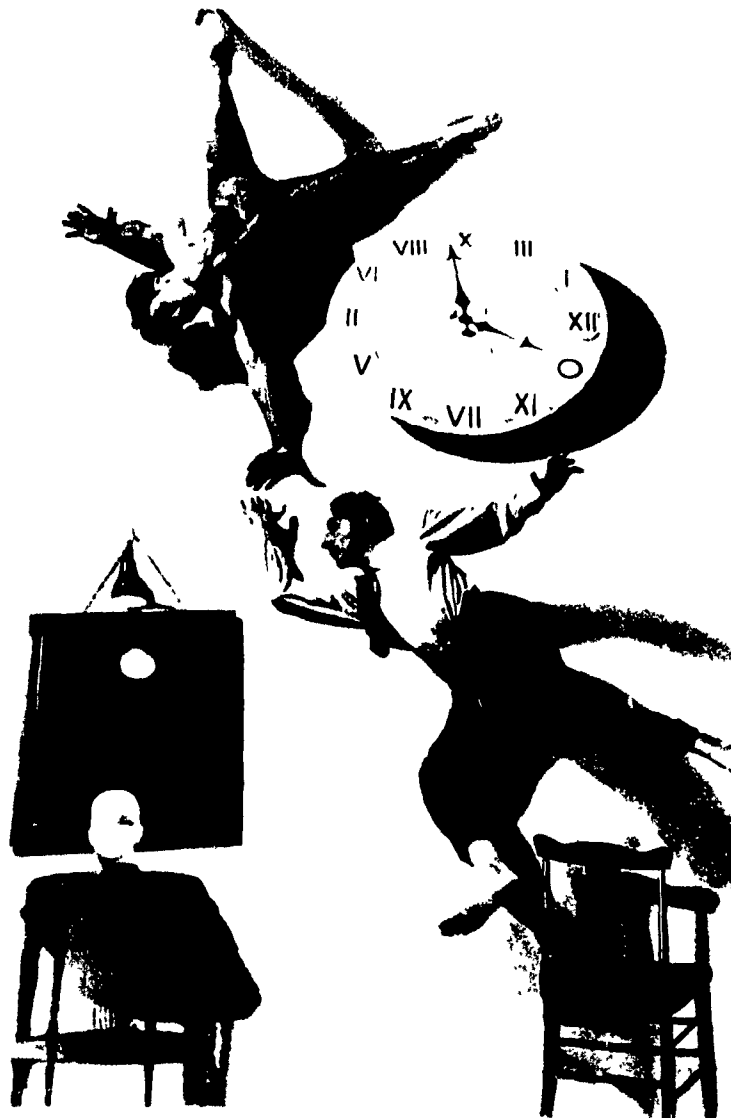
At least hunchback is their shadow
Against the wall of my room.

The poem *Dos D'Ange* reveals that the living angel and its shadow are corporeal and inseparable. Thomas Aquinas understood an angel to be Finite from God's point of view, but seen from man's lower point of view, the angel appears Infinite. Cocteau's angel represents the divided self, but at the same time helps the artist to follow his *ligne droite*. For Cocteau, an angel is "un jeune animal,

³⁰ The english translations for *Dos D'Ange* and *L'Ange Hewiebise* have been provided by the author.



Jacob Wrestling with the Angel,
(Eugène Delacroix, 1855-61)



Cocteau reaches towards his "Angel",
(Philippe Halsman, 1950)

éclatant, charmant, vigoureux."³¹ The angel/monster is like the artist/poet; terrible and "angelique" at the same time. The androgynous character of the Angel relates him to other creatures of duality such as the Hermaphrodite, which returns us to Cocteau's idea of the invisible meaning within the visible reality.

The other side of the angelic light is the invisible, dark side of the artist, which is the shadow behind the object represented by the realm on the other side of the mirror. Like the metaphor of the mirror in the film *Orphée*, the Angel is the reconciliatory device that allows an expunging of opposites creating the confusion; between reality and illusion; between the extended dream of the sleepwalker and the intention of surrealist art to bring life and theatre unbearably close. The poet/artist listens to his night, the dark side of the conscious in the unconscious, where the force of expiration takes place. When asked: Are you waiting for inspiration? Do you believe in a force coming from the outside ?, Cocteau replied:

*No. One should say 'expiration', not 'inspiration'. It is from our reserves, from our night that things come to us. Our work pre-exists within us. The problem is to discover it (inventire). We are merely its archaeologists.*³²

Using Cocteau's poetry and critical writings as a scaffolding for the images in his films, we can understand his *poésie* in visual media not as mere pastiche, nor as derivative of surrealist art, but as manifesting a series of profound ideas dealing with the act of creation, first through the poet Orpheus and subsequently through the angelic messenger Hermes. Let us continue examining the figure of Hermes as he becomes metamorphosized through the literary ideas of Cocteau into the character Heurtebise. Cocteau imagined the angel Heurtebise to be:

midway between the human and the inhuman. An angel is a brilliant young animal, full of vigour and charm, plunging from the seen to the unseen with the powerful gestures of a diver, and the thunder of a myriad wild pigeon's wings. The radiant swiftness of its movements hides it from our view. Were it to slow down, doubtless we should perceive it. Now is the time for Jacob, that fine wrestler, to throw himself upon it. Death has no meaning for this magnificent

³¹ Crowson, *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau*, p. 134. The angel is "a young animal, bursting forth, charming, and vigorous."

³² André Fraigneau, *Cocteau on the Film*, trans. Vera Traill (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1972), p. 131.

*specimen of a sporting monster. It strangles mortals, and impassively tears out their souls. I imagine it to be something between a boxer and a sailing ship....*³³

Plato commented that the Angel is a messenger moving between heaven and earth with a light rushing motion. Identifying himself with the limping child-poet in *Le Sang d'un Poète*, Cocteau's characteristic gait of the poet is a result of wrestling with the Angel. Constantly striving for balance, like the acrobat, Cocteau writes:

*Poetry walks with one foot in life and one foot in death. This is why I say that it limps, and it is through this limp that I recognize it.*³⁴

During the Renaissance, Pico della Mirandola established the Neoplatonic triad,³⁵ emphasizing opposition and reconciliation through the trinity. Cocteau treats the figures of Orpheus and Hermes as interdependent; adopting a theocratic view of his characters, in the sense that each God has within him the entire pantheon, representing an aspect of the "one in the many". Several keys to Cocteau's formulation of the angel figure are in an early poem written in 1925, entitled *L'Ange Heurtebise*. Orphic symbolism resides within the poem for Apollo is the "father" of Orpheus as well as guardian of Hermes, who becomes transformed into the "terrible" angel Heurtebise. The ambiguity of Hermes is telling; not only does Hermes guide souls through Hades, he also appears in the poem as the guardian angel, Heurtebise.

In *L'Ange Heurtebise*, Cocteau arrives at a fusion of the *self* and the *Other*, an idea he wrote about extensively in reflecting upon the role of poetry in the modern era. The poem is presented in its entirety, along with an english translation and reflections on several passages which will begin to piece together particular allusions and references. The references that begin in *L'Ange Heurtebise* continue to appear throughout Cocteau's trilogy of Orphic films, *Le Sang d'un Poète*, *Orphée*, and *Testament d'Orphée*. Reading the poem along with the exegesis will enable us to understand that Cocteau's use of language is as

³³ Cocteau, *Cocteau's World: an anthology of writings by Jean Cocteau*, p. 359.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 478.

³⁵ i.e. Mercury, Apollo, Venus.

much for the sound, as the sense. However, below the visible reality is a construction of several layers. This begins to reveal the complex dual role of the poet, as Cocteau fuses angels and demons in a marriage of the double image of heaven and hell. The poet wrote that *L'Ange Heurtebise* was "the one poem in my life which luck never left me until the end"³⁶ :

³⁶ Cocteau, Cocteau's World: an anthology of writings by Jean Cocteau , p. 467.

L'ANGE HEURTEBISE ¹ (1925)

I

L'ange Heurtebise, sur les gradins
En moire de son aile
Me bat, me rafraîchit la mémoire
Le gredin, seul, immobile
Avec moi dans l'agate
Que brise, âne, ton bât
Sumaturel.

II

L'ange Heurtebise, d'une brutalité
Incrovable, saute sur moi. De grâce
Ne saute pas si fort
Garçon bestial, fleur de haute
Stature.
Je m'en suis alité. En voilà
Des façons. J'ai l'as; constate.
L'as - tu ? ²

III

L'ange Heurtebise me pousse
Et vous, roi Jésus, miséricorde
Me hissez, m'attirez jusqu'à l'angle
Droit de vos genoux pointus ³
Plaisir sans mélange. Pouce! ⁴ dénoue
La corde, je meurs.

IV

L'ange Heurtebise et l'ange
Cégeste ⁵ tué à la guerre -- quel nom
Inouï -- jouent
Le rôle des épouvantails
Dont le geste *non* effraye
Les cerises du cerisier céleste
Sous le vantail de l'église
Habitée au geste *oui*.

L'ANGE HEURTEBISE ¹

I

The angel Heurtebise, on the steps
In the watered silk of his wing
He beats me, he refreshes my memory
The rogue, alone, immobile
With me in the agate
That breaks, donkey, your packsaddle
Supernatural.

II

The angel Heurtebise, with an incredible
Brutality, jumps on me. For goodness sake
Don't jump so forcefully
Beastial boy, flower of high
Stature.
I am confined to bed. What is this way of
Doing things. I have the ace; notice!
Do you have it ? ²

III

The angel Heurtebise pushes me
And you, king Jesus, divine mercy
Hoists me, pulls me up to the right angle
Of your pointed knees ³
Pleasure without hesitation. Stop! ⁴ Untie
The cord, I am dying.

IV

The angel Heurtebise; and the angel
Cégeste ⁵ killed in the war -- what an
Exceptional name -- they play
The role of scarecrows
Whose gesture *no* frightens
The cherries of the celestial cherry tree
Under the door leaf of the church
Accustomed to this gesture *yes*.

Notes

1. The title *L'Ange Heurtebise* refers to a collision (*heurter*) with the north wind (*bise*), who is personified by the angel Gabriel. Like Jacob, Cocteau is wrestling with the angel. Heurtebise is an amalgam of two french words; the amalgam is important since it is to create an alloy of metal with mercury (*hermes*), in order to soften it and create a third 'thing'.

The name suggests the simultaneous malevolent and benevolent qualities of the angel who represents the Other, causing both angst and fulfilment. In french, *bise* also means a little kiss, hence *heurte/bise* is to collide and caress. Heurtebise replaces the name *Hermes* in Cocteau's re-casting of the Orpheus myth, although they are the same character.

2. Cocteau follows the French language tradition of using the sound of words as *jeu de mots* and of creating *double entendre*. Here *J'ai l'as* and *l'as-tu* illustrates a modern use of poetry in which the sounds become things in themselves. This rhythm of language is what is specific to poetry, and is not directly translatable.

3. An important image is the 90 degree right angle produced by the genuflecting angel, symbol of holiness. The point of the right angle is sharp and dangerous, hence the image has dual significance. Another occurrence of the right angle can be found in the image of the angel wings. When outspread they create a 90 degree right angle, each 45 degrees from the axis of the spine, referring to the Angelic Geometricians mentioned in the *Book of Enoch*.

4. In children's games, *Pouce* is equivalent to 'home-free' or 'time-out' in english. With this incantation, one leaves the space of the game, and re-enters reality. Play is specific in territory and in duration. See *Homo Ludens* by Johan Huizinga for a discussion of the idea of play in culture. Here, as in *Le Sang d'un Poète*, Cocteau recalls his days at the Lycée.

5. An invention of Cocteau, Cégeste becomes the younger poet in rivalry with Orpheus in the film *Orphée*. His name rhymes with *celeste* (celestial), and is a homonym with *ses gestes* (these gestures). He does not exist in the original Orpheus myth, nor in Cocteau's theatre version of *Orphée*.

V

Ange Heurtebise, mon ange gardien
 Je te garde, je te heurte
 Je te brise, je te change
 De gare, d'heure.
 En garde, été! Je te défie
 Si tu es un homme. Avoue
 Mon ange de céruse, ta beauté
 Prise en photographie par une
 Explosion de magnésium. ⁶

VI

Ange Heurtebise, en robe d'eau
 Mon ange aimé, la grâce
 Me fait mal. J'ai mal
 A Dieu, il me torture.
 En moi le démon est tortue, animal
 Jadis mélodieux. ⁷ Arrive
 Sors de l'agate
 Dure fumée, ô vitesse qui tue.
 Sur tes patins de diamant rayé
 Le miroir des malades.
 Les murs
 Les murs
 Ont des oreilles
 Et les miroirs
 Deux yeux d'amant.

VII

Ange Heurtebise, abonde, moelle
 D'avion en sureau et en toile d'albâtre.
 C'est l'heure. Il faut encore
 Descendre à mon secours, la tête
 La première, à travers le verre
 Sans défaut des yeux, le vide, l'île
 Où chante l'âtre. ⁸ Sors ton épée,
 Viens au ralenti, folle étoile. ⁹
 Que n'ai-je ton corps ? Ah!
 Si nous avions tes hanches
 Drapées de pierre, méchante
 Bête à bon Dieu.

V

Angel Heurtebise, my guardian angel
 I keep you, I hurt you
 I break you, I change you
 Of place, of time.
 On guard, summer ! I challenge you
 If you are a man. Talk
 My angel of ceruse, your beauty
 Taken in photography by an
 Explosion of magnesium. ⁶

VI

Angel Heurtebise, in a robe of water
 My beloved angel, grace
 Hurts me. I am unreconciled with God,
 He tortures me.
 In me the demon is turtle, animal
 Once melodious. ⁷ Come
 Leave the agate
 Thick smoke, o speed that kills.
 On you skates of diamond scratch
 The mirror of the sick.
 The walls
 The walls
 Have ears
 And the mirrors
 The eyes of a lover.

VII

Angel Heurtebise, be abundant, marrow
 Of plane in elder and in linen alabaster
 It is the hour. Once more
 Descend to my rescue, head first,
 Through the glass without defect,
 Of the eyes, the void, island where
 The hearth ⁸ sings. Unsheath your sword,
 Come in slow motion, foolish star. ⁹
 Why don't I have your body ? Ah!
 If only we had your hips
 Draped of stone, malicious
 Beast of good God.



*The Ancient of Days,
putting a compass to the earth,
(William Blake, 1827)*



*Raphael: God has healed the Archangel
(David LaChapelle, 1988).*

6. In primitive cultures, both the photograph and the mirror are thought to capture the soul. The negative magically captures an impression on a plane, not unlike when physicists thought that light travelled from the object in projecting lines. Since the image is in reverse, it appears angelic white and translucent, like the material ceruse, a waxen substance which is the product of the bees. See note 11.

7. The melodious turtle is a reference to the lyre, the musical instrument of Orpheus. The first lyre was made by the infant Hermes, who crafted the lyre from the shell of a tortoise, using the intestines of Apollo's cows for the strings. Apollo was worshipped by Orpheus as the God of medicine and music.

8. The Greek coupling of the hearth (Hestia), and the messenger (Hermes) symbolizes the centre and the limit, an important symbol of the circle in geometry, and of the sphere in cosmogony. If God is the Demiurge, then the angels are the first Geometers. Architect John Hejduk writes in *Vladivostok*:

*On the first note
he sent out the angels
they drew in outline
with the tips of their wings
the sphere of the earth.*

9. The analogy between the angel and a star is a common one, since the dwelling place of angels is the heavens, like the stars fixed to the celestial arch in medieval cosmology. The celestial star is also Cocteau's signature trademark. See the sword hilt crafted by Cocteau with Picasso for this symbol.

VIII

L'ange Heurtebise, aux pieds d'animal ¹⁰
 Bleu de ciel, est venu. Je suis seul
 Tout nu sans Ève, sans moustaches
 Sans carte.
 Les abeilles de Salomon
 S'écartent, car je mange très mal mon miel
 De thym amer, mon miel des Andes. ¹¹
 En bas la mer ce matin recopie
 Cent fois le verbe aimer. Des anges d'ouate
 Les indécents, les sales
 Sur l'herbe traient les pis des grandes
 Vaches géographiques. ¹²

IX

Ange Heurtebise, je triomphe.
 La colère, le chiffre 13,
 Mélangent à rebrousse-poil
 Tes moires blanches
 Gonflent tes voiles d'une
 Façon toute neuve.
 Jamais, leçons, ne me plûtes; j'appris
 Coûte que coûte
 Les affluents de l'Oise, ¹³ le nom
 Des branches d'arbre, la brousse
 Du mois de mai.
 Oiseleur, tu perds ta mic, apprivoise
 Plutôt les statues. ¹⁴
 Des oiseaux ce sont les amies ...
 Le marbre est très influent.

X

Ange Heurtebise, dites l'Ave.
 Un pied sur la tortue, l'autre sur
 L'aile, c'est jongler avec
 Plume et boulet de canon. ¹⁵
 J'eus des torts, j'en conviens : Nous nous
 [plûme
 Après le jeûne. Ange Heurtebise, la terre
 Mi-soleil, mi-ombre a tout d'une
 Panthère de la jungle. Non ?
 Eh Bien, j'en suis sûr et vous ordonne
 De vous taire. Vous avez
 Du sang au bec, mon jeune ami. ¹⁶

VIII

The angel Heurtebise, with animal like feet ¹⁰
 Sky blue, is come. I am alone
 Naked without Eve, without moustaches,
 Without a card.
 The bees of Solomon
 Divide, because I eat very badly my honey
 Of bitter thyme, my honey of the Andes. ¹¹
 Below, the sea this morning repeats
 A hundred times the verb to love. The quilted
 Angels of cotton, the indecent, the dirty
 On the grass milk the udders of large
 Geographical cows. ¹²

IX

Angel Heurtebise, I triumph:
 Anger, the number 13,
 Mix against the grain
 Your white watered silk
 Refill your sails in a
 Wholly new way.
 Never did lessons please me; I learned
 At all costs
 The tributaries of the Oise, ¹³ the name
 Of tree branches, the bush
 Of the month of May.
 Bird catcher, you waste your crumbs,
 Instead tame the statues. ¹⁴
 Birds they are the beloved ...
 The marble is very influential.

X

Angel Heurtebise, say the Ave.
 One foot on the turtle, the other on
 The wing, is to juggle with
 Feather and cannon ball. ¹⁵
 I was at times wrong, I admit : We pleased
 [each other
 After the fast. Angel Heurtebise, the earth
 Half sun, half shade all like a
 Panther of the jungle, No ?
 Well, I am sure and I order you
 To be silent. You have
 Blood on your beak, my young friend. ¹⁶

10. Like other imaginary beings, Heurtebise is a combination of animals that signify he is a beast. The monster is also a messenger for he 'demonstrates', derived from the latin *monstrari*. Cocteau's *monstres sacrés* are numerous, showing that angels and monsters are closely related, in particular, the beast/angel figure in *La Belle et la Bête*,

11. The reference to the bees can be found in Virgil's fourth *Georgic* where he discusses the politics of the bee colony, and the production of honey. The angel-bee relation refers to the bees being a kind of Hermes figure collecting honey-dew, for the Greeks thought that honey fell from the heavens in the form of ambrosia and settled on plants. Thyme was associated with Mount Hymettus in Greece, famous for its honey.

12. The image of a figure casting a shadow which completes its form is a key to Cocteau's use of light and shadow. The importance of the angel and his shadow being consubstantial, creating one form, emerges once more in the poem *Dos D'Ange*, where we "see" the angel from the privileged view of behind. This position of seeing the angel from above or behind is generally reserved for the Divine Light.

13. The Oise is a river of Northern France, tributary to the Seine. The department of Oise is known for raising cattle and bee-keeping, two references in Virgil's fourth *Georgic*, regarding Orpheus and Aristaeus. Aristaeus was to sacrifice four cows, and four bulls, on four altars as recompense for his pursuit of Eurydice, which caused Orpheus' grief. After nine days, the bees would be renewed, emitting from the broken bowels and bloated skin of the animals, in an act of spontaneous generation.

14. Taming the statues is related to Orpheus' command over the rocks, trees, and animals through his words and music. The statue reappears in *Le Sang d'un Poète*, where it comes to life through the hand of the creator, who adds: "*a casser des statues on risque d'en devenir une soi-même.*" (By breaking statues, one risks becoming one himself.)

15. The foot on the turtle is the reference to the lyre mentioned in note 7. Here, the turtle is like a cannon ball, and the angel is like a feather, emphasizing the duality between earth and sky, between Man's earthbound nature by gravity, and his desire for flight. This constant struggle against gravity is at the source of all contemporary architecture. Antonio Gaudi's 'mirror-modelling' for the *Sagrada Familia* attests to this fact. (Gravity).

16. The earth is black, like a black cat, and the angel with his beak is like a white bird; the symbolism refers to the earth and man being dark, and the sky and angels being light. As there is no fulfilment without the Angel/Other, there is no architecture without light; the desire to capture light is the second source of all architecture. (Light).

XI

L'ange Heurtebise, rue d'Anjou 17
 Le dimanche, joue aux faux pas
 Sur le toit, boîte marelle
 A cloche-pied, voletant comme pic
 Ou merle, ses joues en feu.
 Attention, dites-moi tu.
 Heurtebise, mon bel
 Estropié, on nous épie à droite.
 Cache tes perles, tes ciseaux
 Il ne faut pas qu'on te tue
 Car en te tuant chaque mois
 Moi on me tue et pas toi.
 Ange ou feu ? Trop tard. En joue
 Feu !
 Il tombe fusillé par les soldats de Dieu. 18

XII

La mort de l'ange Heurtebise
 Fut la mort de l'ange, la mort
 Heurtebise fut une mort d'ange
 Une mort d'ange Heurtebise
 Un mystère du change, un as
 Qui manque au jeu, un crime
 Que le pampre enlace, 19 un cep
 De lune, un chant de cygne qui mord.
 Un autre ange le remplace dont je
 Ne savais pas le nom hier
 En dernière heure : Cégeste.

XIII

Heurtebise, ô mon cygne, ouvre
 Ta cachette peu sûre. Une feuille
 De vigne mise sur l'âme
 Impudique, je t'achète
 Au nom du Louvre, que l'Amérique
 Le veuille ou non.

XIV

Heurtebise ne t'écarte
 Plus de mon âme, j'accepte.
 Fais ce que dois, beauté.
 Qu'il est laid le bonheur qu'on veut
 Qu'il est beau le malheur qu'on a.
 Cheveux d'ange Heurtebise, lourd
 Sceptre mâle, danger de l'eau
 Du lait, malle de bonne en gare
 Au regard de cet élégant animal
 Sur la carte qui bouge : mon tombeau
 De l'île aux doigts écartés
 Le malheur gante du sept. 20

XI

The angel Heurtebise, rue d'Anjou 17
 The Sunday, plays tripping
 On the roof, box hopscotch
 Hopping, fluttering like a magpie
 Or blackbird, his cheeks on fire.
 Be careful, call me "tu".
 Heurtebise, my pretty
 Cripple, one spies us on the right.
 Hide your pearls, your scissors
 It must not be that one kills you
 Because in killing you every month
 One kills *me* and not *you*.
 Angel or fire ? Too late. Ready, aim,
 Fire !
 He falls shot by the soldiers of God. 18

XII

The death of the angel Heurtebise
 Was the death of the angel, dead
 Heurtebise was the death of an angel
 A death of an angel Heurtebise.
 A mystery of exchange, an ace
 That is missing from the game, a crime
 That the vine branch entwines, 19 a vinestock
 Of moon, a swan song that bites.
 Another angel replaces him whose name
 I didn't know yesterday.
 In the last hour : Cégeste.

XIII

Heurtebise, o my swan, open
 your unsafe hiding place. A vine leaf
 Put on the immodest soul
 Shameless, I buy you
 In the name of the Louvre, whether America
 Wants it or not.

XIV

Heurtebise, don't separate
 Any longer from my soul, I accept.
 Do what has to be done, beauty.
 How ugly is the fortune that one wants
 How beautiful is the misfortune that one has.
 Hair of angel Heurtebise, heavy
 Male sceptre, danger of water
 Of milk, trunk of good fortune
 Upon the look of this elegant animal
 On the card that moves : my tomb
 Of the island of separated fingers.
 Misfortune wears gloves size seven. 20

17. The poem suddenly becomes autobiographical since 10 rue d'Anjou was Cocteau's Paris address for many years. Mixing reality with theatre was an intention Cocteau pursued throughout his *poésie*, from the closing act of the play *Orphée* staged in Paris (1926), to his last film *Testament d'Orphée* (1959).

18. This reference seems to be to Raymond Radiguet, a lover of Cocteau who was killed in the first world war, also referred to in the fourth stanza of the poem.

19. Cocteau's entwining vine branch has a reference in Virgil's first *Georgic*, where he mentions "how to raise on Elms the teeming vine." The process of marrying the grapes to the elm tree was practiced in Virgil's time. The vine grows best by grafting it onto a tree, thereby creating a creature in a state of metamorphosis, symbolized by the figure of Hermes. See the *Hermes of Praxiteles* for this image, and note his caduceus, a rod with two entwined snakes which represents the symbol of Mercury/Hermes.

20. Gloves size seven is what the figure Death wears in the film *Orphée* in order to travel between the two worlds. She forgets them behind, which enables Orpheus to enter Hades through the mirror. Numbers still had symbolic significance in the time of Plato and Pythagoras, and Orpheus played the 'Music of the Spheres'. His lyre had seven strings which represented the harmony of the cosmos.

XV

Ange Heurtebise, les papillons battent
 Mollement des mains malgré la nue.
 Les soupapes et les oreillettes du cœur
 Fleur de l'aorte, anthracite
 Ouragan des points cardinaux.
 Cordages de la nuit
 La lune écoute aux portes.
 La rose n'a pas d'âge
 Elle a ses becs, ses gants
 Et les journaux la citent
 Avec les acrobates
 Que la nuit et le jour
 Échangent sans amour. ²¹

XVI

PROCES - VERBAL ²²

Dans la nuit du... Quai... Les anges :
 Heurtebise, Elzévir, Dimanche, Cégeste
 Après avoir... ont... du sexe féminin...
 Il paraîtrait... malgré l'heure...
 Elles virent... lumière diffuse... l'âne...
 Fit mine de... une aile... par le manche
 En fer... sur la bouche... l'atrocité
 Du geste. ²³

Menés au poste, ils refusèrent
 De s'expliquer, bien entendu. ²⁴

XV

Angel Heurtebise, the butterflies clap
 Softly their hands despite the skies.
 The valves and auricles of the heart
 Flower of the aorta, anthracite
 Hurricane of the cardinal points.
 Rigging of the night
 The moon listens at the doors.
 The rose has no age
 It has its beaks, its gloves
 And the newspapers quote it
 With the acrobats
 That the night and the day
 Exchange without love. ²¹

XVI

VERBAL TRIAL ²²

In the night of... wharf... the angels :
 Heurtebise, Elzevir, Sunday, Cégeste
 After having... have... of the feminine sex...
 It would appear... despite the hour ...
 They saw... diffused light... the donkey...
 Acted as... the wing... by the handle
 In steel... on the mouth... the atrocity
 Of the gesture. ²³

Brought to the office, they refused
 to explain themselves, as expected. ²⁴

21. The image of the acrobat is central for Cocteau, for he believed that, life was to walk the tightrope. His introduction of the play *Orphée* in 1926 began:

*You see, we'll be performing very high with no nets
to catch us if we fall. The slightest distraction from
the house might make us lose our balance. That
means death for me and my fellow actors....*
CURTAIN RISES.³⁷

The acrobat walks the threshold between two zones (i.e. night and day), and therefore is a kind of bridge over an abyss, a synapse between every duality, thereby creating a trilogy as do Orpheus, Hermes, and Eurydice. Although the angel and the acrobat are not equivalent, the acrobat is a mortal in the intermediary position, 'aspiring' to be an *angelos*.

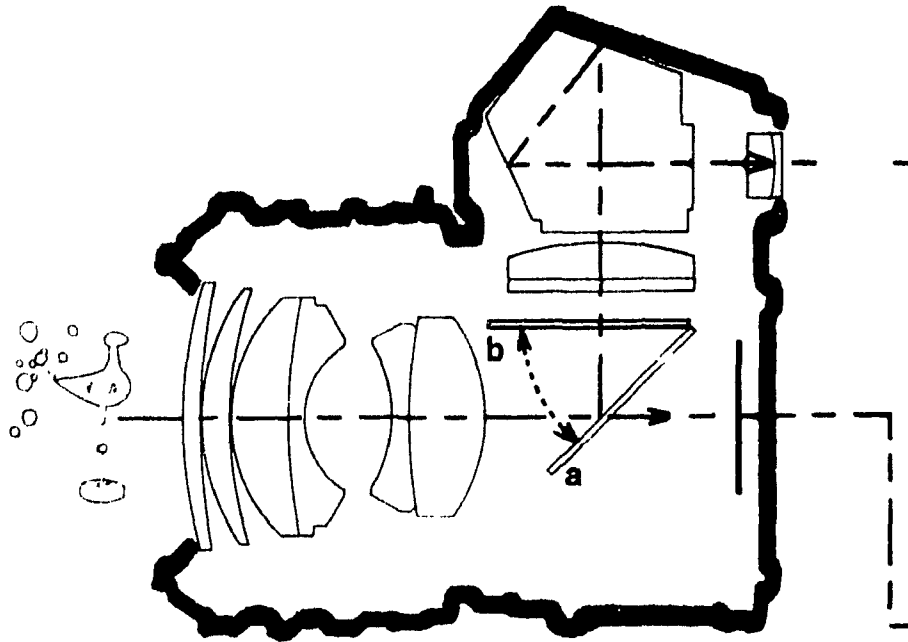
See Cocteau and Picasso's curtain of the ballet *Parade* for this image of the mortal who is condemned to earth, seeking *apotheosis* through flight. A contemporary reference can be found in the film *Wings of Desire*, through the figure of the circus acrobat, who is analogous to an earthly angel.

22. *Procès-Verbal* is a french legal term the police use in booking a motorist, or in submitting a record of evidence in court. The entire last stanza has the tone of a police report heard over the radio, with all its static and choppiness. In the film *Orphée*, Cocteau pursues messages coming over the radio as ciphers to be decoded. Also in the film, the angels of death, Raphael and Azrael, are portrayed as motorcycle police.

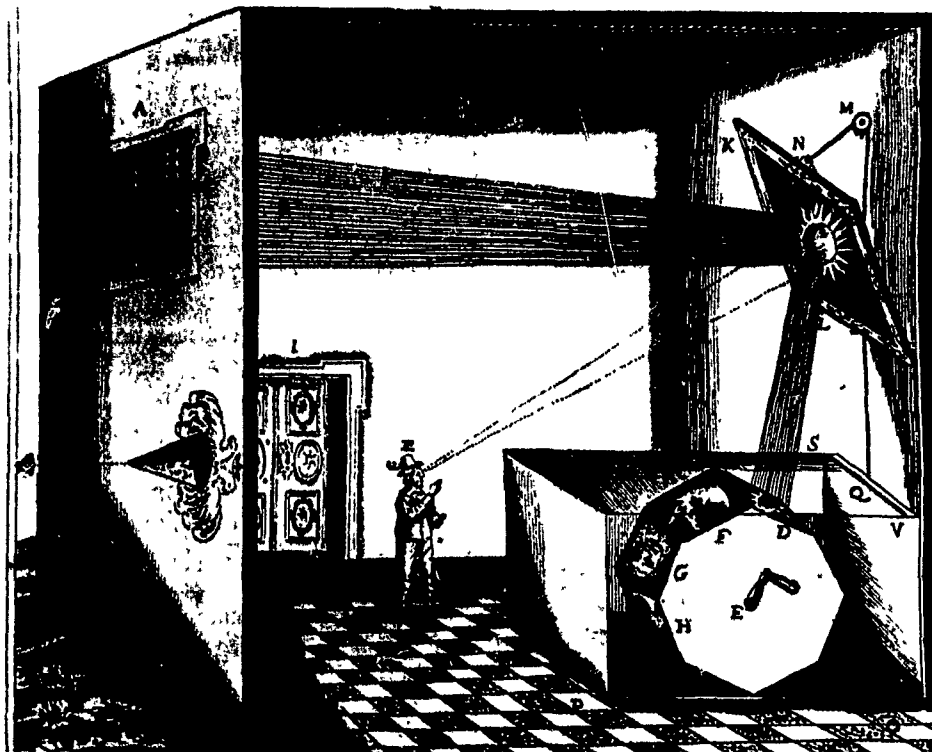
23. Once again, *du geste* is a play on *Cégeste*..

24. The final refusal to explain themselves captures Cocteau's struggle as a modern poet. Cocteau's Orpheus is misunderstood by the collective, always having to defend himself against the public. Continuing the "testament" theme in his film trilogy: *Le Sang d'un Poète*, *Orphée*, and *Testament d'Orphée*, the poet Orpheus/Cocteau is a victim, placed on trial to justify his actions. At the conclusion of the poem they refuse to explain, but in knowing the fate of Orpheus, the reader can predict the outcome of this decision.

³⁷ Cocteau, *The Infernal Machine and Other Plays* by Jean Cocteau, p. 103.



The 'single lens reflex' camera still uses a mirror at 45 degrees (a), magically capturing the image within the 'room'. The mirror momentarily moves into position (b), to allow light onto the plane of the film.



Another Kircher apparatus showing the reflection of an object through a mirror onto a recording device.
(Athanasius Kircher, *Physiologia Kircheriana Experimentalis*, 1680).

Following the commentary on *L'Ange Heurtebise*, it is clear that Heurtebise is a transformation of Hermes, and that Hermes is associated with the mirror in the film *Orphée*. Both Hermes and the mirror act as messengers between two worlds. Furthermore, the 'mirror world' is analogous to the reflection of light from the angel's wings, which are another kind of mirror. The key to the symbolic relation between Cocteau's imagery of the angel Heurtebise and the mirror in *Orphée*, lies in understanding that the mirror is the product of an amalgam, as the Hermaphrodite is the result of the alchemical union of the messenger Hermes and the goddess of love Aphrodite. The looking glass, or mirror, originated in the reflective surface of the water where the self-referential Narcissus gazed upon his own image.³⁸

As the mirror developed, the 'amazing' property of the looking-glass was its true reflection by reproducing the colors of the object through refraction. Soon, the process of backing glass with a surface to create a mirror was developed by the Venetians through a process called 'foiling', and the production of mirrors escalated with the technology of making plate glass. This production of plate glass, developed in France in the seventeenth century, involved pouring the molten glass onto an iron table and rolling it smooth, followed by the "foiling" of the glass. The creation of a mirror required 'magic' involving three substances: the glass surface, the foil (silver or tin, and later silver nitrate or aluminum), and lastly, the binding agent mercury - otherwise known as 'quicksilver'. An account of the process of making mirrors in an early 20th century shop illuminates the role of Hermes :

*On an inclined table surrounded by gutters, a carefully cleaned sheet of tin is spread, on which the mercury is poured. Under a light and rapid hand, the glass, pushed straight forward, drives before it the surplus of the metal, and the mercury, shut in between the tin and the glass, spreads out, adheres and amalgamates in a few minutes. But the glass has to dry for nearly eight days, under heavy weights, which completes the fixing of the tin foil.*³⁹

³⁸ The Egyptians and Greeks first polished stone surfaces in order to make reflections. Later, they polished metal surfaces to act as mirrors.

³⁹ Frances Rogers and Alice Beard, *5000 Years of Glass* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes co., 1937), p. 201.

The *angelos* Hermes is present, since Mercury creates an amalgam.⁴⁰ quickening the silver and forming a bond between the two surfaces. Since the fumes from mercury are poisonous, after 1855 the process was changed, replacing mercury by nitrate of silver.⁴¹ A further development was the use of aluminum for silver, since aluminum does not tarnish as do silver and tin. However, in the changing process, the symbolism of foiling with quicksilver has been lost, and remains an empty gesture to mirror manufacturers today. By contrast, Cocteau's use of mercury in the creation of the mirror has double meaning: first, Mercury's association with Heurtebise/Hermes, and second, the symbolic reference to the role of mercury in the process of crafting the mirror sequence in *Orphée*. Once more in Cocteau's *poésie*, the "thrice greatest Hermes" acts as messenger.

THE 'WATCHERS' PARTICIPATE

I would like to contrast Cocteau's *L'Ange Heurtebise* with two other works dealing with the question of the embodied Angel. The first work is the nineteenth century poem *Loves of the Angels*, by the Irish poet Thomas Moore. It is valuable to compare Cocteau's image of the Angel to that of Moore's poem, in order to unveil the idea that the angel represents both Becoming and the Other in Cocteau's *poésie*. A major aspect of the invention of *L'Ange Heurtebise* is Cocteau's understanding of the angel as corporeal and embodied in the Other. Heurtebise remains closer to the Fallen Angels, called "Watchers", written about in the *Book of Enoch*, than to the divine messenger of Christianity :

It happened, after the sons of men had multiplied in those days, that daughters were born to them elegant and beautiful; and when the Angels, the sons of heaven, beheld them, they became enamoured of them. ⁴²

⁴⁰ Refer to the note on page 44 for a discussion of Cocteau's creation of Heurtebise in the poem *L'Ange Heurtebise*, and his use of the amalgam.

⁴¹ The silver was protected by a coating of shellac, followed by two coats of weather-proof paint. The use of silver-nitrate was already mentioned in connection with the making of photographs; it was also used as an emulsion for the making of film in early cinematography.

⁴² See *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, trans. Michael Knibb (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1978). See chapter 7, section 2.

The poem *Loves of the Angels* begins by invoking the question whether the Fallen Angels were cast out of heaven, or if they fell of their own accord. Alluding to Plato's *Phaedrus*, where the soul is trying to escape the prison of the body, the act of love gives wings to the soul as it attains its *apotheosis*. In the poem *Loves of the Angels*, the stories of three Fallen Angels unfold, illustrating the struggle that the three angels have with the desire for embodiment, versus their knowledge of *transcendence* through the Divine Light.

The First Angel falls in love with the mortal Lea. Descending to view her more closely, he cannot unfix his gaze from upon her, lamenting "Why, why have hapless Angels eyes?"⁴³ The Angel recalls the shame of Eden, for all three Fallen Angels have the collective memory of Creation.⁴⁴ This First Angel guards a secret word which, in his inflamed passion, he passes on to Lea:

*I stamp'd one burning kiss, and nam'd
The mystic word, till then ne'er told
To living creatures of earths mould !⁴⁵*

I Lea repeats the incantation three times, sprouts wings and ascends to heaven, while the First Angel discovers that his spell has power no longer, for he has given away the celestial secret:

*Dead lay my wings, as they have lain
Since that sad hour, and will remain -
So wils the' offended God - for ever !⁴⁶*

The Second Angel with piercing glance, is Rubi, once member of the Cherubim, who guide Knowledge and Wisdom in the Celestial Hierarchy. Rubi recounts the creation of the first woman, and the foreshadowing of his doom:

*That crowning of creation's birth,
When, mid the worship and surprise*

⁴³ Thomas Moore, *Loves of the Angels* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1823), p. 19.

⁴⁴ The two Angels Cassiel and Damiel, in Wim Wenders film *Wings of Desire*, are similar in representing the collective memory, as does the mortal poet Homer on earth. Memory is related to continuity of culture, story-telling, and the creation of architecture.

⁴⁵ Moore, *Loves of the Angels*, p. 23.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

*Of circling angels, Woman's eyes
First open'd upon heaven and earth;⁴⁷*

This impression leaves Rubi in wonder and amazement, with a growing intensity to know what lay beneath the surface of Lilis. The Second Angel is aware that his sin stems from a desire for Gnosis, for he remembers from experience Adam's short lived happiness with Eve, whose name Chavah in Hebrew means 'life'. Ironically, it was "she who brought *death* into the world." Having this knowledge, Rubi falls in love with Lilis, visiting her first in her dreams:

*From the first hour she caught my sight,
I never left her - day and night
Hovering unseen around her way, ⁴⁸*

As a result of such intense visions, the mortal Lilis cries out:

*I do implore thee, oh most bright
And worshipp'd Spirit, shine, but o'er
My waking, wondering eyes this night,
This one blest night - I ask no more ! ⁴⁹*

Love is bitter-sweet, and in his amorous⁵⁰ love for Lillis, Rubi reveals many secrets that God had concealed from man. Suddenly, the Angel realizes that he must live in sorrow forever, for Death's shadow looms over the mortal Lilis, and the one he loves is destined to die. Moore's Angel is light Incarnate, the figure who through reflection lessens the Divine Light of Knowledge, and transmits this light in a form which is possible for mortals to look upon. To protect his love, Rubi furls up his wings in the presence of Lilis, since their pure light is too intense for her mortal eyes. Under the rise of the full moon, like the moon-worshipping Bacchantes from the myth of Orpheus, Lilis asks to feel just once the angelic wings upon her. In his burning passion, Rubi unfurls his wings, letting a thousand sparks fall from them. As his pure passionate flame is

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 52

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁰ The common root of love (*amor*), and death (*mors*) points to this inevitable connection between Eros and Thanatos, mentioned in connection with Hermes in Angelus I. "Both love and death are gateways; the moment of extinction in the pleasure of love resembles that of death." (Wilson, *Angels*, p. 86.)

transformed into earthly fire, Rubi burns Lilis to the quick, exclaiming : "I saw her lie, Black'ning within my arms to ashes !" ⁵¹ In her dying agony, she emblazes a kiss upon Rubi, leaving a 'scarlet letter' branded upon his brow for all to see. His fall was complete.

The Third Angel is from the Seraphim; the Spirits of Divine Love. He sang among the heavenly hosts of song, until he heard the tender song and lute playing of a sweet maiden. Zaraph falls in love with this female Orpheus, who is the mortal Nama. Having found his Other half in the spirit of Nama, Zaraph's punishment represents the fate of mankind -- to be a Fallen Angel:

*Their only doom was this - that, long
As the green earth and ocean stand,
They both shall wander here - the same
Throughout all time, in heart and frame -
....Subject the while, to all the strife,
True love encounters in this life -* ⁵²

In theory, the only sin the Watchers were guilty of was having turned their love away from the Creator to another creature. The Angel Zaraph allowed terrestrial passion "to cloud the mirror of his heart", the soul which reflects the image of God. However, having found the Other is the closest thing to Divine rapture, for Zaraph and Nama are :

*Like two fair mirrors, face to face,
Whose light, from one to the' other thrown,
Is heaven's reflection, not their own -* ⁵³

Moore turns the sin and punishment of the Watchers who return to earth into an allegory of reconciliation of the soul through love, with the aid of the Divine Music of the Spheres. Love united Zaraph and Nama in the union of the Other with the self, since "Music remains the element that links both Love and Religion

⁵¹ Moore, Loves of the Angels, p. 90.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 117-18.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 122.

to the skies,"⁵⁴ as Orpheus well knows. "The Angels minister to all men and to the things of Nature, purifying and uplifting them."⁵⁵ Together, the celestial hierarchy "moulds and perfects its participants in the holy image of God, like bright and spotless mirrors which receive the Ray of the Supreme Deity which is the Source of Light."⁵⁶

According to the *Mystical Theology* by Dionysius the Areopagite, the Divine darkness is an excess of Light, a deep but dazzling darkness. The ascending stages of prayer and contemplation are akin to Jacob's ladder, by which the soul moves from the Finite to the Infinite. Each Order in the Celestial Hierarchy participates in the Divine Light and receives their power in the measure of their capacity, so that the lowest possesses the power of the higher in a subordinate degree, creating a clear mathematical structure for the Nine Orders. The Celestial Intelligences are formed of three triads which in turn form a spiritual ladder of Nine Orders.⁵⁷ The first triad is comprised of *Seraphim*,⁵⁸ *Cherubim*, and *Thrones*. From the Seraphim, whose name indicates 'those who purge and consume through fire', flows Grace. From the Cherubim flows 'Knowledge and Wisdom', enabling a lucid understanding of Divine Immanence. From the Thrones flows 'the uplifting of the Soul'. The second triad is formed of *Dominions*, *Virtues*, and *Powers*, ordering Providence, and the third triad includes *Principalities*, *Archangels*, and *Angels*. The Orders are utterly above and beyond our passionate pleasures; their Desire symbolizes Divine Love. Following the visible and the invisible in Cocteau's work, the other aspect of the spoken is the unspoken, as the *Celestial Hierarchy* concludes with "the hidden Mysteries which lie beyond our view we have honoured by silence."⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Moore wrote that Love, Religion, and Music are all that is left of Eden upon Earth. Central to the Fall is the idea that Architecture begins once Man leaves Eden and has to build the city as a reflection of the cosmos

⁵⁵ Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies*, p. 18.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁷ The architecture of this thesis, with its three subdivisions within the triad of the *Angelus*, follows the structure forming the Nine Orders. However, in this study, Jacob's ladder brings us back down to earth at the end of our journey.

⁵⁸ The Seraphim and Cherubim are many eyed and many winged, which Cocteau refers to through his use of Azrael, who has great speed with his 4,000 wings and 70,000 feet.

⁵⁹ Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies*, p. 68.

The source of Moore's narrative is the *Book of Enoch*, which lists twenty of the two-hundred Angels called "Watchers" who made the observation that to experience the phenomenological side of life may be worth recreating the Fall. The Watchers were intended to look upon the earth; but as they decided to become participants, their leader Semyaza led the other angels to reveal various mysteries reserved for the initiated Celestial Hierarchy. Among the Fallen Watchers, Azazel taught mortals to make swords and armour, and to use make-up and ornamentation. Azazel, whose name signifies "God has made", taught artifice, and Amezarak taught mankind how to cut and gather herbs, and how to cast spells through magic. Tamiel taught women astrology, and PENemue revealed the secret of writing with pen and ink.

As Enoch sleeps and dreams, he is taken to the four corners of the earth, and revealed the architecture of the heavens. Enoch is shown the four winds, which are the Four Archangels supporting the Earth and the firmament. Like the New Jerusalem, the architecture of heaven has 12 gates, and four quarters; each quarter has a wind direction and a presiding angel, as depicted in Robert Fludd's seventeenth century *Medicina Catholica*. Witnessing the division the Lord has created between light and darkness, Enoch asks "is there any man who could know what is the breadth and the length of the earth? And to whom have *all its measurements* been shown?"⁶⁰ In his dream Enoch is revealed that the Angels are Divine Geometricians:

*And in those days, I saw long cords given to those angels, and they acquired wings for themselves, and flew, and went towards the North....They went that they may measure.*⁶¹

The *Celestial Hierarchy* are clad in priestly garments, holding sovereign rods, spears and axes, which represent dividing and conquering. As Divine Architects, they hold measuring lines and carpenters tools, which represent their power of foundation and erection. Dionysius writes: "no acute mind would have any difficulty at all in finding correspondence between the visible symbols and the invisible realities",⁶² a good caution to architects who no longer believe that the

⁶⁰ Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, p. 226.

⁶¹ Ibid., 148.

⁶² Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies*, p. 65.

visible and the invisible are two aspects of the same reality. Traditionally, the angels not only guard the proportions of the earth, and guide the Music of the Spheres which Orpheus accesses through his music and poetry, they also assisted Noah in building a wooden structure in the form of an "ark".⁶³ The task of releasing the waters under the Earth for the Flood was also the effort of the Angels. After the angels revealed the eternal secrets which were made in heaven, Enoch writes: "And the world was changed."⁶⁴ Enoch then prepares Noah for the Flood, which will purge the race of Giants who populated the Earth as a result of the Watchers' 'participation'. Then the Light gathered up the four archangels:

<i>Michael</i>	(ruler of Mankind)
<i>Gabriel</i>	(ruler of serpents, the Cherubim, and the Garden)
<i>Raphael</i>	(angel of the spirits of the Moon)
<i>Uriel</i>	(angel of thunder),

and the Lord instructed Raphael to bind Azazel by the hands and feet, and to throw him into the darkness. Finally, the Watchers were bound and thrown from heaven by the Archangels into the centre of the Earth. From that moment on, Azazel and the Fallen Watchers were deprived of speech and the power of the Logos. The progeny of the Watchers with mortal women were the race of Giants⁶⁵ who, having been revealed the Sacred Mysteries, pillaged and plundered, until annihilated by the Flood.

If mankind's punishment is mortality, then the Angel's punishment is eternity, for they too seek the Other. In both *Loves of the Angels* and *Wings of Desire* true fulfilment is achieved in union with one's 'mirror' soul. The theme of being led astray from the righteous path is common to the Fall, which is associated with the division between man and angels, as between heaven and earth. Gadreel led Eve astray, who in turn led Adam astray. Without the Fall, there would be no limits, and without limits there would be no need for Architecture. Man's fate created mortality, and in turn, his labour and toil have allowed him to construct walls, temples, and the city that Cain 'brought forth', named after his

⁶³ Note the connection between 'ark' and 'arc', as the angels inscribe the template with the tips of their wings which act as compasses. See illustration opposite p. 46.

⁶⁴ Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, p. 81.

⁶⁵ The race of Giants were some 11,250 feet tall according to Enoch.

own son, Enoch.⁶⁶ The parameters of death define life, and vice versa. Out of this condition grows the existential struggle that Cocteau deals with in the Orphic theme:

*Consider: the Hero continues,
even his fall
was a pretext for further existence,
an ultimate birth.*⁶⁷

This is Cocteau's understanding of the creative act, and of the angel Heurtebise. Without this meandering, mankind would have remained pure and immortal:

*For men were created no differently from the Angels, that they may remain righteous and pure, and Death, which destroys everything would not have touched them; but through this knowledge of theirs, they are being destroyed....*⁶⁸

Cocteau is aware of this history of angelology as he writes about the fall of the angels, and their implications on 20th century 'making'. *L'Ange Heurtebise* represents the possibility of *transcendence*, although quite different from the idea of the traditional Angel. Returning to an observation from Madame Bessonnet-Fabre, that angel and angle are synonymous in Hebrew,⁶⁹ leads Cocteau to project that :

*The fall of the angels may also be interpreted as the fall of the angles. The sphere is made up of an accumulation of angles. Angles and points liberate force. This is the explanation of the architecture of the Pyramids. The fall of the angles therefore signifies: the ideal sphere, that is to say, disappearance of the divine force, apparition of the human, the conventional.*⁷⁰

⁶⁶ The *Book of Enoch* concludes with the birth of Lamech's son, who is strange and not like a man, but all white and like the children of the angels of heaven. This is Noah, who represents hope, while the Lord cleanses all iniquity.

⁶⁷ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, p. 23.

⁶⁸ Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, p. 161.

⁶⁹ In German, the word "engel" denotes the angel and the angle. Jesse Browner, in his translation of *Journal d'un Inconnu*, believes that Cocteau was misinformed by the madame about the Hebrew origin of the word, p. 41.

⁷⁰ Cocteau, *Cocteau's World: an anthology of writings by Jean Cocteau*, p. 360. The analogy between body and earth, and of the earth as the ideal sphere, can be found in cosmogonies such as Plato's *Timaeus*.

The sphere that Cocteau is referring to is traditionally the ideal sphere, the ever moving, self moved *Primum Mobile*.⁷¹ In inventing his angel Heurtebise, Cocteau comes to realize that *transcendence* and *immanence* are ultimately consubstantial if we are to actively pursue the quest for embodiment. This is why transcendence marks the first half of the journey, but "what about *immanence*; what of the return?"⁷² The journey to the Angel, and the journey from the angel marks the complete journey; this cycle of eternal return puts one back in the *lebenswelt*, "a world now transformed in the light of their Angelic (enlightened) experience."⁷³

Jean Cocteau's personal life reflected Artaud's observation that "conscious or unconscious, the poetic state, a transcendent experience of life, is what the public is fundamentally seeking through love, crime, drugs, war, or insurrection."⁷⁴ Through Cocteau's search for love, his struggles with opium addiction, homosexuality and religion, he came to find his Becoming in poetry, uttering Orphic mysteries through his *poésie* for the initiated hierophant to decipher. Through our exegesis of Cocteau's two poems, coupled with his writings on the angelic role of the poet, his work offers us a view that Heurtebise is indeed an embodied angel. In Cocteau's world, the object and the symbol are together, just as the waking dream is a reality :

*The real, therefore, is always in process, always becoming rather than being: an amalgamation of data in nature, of games, of imagination, of subjective associations. Cocteau never denied the existence of phenomena outside the mind, but all facets of his work implied that he considered these phenomena as only a fragment of reality: the real as a whole simply cannot exist without taking consciousness and perception into account.*⁷⁵

Poésie is hinged upon the acts of perception and embodiment, two ideas we will explore in the final chapter on phenomenology versus the empty gesture.

⁷¹ The five senses are each represented by some aspect of the Divine: *sight*, the Divine Light; *smell*, the Divine fragrances; *hearing*, the Divine Inspiration; *taste*, Divine nourishment; and *touch*, Divine judgement. God remains the *Primum Mobile* .

⁷² Wilson, *Angels*, p. 186.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, p. 122.

⁷⁵ Crowson, *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau*, pp. 87-88.

ANGELUS III

The first two chapters were building the idea of the immanent return to the 'lebenswelt.' The second comparison of L'Ange Heurtebise is with a contemporary work on angels: the film Wings of Desire. The film confirms Cocteau's angel Heurtebise as a metaphor for embodiment, and an optimistic commentary on the future of making architecture in a meaningful way. In building his angel Heurtebise, Cocteau comes to realize that transcendental meaning is still possible; not transcendental meaning in terms of "transcendence" alone, but coupled with "immanence"

We have moved from Cocteau's re-casting of myth, to his invention of the figure Heurtebise, who reflects the idea of technêi, and finally in the third chapter to a re-definition of the idea of 'transcendence', in light of Heurtebise and the embodied experience.

Gravity is part of our being. He¹ tried endlessly to find some trick to get the better of it.

J. C.

EMBODIMENT VERSUS THE EMPTY GESTURE

In this chapter, our interest in the notion of embodiment in Cocteau's *poésie* is best expressed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose ideas on phenomenology re-evaluate the fullness of 'things'. He recounts how phenomenology goes beyond existentialism in its understanding of Becoming as being fully 'present', pointing out that "the perceiving mind is an Incarnate mind."² When speaking about the complexity of perception, he writes:

*I grasp the unseen side as present, and I do not affirm that the back of the lump exists in the same sense that I say the solution of a problem exists. The hidden side is present in its own way. It is in my vicinity.*³

It is with this understanding that Merleau-Ponty develops a theory that the senses work in a unified, *cenesthetic* manner. In a similar spirit, let us approach phenomenology in the work of Cocteau :

*Phenomenology seeks to rise above both idealism⁴ and materialism⁵ by discovering a third way by making intuition the true source of knowledge. It is an attempt to reconcile the traditional oppositions between body and soul, sense and reason, subjectivism and objectivism. It attempts to as full a description of direct experience (existence) as possible. Most modern existentialists are phenomenologists. Modern phenomenology and humanistic existentialism move in the paths of immanence philosophy.*⁶

¹ Cocteau is speaking in this instance about the dancer Nijinsky; however, this idea could apply to any act of contemporary architecture.

² Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, trans. J.M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 3.

³ Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 14. Merleau-Ponty wrote another series of essays published under the title *The Visible and the Invisible*, which also discusses the duality of phenomenology

⁴ *idealism*: any system of thought or philosophy in which the object of external perception is held to consist, either in itself, or as perceived, of ideas. (O.E.D.)

⁵ *materialism*: the opinion that nothing exists except matter and its movements. The opinion that the phenomena of consciousness and will are wholly due to the operation of material agencies. (O.E.D.)

⁶ This and the following definitions are from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989.



The Apotheosis of Homer,
(John Flaxman, 1778).



Flight into the self,
(*Le Sang d'un Poète*, 1930).

Four important words emerge in connection with this work so far:

Immanence: Latin: *im-manere*, signifying to dwell within. To remain.

Transcendence: to climb over or above, beyond. Surmount, to rise above. Of the Deity: above and independent of the universe. A metaview.

Epiphany: to show, a manifestation or appearance. The Epiphany is the feast of the magi, 12 days after Christmas.

Apotheosis: completely to make a God of. The canonization of saints, deified or immortalized.

These four terms can be grouped into a fourfold which frames the notions of transcendence and apotheosis in a twentieth century context :

immanence	transcendence
epiphany	apotheosis

Merleau-Ponty's theory on the 'primacy of perception' acknowledges that the issues of immanence and transcendence are not capable of being reduced to either one, or the other, but that they constitute a paradox, or in the terms put forward so far in this thesis, a duality :

*Immanence, because the perceived object cannot be foreign to him who perceives; transcendence, because it always contains something more than what is actually given. And these two elements of perception are not, properly speaking, contradictory.*⁷

Although we divide things for analysis, the act of synthesis is required in order to get back to the presence of fullness. Through an essay on the development of the child in the world,⁸ Merleau-Ponty sheds light on the narrative of *Le Sang d'un Poète*, and the relationship between the self and the Other. The child actually gets to know itself by 'mirroring' the Other, analogous to the angel of Cocteau :

⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 16.

⁸ "The Child's Relations with Others", trans. William Cobb, *The Primacy of Perception*, pp. 96-155.



The Angelus, is the light 'Incarnate'
(Jean-François Millet, 1859)



Cocteau building his 'Angel' 'Heurtebrise', as an act of *technê*
(*Le Sang d'un Poète*, 1930)

*It is thus necessary that, in the perception of another, I find myself in relation with another "myself", who is, in principle, open to the same truths as I am, in relation to the same being that I am. And this perception is realized. From the depths of my subjectivity I see another subjectivity invested with equal rights appear, because the behaviour of the other takes place within my perceptual field.*⁹

Ironically the perception of the individual is defined by the body/world¹⁰ duality, that is to say 'being in my body', while 'being in the world'. Following this direction, Merleau-Ponty comments that "history is other people; it is the interrelationships we establish with them, outside of which the realm of the ideal appears as an alibi."¹¹ Significantly, he moves beyond idealism in an attempt to grasp the simultaneity of perception, and the consubstantiality of form and content in things. Samuel Beckett said "form is a concretion of content", and Merleau-Ponty similarly expresses this duality as "matter is pregnant with its form, which is to say that in the final analysis every perception takes place within a certain horizon and ultimately in the 'world'."¹² Merleau-Ponty's insight forces one to re-think an approach to architecture from a phenomenological awareness.

Our reading of Cocteau's work suggests that he does not deny the existence of what we may call 'reality', but rather that man lives in the worlds of the ideal, the imaginary, and the real at the same moment.¹³ The emphasis on phenomenology follows what Merleau-Ponty refers to as 'maintaining contact' with 'the thing itself'. Similarly, the contemporary *Angelus*¹⁴ not only represents the idea of the Angel; it is the light Incarnate manifested through the phenomenological angel Heurtebise. Through Cocteau's phenomenology, the notion of transcendence is manifested in the Other, symbolized by Heurtebise. This corporeal angel is the Other, and thus the embodied person lives through

⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 18.

¹⁰ In this context, the notion of body/world is equivalent to the notion of the self/other.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 12

¹³ The categories of the ideal, imaginary, and real can be found in Merleau-Ponty's theory. See *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 40

¹⁴ I am referring to "The Angelus" by Jean François Millet (1859). By contrast, Cocteau's angel is fundamentally different, regarding the question of corporality.

the flesh of the world, since "to perceive is to render oneself present through the body."¹⁵

Merleau-Ponty's idea of *immanence* is closely related to Joyce's notion of *epiphany*. Whereas the traditional ideas behind transcendence and *apotheosis* are about leaving the *lebenswelt*, the Joycean epiphany stresses a phenomenological moment of transcendence, where a character is dealing with an object, in the context of an experience, and "its soul, its whatness leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance."¹⁶ Thus, the narrative undergoes "an instant of illumination" in which object and symbol are one, giving "meaning to the otherwise trivial narrative."¹⁷ This moment of revelation is essential, for the epiphany becomes a 'portal' connecting *transcendence* to *immanence*. Thus, the study of 'phenomenon', such as the phenomenology of roundness, reveals a 'thing' that appears. For Cocteau, this epiphany is manifested through the appearance of Heurtebise. What Joyce and Cocteau share as modernists is the notion that 'form and content are essentially inseparable', but more importantly, they present an interpretation of the modern world, which finds Joyce re-creating language, Merleau-Ponty radically re-formulating Aristotelean realism in a full theory of the senses, and Cocteau 'building' his angel figure in *Le Sang d'un Poète* ¹⁸

Earlier I mentioned the idea that the pre-requisite for remaining 'poetic' was to hold the world in a constant state of wonder. This condition is elusive, for a problem with ritual is that following many generations of repetition, a gesture or word tends to lose its meaning, and the ritual then passes on to habit, finally leading to the empty gesture. An example of this passing of ritual to habit was presented in the previous chapter, in the explanation of the symbolism of "mirror-foiling" using quicksilver, and its subsequent loss of association with Hermes. The origin of the word mirror is in the Latin verb *mirari*, meaning 'to look'. Extensions of this word include admire, image, magic, and miracle. The magician and shaman perform 'miracles' through *taumaturgy*. Miracles are

¹⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p 42.

¹⁶ Marvin Magalaner & Richard Kain, *Joyce, the man, the work, the reputation* (New York: Collier Books, 1956), p 82

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Joyce writes *Ulysses* during 1914-21, Cocteau's film is based on ideas he formulated in the early 1920's, and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is presented circa 1946.

performed by those who have faith in what we tell them. In *Journal d'un Inconnu*, Cocteau relates that Picasso stated that everything is a miracle, "that it's a miracle that we don't dissolve in our bathtub"¹⁹ as sugar does in a glass of water.

As a way of trying to recover the embodied gesture, modern philosophers such as Ortega y Gasset have had an interest in uncovering meaning through etymology and the study of intentionality. In *Man and People*, Ortega y Gasset beautifully recounts the origin of the handshake, which we now re-enact out of reflex action and custom. The original meaning of the handshake was to demonstrate to the other party that one was not bearing arms. The showing of one's open palm was a sign of solidarity, introducing the hand salutation. Ortega points out that as gestures pass on to mere social conventions they are "characterized not only by being meaningless but by something sadder still - that they once had a meaning and have lost it."²⁰ If embodiment is meant to express spirit through gesture and action, the antithesis of the embodied gesture that Merleau Ponty speaks about is the empty gesture. As a result, each of us has shaken hands with a disembodied soul who offers a hand resembling wet toast.

Similarly, the loss of meaning in architecture is attributed to our era's cultural narcosis, which creates these empty gestures. The gestures remain unreactable, just as myth remains opaque for us today. Although ritual and ceremony recall the origins of myth, ironically the continual repetition of a gesture eventually leads to forgetfulness. We need only look to an example from mythology to illustrate the cultural narcosis from which we suffer. We are familiar with the colloquialism "Achilles heel", as representing a person's vulnerability. However, do we remember that Thetis, the mother of Achilles, dipped the infant Achilles in the Styx in order to render him immortal? Having to hold him by some part of his body, she held him by the heel, originating this term which has lost its meaning through repetition of use. Mythology is a storehouse of these types of origins.

¹⁹ Jean Cocteau, *Diary of an Unknown*, trans. Jesse Browner (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1988), p. 44.

²⁰ José Ortega y Gasset, *Man and People*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1957), p. 197.

The contemporary condition as one of 'forgetfulness' is what Antonin Artaud was concerned with in his writings which tried to direct the theater away from the primacy of the written text back to a language of gesture and emotion. The distinction between author and director that he felt so determined to integrate, can be seen as an analogous division between the architect and those who follow the building through to its realization. The idea of breath, (*anima*), and animation concerned Artaud, for "action is the very principle of life."²¹ This action is manifested through the gesture in theatre, and through the cipher or symbol in Cocteau's *poésie*. The written text dies or transforms through the performance where spectacle brings audience and performance together. Is this not similar to the symbols of the gothic cathedral which gave way to the spatial experience of gravity and light once built ?

Cocteau's re-enactment of ritual continually recalls the seeds of the original story, while undergoing transformation that ultimately leads to an entirely new story. Following the tradition we saw in Ovid, he writes that fable differs from history in that the fable or myth undergoes subsequent transformation in the telling of the story from person to person, incorporating the mistakes of the copyists and orators as an integral part of the narrative:

*Our readiness to mythify and to accept myth is incredible. A falsified truth very quickly becomes our gospel. We add our own two cents worth, and little by little, a picture is painted that bears no relation to the original.*²²

Constantly aware of this duality, one of the ironies in the re-casting of myth in Cocteau's work is that his *poésie* recalls the dichotomy of memory and forgetting. Memory involves not only what we remember, but also what we have forgotten,²³ "coaxing forth the music of memory"²⁴ and creating myth's universal aspect, allowing it to be taken as 'truth'. Mythology as sacred history allows for interpretation; it points to the fact that a truth can be multiple. Cocteau contrasts the mythologist to the historian, as he does the poet to the

²¹ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, p. 148.

²² Cocteau, *Diary of an Unknown*, p. 132.

²³ "I wonder whether a memory is something you have or something you've lost " (Dialogue from the film *Another Woman* by Woody Allen)

²⁴ Cocteau, *Diary of an Unknown*, p. 132

philosopher, and in so doing he offers a mnemonic device for architects, who are often more concerned with the facts than the content:

*A square in Verona where fables are embodied is far more alive than any in which monuments are erected to the dead*²⁵

In contrast to the empty gesture, the art of the poet is always concrete, for unlike philosophy, which deals with abstraction, the poet/artist builds ideas with images which inevitably return to the world of 'things'. A passage from the poetry of Rilke illustrates that like architecture, poetic images depend on their materiality:

*Look, we don't love like flowers, with only a single
season behind us; immemorial sap
mounts in our arms when we love*²⁶

THE ARCHITECT AS STORY-TELLER

Recalling that the origin of style comes from the *stylus*, an instrument used for writing, the tradition of architecture is to record or re-tell the stories of the human condition. In their original meaning, the shaman, the magician and the poet shared an interest in representing the collective unconsciousness. The possibility of transcendence through the immanent character of 'things' leads us into a comparison between Cocteau's *Heurtebise* and Wenders' character Damiel in the film *Wings of Desire*, which sends the two angels Cassiel and Damiel²⁷ on a quest for embodiment. These two angels are the supreme 'recording angels', having witnessed creation since the beginning of time and the separation of light from chaos. Recorded history resides in their knowledge as the collective memory. In *Wings of Desire*, the poet Homer represents what our culture has forgotten, since a form of cultural narcosis has taken place. The problem with this cultural state of forgetfulness is that it is accompanied by a general amnesia.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 143

²⁶ Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, p. 39

²⁷ In the *Dictionary of Angels* (Davidson), Cassiel is the angel of solitudes, and of temperance, one of the four cardinal virtues. Damiel is noted as the angel of the 5th hour.

The parallel between *Wings of Desire* and Cocteau's *Orphée*²⁸ includes three figures who play a large role in relation to Orpheus as poet and lover. They are the poet Homer, the circus acrobat Marion, and the ubiquitous child. The poet Homer is the earthly equivalent of an angel; he is the memory of the community embodied in the persona of the story-teller, the one who has not forgotten, and thus protects the history of the nation. Homer's role is that of shaman, for "in primordial societies, shamans act as repositories of language; ... epic and oral poetry derives ultimately from the shaman's or hero's voyage to the Other World."²⁹ Furthermore, the role of the poet (before the recording of the written text), was to keep myth and history alive. This, in turn, is the *métier* of the architect...not the architect who is poetic...but the architect as poet.

Though not a fallen angel, Homer is related to the two guardian angels Daniel and Cassiel, who have been present since the original chaos began its metamorphosis into the ordered universe. In *Wings of Desire*, the angel is a mnemonic device which allows us to transcend our forgetfulness. As patrons of memory, and the symbolization of light, the angels in *Wings of Desire* are not corporeal, although children perceive them in the same way that they conceive of imaginary friends or make snow angels.

After "Watching" for what seems to be an eternity, the angel Daniel decides to trade in his wings for embodiment and mortality, in order to feel the warmth of a cup of coffee between his hands, the heat of friction from rubbing one's palms together in the cold, the smoke from a cigarette and the grasp of a handshake. From what we have said about phenomenology, these acts are not merely prosaic, they have potential for transcendental meaning. Following the Watchers in the *Book of Enoch* who wished to descend to earth in order to experience the flesh of the world, Daniel falls to earth in order to pursue his Other self, realizing that the human condition is to be a fallen angel, "the Incarnate I". Daniel represents the Angel in man, since "in angels, man realizes his full potential for transcendence, and finally escapes the cosmic, only to realize that he

²⁸ The cinematographer for *Wings of Desire* is a man called Henri Alekan, who was also one of the cameramen for *La Belle et la Bête* in 1946

²⁹ Wilson, *Angels*, p 99



Daniel descends from the heavens to the earth
(Wim Wenders, *Wings of Desire*, 1988)



The Acrobat desires angelic flight, ascending to heaven from earth
(*Wings of Desire*, 1988)

himself is the cosmos.³⁰ The ascent is marked by *transcendence*, but the return is marked by *immanence*.³¹ As in *Loves of the Angels*, it is ultimately love that ignites Damiel's decision to go beyond transcendence and fulfill his immanence through the Other. The touch of the nape of her neck is enough, and after his union with Marion, he writes "Je.. sais...maintenant..ce..qu'aucun..ange ne sait."³²

In *Orphée*, Azrael and Raphael are two aspects of Princess Death. This triad is comparable to Homer and Marion who, similarly, form two aspects of the character of Damiel. As Homer is the mortal version of the poet/angel, Marion is the mortal version of the acrobat/angel.³³ Bearing wings, she trains on the trapeze, not unlike the angel/acrobat in Picasso's curtain for *Parade*. Her desire for flight, and her role as intermediary hovering between earth and sky places her, like Homer, as an earthly angel. An invocation of the Muse/Angel is necessary to reveal the act of transcendence, where one loses oneself in a fusion with the Other, in love or in the act of creation.³⁴ This is what connects *Wings of Desire* to both *Le Sang d'un Poète* and *Orphée*. Although Cocteau's two films appear to be contradictory to some critics, never is the descent into the self an act of self-referentiality in Cocteau's work.

The third aspect of Damiel is the child, the 'pure' spirit who perceives the consubstantiality of the visible and the invisible: the child who makes snow angels, and catches snowflakes on his eyelashes and tongue when the first snow falls -- for every snowfall is a first. The child has not yet developed the pre-reflective action of the adult. Thus, the child in *Wings of Desire* represents more than a wish to return to the naïve state of childhood, as the voice of Damiel suggests:

When the child was a child,

³⁰ Wilson, *Angels*, p. 186.

³¹ The terms *transcendence* and *immanence* are used in the sense Merleau-Ponty uses them, which are defined in the beginning of this chapter.

³² "I now know what no angel will ever know."

³³ There is a direct reference from Cocteau to Nietzsche's 'Rope Dancer', who hovers over the abyss in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

³⁴ As in Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*, the earthly acrobat strains toward the touch of the Angel.

*he walked with jangling arms
 He wanted that the brook be a river
 And the river, a great torrent,
 that this puddle be the sea
 When the child was a child,
 he didn't know he was a child,
 Everything for him had a soul,
 and all the souls were one
 When the child was a child,
 he didn't have opinions about anything,
 he didn't have habits,
 he often sat cross-legged,
 took off running,
 had a cowlick
 and didn't pose when photographed.* ³⁵

The poetic idea of objects becoming familiar, like old friends, suggests that we have relationships with objects as we do with people. How can a child personify a stick to be an airplane, or a doll to be a playmate? The architect must see beyond the visible the way a child might, but at an informed level. Wender's film is a commentary on the seriousness of adults and society at large, who no longer perceive poetry in all things. This problem is related to Merleau-Ponty establishing that a theory of embodiment was indeed a problem of perception. For the poetry in 'things' is not gone, it remains - it is not even hiding.

Wings of Desire is ultimately about holding the world in a constant state of 'wonder', this is what the artist and the child share. The task of drawing the essence out of an object is to draw out our experience. The architectural plan is a drawing of angelic flight, for it places the viewer in an imaginary position above the horizon, recalling our role as angelic geometers. Appropriately, the plan is called a 'projection'.

Part of the architect's *métier* as artificer, furthermore, includes the idea of play in culture³⁶ whereby we take on another role. The architect as *Homo ludens* has many forms. Chance, the aleatory, and spontaneous writing attempt to approach the idea of play as a creative process. This aleatory process is typified by Jean-

³⁵ The translation of this french passage from *Wings of Desire* is ours

³⁶ It is important to note that play is specific in duration.

Luc Godard, who was inspired by Cocteau's *Orphée*. The poem "Letter to my friends to Learn how to Make Films Together", directs the notion of the artist as the informed child in Godard's own work as a film-maker.

*I play
You play
We play
At cinema
You think there are
Rules for the game
Because you are a child
Who does not yet know
What is a game and what is
Reserved for grownups
Which you already are
Because you have forgotten*

*That it is a child's game
What does it consist of
There are many definitions
Here are two or three
Looking at oneself
In the mirror of other people
Forgetting and learning
Quickly and slowly
The world
And oneself
Thinking and speaking
Odd game
That's life ³⁷*

The adult notion of the ludic³⁸ includes mimesis; man imitates, he invokes the Muses through gestures, music, or *technê*. He calls down the order of the cosmos onto the field; as magician he instills wonder. He becomes shaman and holds the secrets of one initiated into certain Orphic mysteries. Or he becomes bureaucrat, shuffling papers from pile to pile, and going from project to project without 'seeing' a project transforming through time as it is being born. How

³⁷ Jean-Luc Godard, Godard on Godard, trans & ed Tom Milne (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1972), pp 242-43

³⁸ *Ludic*. Poetry is sacred, for the same reason that eroticism is sacred, it is ludic, that is to say, useless (O.E.D.)

can architecture embody our experience if the act of design is abstracted and distanced from the site, and from the materials and processes by which the idea is given form? Children make tree-houses and snow forts; they don't draw plans for them distinct from the making. What the child has is time, which is antithetical to the logic of late-capitalism, having reduced the production of architecture to a mere process of mechanization, with its classic division of labour and time.

ANGELS IN THE ARCHITECTURE : or notes towards a PRAXIS

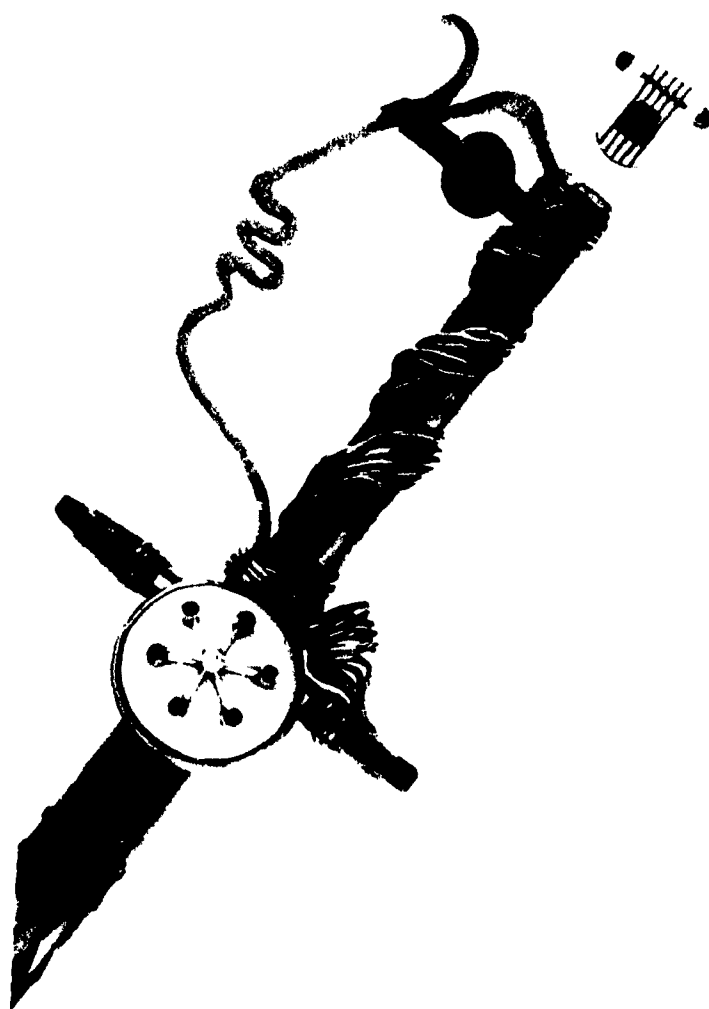
Our exegesis of the symbol of Hermes in Cocteau's work reveals that the inter-relationship between the body and the soul has important implications in the making of architecture. The architect Carlo Scarpa understood the symbolic role of Hermes as *angelos* by introducing an intermediary material in his architecture. Prior to this work, I thought that the 'reveal' in Scarpa's architecture was used to separate two different materials, but through the study of Orpheus, Hermes, and Eurydice, have come to realize that the reveal joins the two materials in a triadic union. Furthering this idea, if we imagine that architecture is alive, the next time that we deal with a piece of stone we may work it differently. The difficulty of architecture is that the manifestation of the invisible is through the tactile, material qualities of architecture, although "what is essential is invisible to the eye."³⁹

One has to train oneself as an architect to look at the object for itself in its totality; that a piece of marble or stone is alive, and therefore has a duration in time. The Japanese clothes designer Yohji Yamamoto, knowing from experience that cotton material is alive, said that he wished to design 'time' into his clothes, so that they would transform into something else ten years later, yet still have their Being.⁴⁰ A thing will be new, it will age, and it will decompose as a process of returning to the earth.

If the material quality of architecture develops out of an attitude toward *technê*, what about the objects that aren't alive? I can only respond in the spirit of

³⁹ An idea that author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote, and I have borrowed

⁴⁰ This reference is from another Wenders film, *Carnet de Notes sur Vêtements et Villes*, 1989



Symbolic sword head depicting Orpheus, with Cocteau's familiar motifs of the lyre, the celestial star, and distorted time (Cocteau and Picasso, 1955)

surrealism, that every object has the potential for personification. Recalling Cocteau's use of 'magic realism' through his human caryatids and candelabra in *La Belle et la Bête*, the world is always animated. In this light, the Other can be a block of stone for the architect, as Beatrice was the Other for Dante. The phenomenologist's realization is that we can only get at the essence⁴¹ or soul of an individual, through the flesh of the body. They represent a unity; that is to say, one cannot subsist independent of the other, any more than could shade and shadow. Aristotle offered this response to the question of the soul's embodiment:

That is why we can wholly dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one. it is as meaningless as to ask whether the wax and the shape given to it by the stamp are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter. ⁴²

If we hold the Aristotelean belief that an idea is expressed through its form, we immediately go beyond all formalistic thinking that is obsessed with taxonomy or preoccupied with 'styles'. There has always been something essential about architecture that transcends either materialism or idealism. Poetry in architecture does not depend upon subject matter or programmatic concerns; the content of architecture grows out of the human imagination, as an integral part of the human condition. (Even 'flights of fancy'⁴³ begin from the base of the individual in relation to others). Since architecture and poetry share the concern of framing human situations, and perceiving the reality beyond the visible, there should not be an architecture which we name poetic, and another which we call prosaic. The PRAXIS that formed the original professional practice was the integration of *technê* and *poësis*, reflecting the task of both poet and architect.

The most difficult question to respond to is whether architecture has any further potential for transcendental meaning in what is ironically called a 'post - enlightenment' society. The question of meaning is expressed through the comparison between the self and the Other, the idea of the Angel as fulfilment, and the origin of *poésie* for Cocteau. His universe is full of the understanding

⁴¹ In Aristotle, soul is a thing's essence. Derived from essence, sense had two meanings: sense potential and sense actual. The soul was viewed by Aristotle to be a combination of the Elements.

⁴² Aristotle, *Introduction to Aristotle*, p. 172.

⁴³ Those 'projections' of the Imagination that De Quincey and Cocteau experienced under the influence of opium.

that meaning still exists in the careful crafting of objects and scenarios, in the original sense of *technê-poiesis*. Although *mimesis* has shifted meaning, it still remains a mirror. For the modern architect, making is the ritual in the sense that it is a form of self-knowledge, which Cocteau made explicit in *Le Sang d'un Poète*. This self-knowledge remains a form of *transcendence*, but due to phenomenological experience and the tectonic qualities of architecture, making remains grounded within the *lebenswelt*. A plea for a return to things in themselves, and to the mystery of the ordinary, is the key to the poetry of Francis Ponge, phenomenology, and the questions of existence. A passage from the poetry of Ponge summarizes the dilemma of our contemporary condition, within which we can still make architecture:

*The great signs are not only in the skies.
And there is no fatal instant, or rather every
instant is fatal.
It isn't only on the last morning that a sensitive
man savors in an exact light a cigarette or a glass
of rum.
He awakens in this disposition each day.*⁴⁴

This thesis argues that the *praxis* of architecture has been lost, or perhaps only forgotten through cultural narcosis. As the role of Poetry was Cocteau's obsession, our domain is the role of Architecture. We will not cease until we find the hiding place of Architecture, which is built *poésie*. Everything else is building.

*

⁴⁴ Francis Ponge, *Things*, trans. Cid Corman (New York: Grossman Publishers Inc., 1971), p. 114.

Although not intended to be an 'operational' theory of any kind, this work holds phenomenological concerns regarding the *poésie* of architecture. We could begin with being forever 'present' in what we do. That would be a start. To transcend the *self* through simple rituals: to water one tree; to partake in a meal as recalling an important celebration; not to be afraid to make snow angels. These activities form the ground of our experience. Poetically framing the human drama is still the role of the architect. The current pursuit of an architecture without meaning is an impossibility, since architecture's very existence presupposes the necessity and desire of human artifice.

To hold the world in a constant state of wonder is the pre-requisite for any further action...

Appendix

I'm on the trail of the unknown.

jean cocteau

ORPHEUS:

I begin the descent.

The space of the imagination does not perceive scale as it is reflected in outward reality. A shift occurs, akin to Freud's idea that time does not exist within the unconscious.

Coleridge's term "the willing suspension of disbelief" attempts to prepare us for the other kind of journey we are about to embark upon.

Traversing the same text or model in different ways, like so many forking paths that turn back upon themselves. This is the texture of the city. The idea that we are always reading or writing the same book, always re-doing the same project has been posited by Borges and Calvino. How does one construct a text or a project that is multi-valent, ambivalent, and achieves a density such that it falls in upon itself, pulling the viewer-participant into the project involuntarily.

Perception and experience would be *immanent*. The very notion of being on the outside looking in would not be an issue. Until you were on the inside. Then like Alice, once upon the other side of the mirror, the universe will be reversed. Being on the inside looking out is akin to man's initial state of standing firmly on the *terra firma*, and gazing upon the *firmament*.

Being on the outside looking in

..... Being on the inside looking out.

A mirror game. Two worlds, dialectically opposed, yet twin phenomena. The movement between these two polarities marks the space of discourse, and by extrapolation the space of *a r c h i t e c t u r e*.

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