



Hannah Assouline, Agence Opale, Paris

so, Proust, Hemingway, Stravinsky, and Tennessee Williams. Already published to great critical acclaim in France, Arnaud's penetrating and deeply researched work reveals a uniquely gifted artist while offering a magnificent cultural history of the twentieth century.

CLAUDE ARNAUD is a writer and recipient of the 2006 Prix Femina Essai. He is the author of *Chamfort: A Biography*. He lives in Paris.

LAUREN ELKIN is a lecturer in English and comparative literature at the American University of Paris.

CHARLOTTE MANDELL is an award-winning translator of more than thirty books.

"Jean Cocteau was the artistic ringmaster of twentieth-century Paris. Claude Arnaud has written the definitive—and fascinating—life of this artist and impresario, and along the way has clarified mysteries about his sexuality and his collaboration with the Nazis."

—EDMUND WHITE

"Arnaud's incisive and immensely readable biography of the brilliantly witty albeit flawed Cocteau is a triumph. Thank God this essential book has finally been translated. Read it and wallow in twentieth-century art and letters."

—JOHN RICHARDSON, author of *A Life of Picasso*, vols. I–III

"Claude Arnaud's cornucopian biography give us a marvelous, if in some ways consolingly familiar, portrait of the upper echelons of Parisian aristo artistic circles. . . . Simply everybody is here: from Mistinguett to Marcel Proust, Robert de Montesquiou to Anna de Noailles, Misia Sert to Natalie Barney, we wander through an enchanted period when talent seemed to earn immediate rewards, spiced by an undercurrent of discreet homosexuality. . . . Claude Arnaud's work is welcome for reminding us just how remarkable its subject was. It is also welcome for its argument that the twentieth century has left few artistic survivors."

—LACHLAN MACKINNON, *Times Literary Supplement*

Jean Cocteau

CLAUDE ARNAUD



Jean Cocteau

A LIFE

CLAUDE ARNAUD

Translated by Lauren Elkin and Charlotte Mandell

Unevenly respected, easily hated, almost always suspected of being inferior to his reputation, Jean Cocteau has often been thought of as a jack-of-all-trades, master of none. In this landmark biography, Claude Arnaud thoroughly contests this characterization, as he celebrates Cocteau's "fragile genius—a combination almost unlivable in art" but in his case so fertile.

Arnaud narrates the life of this legendary French novelist, poet, playwright, director, filmmaker, and designer who, as a young man, pretended to be a sort of god, but who died as a humble and exhausted craftsman. His moving and compassionate account examines the nature of Cocteau's chameleon-like genius, his romantic attachments, his controversial politics, and his intimate involvement with many of the century's leading artistic lights, including Picas-

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