

THE NOSTALGIA OF THE POET AN HOMAGE TO GIORGIO DE CHIRICO¹

Gabriele Tinti

“Do you know who the most profound poet is? You will probably immediately say Dante, Goethe or others.
This is all a misunderstanding. The most profound poet is Friedrich Nietzsche”.
(Giorgio de Chirico, 1910)²

“Death is the only piece that moves freely in all directions on de Chirico’s chessboard”.
(Jean Cocteau, 1928)³

I

There is no doubt that Nietzsche was the most profound poet. The first, real, transformed poet, turned against himself, against any kind of superficiality, imaginative leap or the empty intellectualism of which literature is full. The first to count on his own forebodings, his own interior conflicts, expanding their dangers, making them into a work of dizzying depth. Because there is no poetry outside a terrible foreboding, an open wound, a gaping abyss, a loss. It cannot exist in a contented work. Less so in a linguistic office study, in a contrived game with words. It may exist, rather, only when the singer is driven by a fatal solitude, an irremediable wound, a blind alley. It certainly does exist when the speaker is a “rope stretched over an abyss” (Nietzsche), an affliction whose voice is a howl, “blood, sincerity, flames” (Cioran). When that voice manages to reveal the profound comprehension of existence as a fate of torment, of the inevitability of suffering, of our impotence before pain, of the impossibility of replicating it, of the knowledge of having to endure; of being exposed and having to resist. Comprehension that is an ability to feel the terrible vanity of everything, our “stretched rope”, our “horrible and immense” abyss (Leopardi), the illusory nature of faith itself in eternity. On reaching these latitudes of the spirit nothing remains to thought but to sink, fail, lose, go mad; to life nothing but recognising itself as a “shadow dream” (Leopardi). It is then that love dies, desires and sighs subside. This is how the thoughts unravel, the heart decays. This is how one becomes a phantom that ceases living, that is tempted by death. It is there that it happens, there where everything is vain and everything vanishes, in that chasm where there is no longer any past or future, where there will no longer be any poetry, any possible memory of man.

1 Gabriele Tinti has composed three poems on inspiration from of Giorgio de Chirico’s paintings, *The Nostalgia of the Infinite* (1914), *The Uncertainty of the Poet* (1913) and *Ariadne* (1913), respectively in the collections of Peggy Guggenheim Collection, TATE Gallery and Metropolitan Museum of Art. The poems were read by actor Burt Young at the Metropolitan in New York. The videos of the readings are being produced by Primal, New York.

2 G. de Chirico, letter to Fritz Gartz, Florence 26 December 1910, published in “*Metafisica. Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico*” n. 7/8, 2008, p. 562, original in German, p. 544.

3 J. Cocteau, *Il mistero laico*, Edizioni SE, Milan 2000, p. 65.

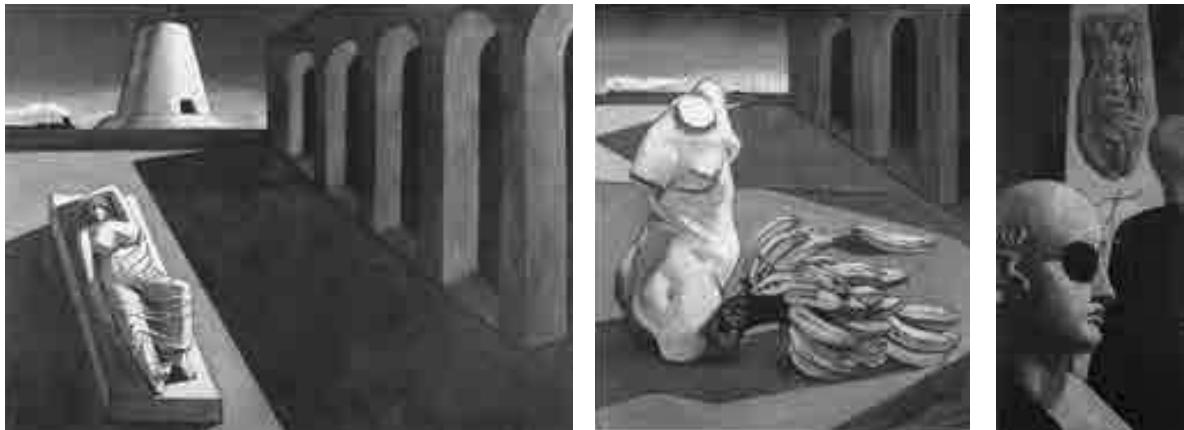


fig. 1 G. de Chirico, *Ariadne*, 1913, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

fig. 2 G. de Chirico, *The Uncertainty of the Poet*, 1913, TATE Gallery, London

fig. 3 G. de Chirico, *The Nostalgia of the Poet*, 1914, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice

II

The blind, divining, guardian poet of stone seated before the temples, the Apollo who has in himself Dionysus, who implies Dionysus, turns into Orpheus, that poet, the poet of de Chirico, of Nietzsche, has always made me feel a profound nostalgia for a mythical age of art and poetry in which these could really sing, an age when youths, bards - quickly destined to decline into rhapsodes and finally into the scribblers that we have become - used the living word with a divine voice. After that there was no more psalmonising, no more presentiment, no more divination. No subsequent song, no poem, no art of today will really be able to shine once it has been compared to the first great season of poetry as we represent it. They cannot do so because the imagination is dead from an excess of words and an overdose of images that are emptied of meaning. The icons of today, words, writing, have lost their religious intensity, their “aura”, and are none other than a running back to that magical “sign of that which has disappeared”,⁴ of that time when “the gods walked among men”.⁵ Indeed, writing is none other than solipsist practice, psychological protection, unpleasant degeneration if compared to the song, to the prediction that was born from fear and at the same time from the joy of living, great sentiments and great emotions. It is probably true, as Baudrillard wrote, that “art as such will perhaps have been only a parenthesis in the history of mankind”.⁶ And the poet may by now be nothing but a jester because “the whole (of our) arpeggio”⁷ is now reduced “to a murmur, a dash of fantasy”. Certainly we survive. Others will come “because the earth creates them again as it has always created them”.⁸ But the lyre was irretrievably placed by Zeus among the constellations because no-one, after Apollo and Orpheus, was worthy of possessing it.

4 J. Baudrillard, *La sparizione dell'arte*, Abscondita Editore, Milan 2012, p. 48.

5 “Götter wandelten eins”, Friederich Hölderlin, *Le Liriche*, Ed. Adelphi, Milan, p. 265.

6 J. Baudrillard, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

7 F. Nietzsche, *Così parlò Zarathustra*, Adelphi, Milan 1983, p. 156.

8 Goethe, *Faust II*, III 3.

Ariadne

you are a princess
sleeping
on a perfect day

Dionysus will come
and you will wake
from this your
deep sleep

in this deserted
square
there is only you
waiting
tired even
of dusk
of that shadow
you already know
that you have always
been dreamily awaiting

Dionysus will come
do not torture yourself

the city thickens
all around

the sun slowly dies
in an endless sunset

from afar
a locomotive puffs

beyond the wall
a yacht
seems lost.

The Nostalgia of the Poet

I am the voice of the sunset
nourished by the dead
scorned by the living

I hear the sea
I see the morrow
my body is stone
and absorbs pain

soon
the sun will end soon
the air is heavy with expectation
the earth asks only
a little quiet

I will go away
as soon as
day breaks

I will only burn
in this scrap
of horizon.

The Uncertainty of the Poet

away beyond the last journey
heading south aboard
a train already gone
beyond that torso
abandoned in the shade
by distant divinities
gone the tedium
the last stop
the happiness of the banana tree
the delight of fruit
gone that square
cleared of markets
of solemn clowns
of our lies
gone the imagination
our heroes
all the stories
gone the poetry
in this last frontier
held in the shadows
in search of the night
where time collapses
discarding every halo
all reason
all brief
brief euphoria.