

# Giorgio de Chirico - André Breton

## Duel à mort

Giorgio de Chirico

Letters to André and Simone Breton, to Gala and Paul Eluard  
Paul Eluard-J.T. Soby Correspondence

by  
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*For the publication  
of the  
correspondence  
with Breton, I  
would like to thank  
Mme. Aube Elléouët  
Breton and  
the Bibliothèque  
Jacques Doucet,  
Paris. For the  
Eluard letters, I  
would like to thank  
Prof. Julien  
Bogousslavsky,  
Lausanne.  
Eluard-Soby  
correspondence:  
The Giorgio  
and Isa de Chirico  
Foundation  
Archives, Rome*

The Breton, Paul and Gala Eluard correspondence contains sufficient material to warrant a reinterpretation of de Chirico's relationship with the city of Paris from just after the war to the year 1925. It allows us to see the outline of intellectual changes, even devastating ones that would apply force to the natural development of his artistic thought. In the end, it is the key to a phenomenon which would involve de Chirico in an all out war against fakes. In the meeting of minds through the correspondence between de Chirico and surrealists it is the role of the Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti that comes to the fore. It was he who arranged the purchase of canvases left by de Chirico in 9, rue Campagne-Première by Breton for 500 lire in 1921. Moreover, Ungaretti is his middleman with Jean Paulhan, the head of the Gallimard's "Nouvelle Revue Française", with the latter being Breton's publisher. Before this, de Chirico and Breton had no direct contact. The founder of Surrealism was aiming at taking over Guillaume Apollinaire's role as dedicating himself to de Chirico. Ungaretti was also a part of Apollinaire's circle, and it is he who is central to the negotiations, having lived himself in Rue Campagne-Première where de Chirico left several works after returning to Italy because of the war.

There are many surprises for those who are curious about such things in this most clamorous of twentieth century artistic "affaires", when Breton declared that de Chirico's artistic career was finished in 1917. The letters read like pages from a mystery novel. The first thing to notice is that Breton and de Chirico discuss cultural and business affairs with an emphasis not so much on his early paintings, even if Breton tried to acquire as many as possible, but more on his new "matter" phase. De Chirico's development brought back the poetics of dreams, essential to Breton with regards to de Chirico's first *Metafisica*. It is precisely this dovetailing coming from a transformed metaphysics that would see Breton and his peers leave Tristan Tzara's dadaist magazine, "Littérature", and move towards Surrealism. This commingling of dreams and matter is an original phenomenon and nothing to do with "Rappel à l'ordre". From the correspondence we can see that Breton and Max Ernst are the trend's two representatives in their close attention

to de Chirico. De Chirico would write about his advances in the study and techniques of the antiquity. Breton acquired his works and designs. One *Lettre* of the correspondence was published in March 1922 in the first issue of the new series of "Littérature", as directed by Breton: it speaks of a vision completely about "painting", shared by Max Ernst and, among others, by Picabia. By publishing *Une lettre*, Breton himself was giving support to de Chirico's research on antiquity and technique. His influence earned the support of the gallery-owner Paul Guillaume, by then distant from de Chirico, who organized a historic exhibition presented by Breton on March 21, 1922.

The year 1922 was an idyllic period for de Chirico and Breton, with the former handing over a significant number of works to the latter, including *Le revenant*. The painting with this title, sold by Breton to Jacques Doucet,<sup>1</sup> has been declared a fake by the artist in the 70's there was a trial. With regards to this title, a large question mark forms around the painting *Le cerveau de l'enfant*, one of the essential works of Surrealism. The letter to Gala, dated February 10, 1924, confirms the delivery of two paintings bought by the Eluards, *Le cerveau de l'enfant* (a new one) and *Trovatore*, but in the letter he also protests that that real title of *Le cerveau de l'enfant* is *Le revenant*. When it was shown in Geneva on December 26, 1920 at the Exposition Internationale d'Art Moderne, whose Italian section was curated by Enrico Prampolini, the work had already been re-named *Le cerveau de l'enfant*, perhaps by Breton<sup>2</sup> (see the evening organized for "Littérature", on February 23, 1920, at the Palais des Fêtes and de Chirico's position which was the most popular in "Littérature"), or by Paul Guillaume, whose label is attached to the back. On January 12, 1922, de Chirico wrote to Breton proposing the sale of *Revenant* "which is still in storage with a dealer." The dealer is Mario Broglio, the publisher of the magazine "Valori Plastici". The painting is listed no. 3 in the receipt of works delivered by contract dated October 1919.<sup>3</sup> The contract with Broglio ends on June 7, 1922.<sup>4</sup> In March, Breton reproduced the painting to illustrate his *Rêves* which follow de Chirico's *Lettre* in "Littérature".<sup>5</sup> In the same issue of "Littérature" a text by Roger Vitrac describes *Le revenant*, second version (*dans la chambre*): "... If he returns, with the close eyes, with his legs resemblings columns, his body like a white jelly-fish, has on eyebrows, beard and moustaches as postiches".<sup>6</sup> In the drawing *Revenant*, and in *Le cerveau de l'enfant*, de Chirico mentions in his letter that the two heads with their eyes closed are the same figure, namely, Napoleon III. In the letter to Gala of February 10, 1924, the artist informs her that he has created *Cerveau de l'enfant (Revenant)* for her. In January he makes a homage to her of the original drawing of *Revenant*, published with the title *Le revenant*, in the monograph by the artist published by "Valori Plastici" also dedicated to her. De Chirico really sold *Le revenant*, second version, to Breton. De Chirico gives the painting *Le revenant* (II) to Breton (see the letter of January 12 1922) to be sold to Doucet. Breton pays the painting. But where is this painting now? The painting with this subject purchased by Doucet is a fake. Maurizio Calvesi has posited reasons to prove *Revenant* was a fake. He

<sup>1</sup> This was obviously a copy of the real painting sold by de Chirico to Breton. See Maurizio Calvesi, *De Chirico dall'Arno alla Senna*, "Ars", Milano April 1999, pp. 59-60. The true and proper errors of perspective, the incongruencies, the horizontal line, are all radically different than the drawing originally given to Gala. On the "tragic story" of the fakes made by surrealists, see Wieland Schmied, *De Chirico und sein Schatten - Metaphysische und surrealistische Tendenzen in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Prestel, München 1989, and Paolo Baldacci, *Giorgio de Chirico. Betraying the Muse*, New York-Milano, ed. Paolo Baldacci, 1994, pp. I-III.

<sup>2</sup> See the presentation of de Chirico's paintings of February 29, 1920 at Palais des fêtes and subsequent evaluation of de Chirico's on the magazine.

<sup>3</sup> V. Maurizio Fagiolo Dell'Arco, *Giorgio de Chirico. Il tempo dei "Valori plastici" 1918-1922*, Roma, ed. De Luca 1980, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> A. Breton, *Cinq rêves* "Littérature" no. 1 New series directed by André Breton, March 1, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> R. Vitrac, *Giorgio de Chirico*, "Littérature", no. 1, March 1 1922, pp. 9-11.

quotes the testimony provided by Filippo De Pisis, who, in an article in "Gazzetta ferrarese", dated February 12, 1918, and then in a 1920 conference, always referred to *Revenant* as a painting "already shown in Paris", thus before the 1918 date; moreover, he states that in the background of the painting there is a glimpse of a town square, which does not appear in *Revenant* whereas one does appear in the background of *Cerveau de l'enfant*.<sup>7</sup> We must believe De Pisis because it was he who actually made a copy of this painting (*Il Poeta folle*, 1918). These titles make for an ugly story. De Chirico contests from the beginning this bad surrealist habit of changing the titles of his paintings, as Paul Guillaume had done and would continue to do so: it twists the meaning of his works and sets the stage for an ambiguity that is dangerous for the market.<sup>8</sup> Closely related to this distortion of titles is the fact that the originals were very often hidden in order to promote the copies that were circulating.

The drawing of *Revenant* dedicated to Gala by de Chirico in January 1924, has two dates: 1917-24. The addition of the second year is a way to establish a relationship "still present" with respect to all his previous work. As a result he permits himself the right of re-using and re-elaborating his own images: the right of an artist, a type of copyright. This is a statement of a principle that introduces the problem of the time: whether intellectual property belongs to the author or the buyer.

The letters to the Eluards, kept by the poet between the pages of his personal copy of *Hebdómèros*, narrate the role of Eluard and his wife Hélène Dimitrovna Diakona (Gala) in the affair. A disconcerting discovery surrounds *Le Muse Inquietanti*, the painting chosen by the surrealists as the primary accusation against de Chirico as a "counterfeiter of himself". Two letters that follow here, when compared with a letter from Eluard to James Thrall Soby, reveal a deception carried out against the American scholar who published them in the second edition of his monograph on de Chirico. The artist's letters dated February 23, and March 10, 1924, letters which are generally accepted to have been sent to Gala, were not in fact addressed to her, but to Simone Kahn, Breton's wife. The negotiation to redo the *Muse* takes place between de Chirico, Breton's wife and Breton as well. Eluard tells Soby that the two letters of February 23 and March 10, 1924, were for Gala. Soby publishes the two letters as letters to Gala in the chapter on the *Muse Inquietanti*.<sup>9</sup> With regards to redoing the *Muse*, there is also a copy of the same letter in the papers in Eluard's archives. But Eluard and Breton had not agreed together on this. A review of Soby's book on "XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle", edited by Gualtieri di San Lazzaro, with the latter himself at war with de Chirico, carries the letter about the *Muse* provided by Breton as a letter sent to M.me André Breton (see below). The letter is in complete accordance with Breton's accusations against de Chirico and a facsimile copy of the letter was presented as proof against the artist.

In a well-known letter that was really sent to Gala,<sup>10</sup> dated June 4, 1924, de Chirico, apparently, is worried about Breton's reaction since Castelfranco was selling the *Muse* at a very expensive price.<sup>11</sup>

This makes me wonder: was de Chirico truly worried or was he doing this in or-

<sup>7</sup> See footnote no. 1.

<sup>8</sup> In 1933, Michele Guerrisi wrote about this dubious episode of Breton's fake titles, presumably having spoken directly with de Chirico: M. Guerrisi, *La nuova pittura. Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, Derain, De Chirico, Modigliani*, Torino, ed. dell'Erma, 1932, pp. 64-65.

<sup>9</sup> J. T. Soby, *Giorgio de Chirico*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955, p. 134.

<sup>10</sup> See M. Fagiolo, *Giorgio de Chirico, Le rêve de Tobie. Un interno ferrarese. 1917. Le origini del Surrealismo*, Roma, ed. De Luca, 1980, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> "I was twenty-four", the professor recounts, 'I had just graduated and like many young people, found myself with little money' Vallecchi accepted an exchange: I gave him a still life by Sofici and he, *Le Muse*. In 1924 de Chirico gave an exhibition in Paris and Breton was enthusiastic about the painting and the artist. He asked me if I would allow a copy to be made and I agreed, stupidly. I seem to recall that Breton sent me a thank you letter... How many more copies were made after that, I do not know". As told by Giorgio Castelfranco in an interview reported in "La fiera letteraria" year XLIII n. 17, April 25th, 1968 pp. 10-12.

der to put himself in the position of having to do a new version of the *Muse Inquietant*? De Chirico had shown that to keep an iconographic painting unchanged – *Piazze d'Italia*, etc. – was a way of highlighting the changes in his use of forms. On the other hand, to have deceived Soby as to the true origins of the second version of the *Muse* only goes to reinforce the surrealist position against de Chirico. In *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (1928) Breton confirms that he can prove that de Chirico was a counterfeiter of himself, thereby legitimizing the counterfeiting of old and new works by de Chirico made by surrealists. A sculpture, *Arianna*, inspired by *La lassitude de l'infini* (1912) in Paulhan's possession, appears in the 1955 edition of the book.<sup>12</sup> De Chirico declares it as a fake. Soby made public. The new letters to Gala and Breton prove Max Ernst carried out initial research with de Chirico and learnt about the secrets of pictorial technique. Max Ernst is, for Breton, the champion of Surrealism after the break with de Chirico. This, despite the fact that pictorial technique and the "matter" would become the official reason to contest de Chirico's new style of 1925. With regards to the use of "cultured" materials, Gala has notable influence. First with Ernst whom she considered to be her "devoted servant" when she meets de Chirico in 1923, and then with Salvador Dalí, who would become her companion in 1929, she was prodigious in giving advice on the use of precious materials in painting, a fact which was in full contradiction with Breton's declarations.

On December 1, 1924, the first issue of "La Révolution Surréaliste" contains the two versions of Metaphysics, both the late Ferrara version of *Rêve de Tobie*, and the research in progress on romantic metaphysics in the *Furies s'apprêtant à poursuivre un assassin par un clair après-midi d'automne*. On the cover there is a photo taken by Man Ray in the Surrealist bureau: de Chirico's painting *Le rêve de Tobie* is hanging over Breton's head while a book is weighing down on de Chirico's head. Accompanying the cover's "dream" painting is the issue's first written piece, *Rêve*, in which the artist describes a dream of an encounter with his father. This is followed by Breton's *Rêve* which would be the last moment of common understanding between Breton and de Chirico. Cracks in the foundation began to appear immediately: on January 10, 1925, de Chirico accuses Breton of boycotting a monograph conceived by Giorgio Castelfranco for which Breton refuses to make available the photos of metaphysical works that only Breton has in his possession: this was to be a clear "brief answer" to the *Muse* affair. At the time, despite Eluard's attempts, it is Breton who owns the greatest number of "early" de Chirico paintings. The only work from the metaphysical period that the artist still owns is *L'après-midi d'automne* (1913) which he would never sell. He tells Breton and Eluard that he has already sold it (see below). The situation deteriorates as the show presented by Giorgio Castelfranco at the Léonce Rosenberg gallery approaches [May 1925, (23 *opere recenti presentate da Giorgio Castelfranco*) 23 *recent works presented by Giorgio Castelfranco*]. Breton acts as a go-between between de Chirico and Paul Guillaume, whose behaviour continues to irritate the artist. Rosenberg does not stand by idly, so that the control over the produc-

<sup>12</sup> The sculpture doesn't appear in the first edition of Soby's book *The early Chirico*, Dadd, Mead & Company, New York, 1941.

tion of de Chirico's work is no longer clear. Because of disagreements with Guillaume, de Chirico decides that he will no longer work exclusively with one dealer. The new paintings open a new area of competence for the artist, and Rosenberg attempts to claim exclusivity over them, but does not succeed, due to the tripartite rapport between himself, Breton-Eluard, and Guillaume. Breton "oversees" de Chirico's new production in galleries which, like the ones in Brussels, recycle the works from the two Parisian galleries. Morise's review of the Rosenberg show in no. 3 of the "R.S." tears it to shreds; on August 3, de Chirico sends a brusque letter to Breton in defense of his explorations. The letter announces his intention to move to Paris in order to be able to defend his work more actively. It is to be his last letter to Breton. The following November 14, the painting, *Le revenant*,<sup>13</sup> is one of the three shown in the exhibition *La peinture surréaliste* organized by Breton at the Galerie Pierre. In January of 1926, de Chirico signs a contract with Guillaume in which he grants him the right to see his works first and agrees to sell him 50% of his new works. On June 4, 1926, Guillaume organizes the show "Giorgio de Chirico" show financed by Albert C. Barnes. The show *Oeuvres Anciennes de de Chirico* ("Early Works by de Chirico") in 1928 at the Galerie Surréaliste marks the final confrontation. At the same time, *Les adieux éternels* 1923 is the eloquent title of the painting by de Chirico which concludes his series of paintings published by Breton in the book *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*.<sup>14</sup> Why does Breton, who is clearly aware of the market for the "new" paintings, defame them from the exact date of June 1925 onwards? Let us look at the true conflict of interests. The control over the sales of de Chirico's work at this time is one of the objectives, but not the only one. There are also ideological and political reasons that I will now investigate.

### De Chirico-Breton-Eluard A Chronology of Their Relationship

#### 1916

One day when André Breton is visiting Guillaume Apollinaire, he discovers de Chirico. Many years later this discovery inspires a story. The poet claims that he saw the painting *Le cerveau de l'enfant* from a bus as it hung in the window of Paul Guillaume's gallery. Awestruck, he gets off of the bus, goes into the gallery, and the story begins. This story mythologizes the origin of Breton's movement, Surrealism. This version of events was told by Breton to Charles-Henry Ford in an interview 1942 in New York for the August issue of "View." In the *Lettre à Robert Amadou* of December 1st 1953, forgetting his long and bitter quarrel with the artist, Breton describes the work as "the most prodigious revelation of quotidian magic. It has exceptional shock value. Just imagine that one day on a bus, as I was passing by the window of the old Paul Guillaume gallery on the rue La Boétie where it was exhibited, I was so struck that I stood up and got off of the

<sup>13</sup> *Le revenant* sold by Breton to Doucet, is photographed in Doucet's house ("L'illustration" Paris, March 3, 1930).

<sup>14</sup> Breton puts the false date 1917 to the painting in his possession.

bus to see it. It took me a long time to stop looking at it and from that moment I was determined to acquire it". [see below: letter dated January 12, 1922]. "A few years later, on the occasion of a de Chirico exhibit in the same gallery, this work left my house and took its place in the window of the gallery. Another person who was passing by had the same reaction... It was Yves Tanguy who only then began to paint."

Breton continues: "At that time when surrealist painting was searching for an identity, this painting, completely immersed in the 'second' sight, had a unique effect on me and on my friends. Max Ernst inherits this legacy in the major work *La révolution la nuit*" (1923).<sup>15</sup>

The story goes that Breton actually met de Chirico's works at the home of Apollinaire. Breton entered this house for his first time on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1916. On the walls there were many paintings, "but especially two by de Chirico, which I could not pull myself away from, because they so deepened my mental horizons".<sup>16</sup>

On his side, Ernst is looking to de Chirico at least from 1919 (see *FIAT MODES - pareat ars*, 8 lithographies).

## 1918

November 3, Paul Guillaume, the buyer that Apollinaire refers to de Chirico, presents, at the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, eleven works by de Chirico during the interval of an event organized by the association "Art et Liberté". On November 9, Apollinaire dies. Breton adopts the term *Sur-naturalisme* or *Sur-réalisme*, the subtitle of the Apollinaire's lyrical drama *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, a synonym for "Metaphysics". Sent to Paris to complete his military service, Giuseppe Ungaretti, friend of de Chirico and Apollinaire, reaches Paris the same night and takes part in the wake.

## 1919

Staying in the same building of de Chirico's old studio in 9, Rue Campagne-Première, Ungaretti transfers de Chirico's remaining paintings to a neighbour in the same building, Jean Paulhan. In his autobiography as told to Leone Piccioni, the poet recounts the following story over several occasions: "He knows de Chirico e Savinio who live in Paris. De Chirico had had the very same house in the same tenement in Rue Campagne-Première... De Chirico had left Paris to return to Italy and his studio, closed due to the war, had remained full and cluttered with his canvases. One day, Ungaretti saw these canvases piled up in front of the tenement porter's office: he asked for an explanation, knowing that the landlady wants to rent out the apartment left by de Chirico (who had never been heard from again after the armistice). Upon finding this clutter of works, she had no idea what to do with them. Ungaretti took them: the house is small and you could hardly move around in it, but he took those paintings. And then he exhibited them: he sold them for small amounts of money, to Breton and to Eluard. He then sent the monies off to de Chirico who was – I believe – living in misery. He also told the

<sup>15</sup> "Revue métaphysique," no. 27, Jan.-Febr. 1954. In A. Breton, *Perspective cavalière* (Paris, Gallimard, 1970) pp. 38-45.

<sup>16</sup> *Perspective cavalière*, op.cit., p. 16.



artist of his find: 'What should I do?' he wrote to him. 'Do whatever you want with them,' was the response. 'And so, I saw that all those paintings stacked on top of each other were not from his metaphysical period, but from his previous period, that of *Piazzes*, the period which is now the most valuable. There were about twenty of them. The porter wanted to sell them at a flea market 'Marché aux puces', the parisian 'Porta Portese'. I said: 'You can't sell them: these are paintings by a friend of mine'. She said, 'Okay.' And so, I took them up to my room. I wrote to de Chirico and he wrote back saying, 'Keep them.' And I said no: 'I cannot keep them. I can sell them and then I'll see what they get.' De Chirico was very poor in that moment. 'And I will send you whatever monies I receive.' And so I sold them. Breton bought them, along with people who became very rich from them. They are those paintings that now are almost all in America".<sup>17</sup>

Ungaretti and Breton were very close by then: "The friendship was in its strongest period between '19 and '20, after which following some disagreements. The metaphysical pictures by de Chirico, that is, those paintings that he painted in the few years before first World War, during his first stay in Paris, became a model to study and interpret for Breton." Along with Aragon and Soupault, Breton founds "Littérature", the first *petite revue* after Apollinaire's death.<sup>18</sup>

Ungaretti collaborates in the June issue (issue no. 4) of "Littérature". Paul Eluard buys several de Chirico paintings from Paul Guillaume with the help of Ungaretti. Guillaume has in his possession the paintings de Chirico left in Paris, those that de Chirico sends from Italy, and also the theoretical manuscripts which are now known as the *Eluard-Picasso Manuscripts*, given by Eluard to Picasso, and parts of which would also go to Jean Paulhan.

## 1920

Breton reviews the monograph, *Giorgio de Chirico: 12 Tables in Phototype*, in "Valori Plastici" that appears in the January 11<sup>th</sup> edition of "Littérature" (year II). Parts of the text are used as an introduction to the 1922 show at the Paul Guillaume gallery and the text also appears in Breton's *Les pas perdus* (published by NRF, Gallimard, 1924). On January 23, Breton presents the work of de Chirico in an evening organized by "Littérature" at the Palais des Fêtes.

## 1921

In February Ungaretti writes to Paulhan: "I praise the coincidence that brought us together, and which helped me guide you to de Chirico's quiet fantasies".<sup>19</sup> Along with the studio paintings, the destination of the "guided" visits has been Guillaume's gallery, where he exhibited works such as *Le revenant* (*Le cerveau de l'enfant*) which Breton was so enamoured by.

In July, Breton is commissioned by the tailor Jacques Doucet to create his new collection in which he would include, among other things, Picasso's *Le Demoiselles d'Avignon* and Le Douanier Rousseau's *Charmeuse de serpents*.

At the end of the year Ungaretti writes to Paulhan from Rome, discussing issues

<sup>17</sup> L. Piccioni, *Vita di Ungaretti*, Rizzoli, 1970, pp. 82-83.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>19</sup> Lettere di Giuseppe Ungaretti a Jean Paulhan and edited by L. Rebay, "Forum Italicum," Roma, vol. VI, no. 42, June 1972. Letter sent from Paris, 64 Rue Dorian.

surrounding "La Ronda" and the "NRF"; he adds, on de Chirico's behalf: "De Chirico asks you for a large favour. He needs money and would be willing to hand over the paintings now in your possession for a total of one thousand francs. I think that our friends Breton, Aragon, Soupault (perhaps Gide) and others might be willing to acquire them. One of these paintings would be yours, of course, as a sign of gratitude."<sup>20</sup> Paulhan bought one of the paintings, and received another as a gift for his efforts in selling the others (*La statue silencieuse*, 1913; *Ariadne*, 1913). He also owned a few drawings and later makes public a plaster cast of *Ariadne* which de Chirico declares a fake through an article in which he responds to provocations published in "Time" in 1961.<sup>21</sup>

On November 19, he signs an agreement with Mario Broglio, the editor of "Valori Plastici", entrusting him with thirty-four paintings and forty-nine drawings with exclusivity in Italy and abroad.

## 1922

Breton's January 1922 "Littérature" text reappears in the catalogue of the de Chirico show at the Paul Guillaume gallery (March 21-April 1) held in the painter's absence. The show includes such works as *Le rêve de Tobie* which was purchased by Eluard. "Littérature" begins a new series, directed by Breton and Philippe Soupault. In the first number, dated March 1922, *Cinq rêves*, a story of dreams dedicated to de Chirico, appears, along with a reproduction of de Chirico's *Le cerveau de l'enfant* first version of *Le revenant*. The title *Le cerveau de l'enfant* compares the "return" with Freud's method. From this point of view the "dream" brings over the unconscious child's world. In this issue Roger Vitrac publishes *Giorgio de Chirico*; de Chirico publishes *Une lettre*, corrected in French by Breton, who in this way "makes official" de Chirico's new experiments on "matter". Breton publishes *Interview with Prof. Freud in Vienna*.<sup>22</sup> It is Surrealism's overture to dreams. The two "fathers" of the dream are Freud and de Chirico. De Chirico is the first messenger of dreams in France. Freud appears for the first time in French in 1921 and Breton goes to interview him in Vienna on October 10<sup>th</sup> 1921 with Eluard and is disappointed.<sup>23</sup> De Chirico becomes the point of reference for the poetics defined by Breton as Surrealism in issue no. 6, dated November 1, 1922, with *Entrée des mediums*: he writes, "this word [Surrealism], which we did not invent, is used by us with a specific meaning. To us it designates a certain psychic automatism which corresponds to the state of dreaming, which is difficult to define". Thus, it supercedes Dadaism, to which the first part of the magazine is dedicated. *Le cerveau de l'enfant* (*Le revenant*) is the key work of the movement. And in this new series, thanks to the association with Picabia, Marcel Duchamp, and de Chirico, the proportion of the magazine devoted to art grows.

In the second issue of the new series of the magazine, Breton affirms: "Dadaism, like so many other things, was just a way for some people to sit down together".<sup>24</sup> There is an understanding between the poet and Max Ernst that reductive Dadaism must be liquidated. Already in a letter dated April 10 1921, before an ex-

<sup>20</sup> Late 1921, Via Carlo Alberto, 8, Rome. In *Correspondance J. Paulhan-G. Ungaretti*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> G. de Chirico, *The Great Lies of "Time"*, "Candido", Rome, April 9, 1961, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> "Littérature", new serie, no. 1, march 1, 1922. Reprint in *Les pas perdus*, p. 255.

<sup>23</sup> See also S. Freud, *Introduction à la psychanalyse*, trad. S. Jankélévitch (Paris, Payot, 1922).

<sup>24</sup> A. Breton, *Lâchez tout*. In *Les pas perdus*, v. A. Breton, *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Marguerite Bonnet, in collaboration with Philippe Bernier, Etienne-Alain Huber, and José Pierre (La Pléiade, Paris, Gallimard, 1988) p. 262.



hibition of his *peintures* presented by Breton Au Sans Pareil on May 2nd, Ernst retracts his interest in Dadaism, representing a prelude to his return to painting based on technique.<sup>25</sup> On June 7, de Chirico rescinds his exclusive contract (in Italy and abroad) with Mario Broglio, the editor of "Valori Plastici". De Chirico is in Florence, where Giorgio Castelfranco replaces Broglio as his patron. In August de Chirico renounces 1.231 lire which represents the rest of his contract with Broglio in order to get *Natura morta metafisica* and *Le Muse Inquietanti* back. Breton experiments with hypnotic sleep in order to capture the contents of dreams. On September 25<sup>th</sup> 1922 he begins these experiments. In "Littérature" no. 6, November 1st 1922, Breton publishes the hypnotized sleep states of René Crevel, Benjamin Péret, and Robert Desnos.

On November 17, Breton gives a conference at the University of Barcelona on Francis Picabia in relation to the Picabia show being held at the Dalmau gallery (Nov. 18-Dec. 8) and which would appear later in *Les pas perdus* (1924).<sup>26</sup> He "consecrates" de Chirico and his pictorial technique while defending him from the accusation of "academicism": "Ce peintre, qui vit en Italie et dont, pour un observateur peu pénétrant, les dernières oeuvres semblent faire à l'académisme le plus stérile concession sur concession, nous tient sous le coup d'une trop émouvante promesse pour que jamais nous poussions nous détourner di lui avec indifférence."<sup>27</sup> Here he meets Joan Mirò.

Max Ernst's painting *Au rendez-vous des amis* (1922, Museum Ludwig, Köln) shows de Chirico with some drapery next to Gala Eluard both represented like a Greek pillar, similar to the body of Napoleon III in the drawing *Le revenant* and *Le Muse Inquietanti*, and, as well, to the drapes in *Le Revenant-Cerveau de l'enfant*. Gala's skirt repeats the movement of the drapery that de Chirico is holding. Both, de Chirico and Gala, on a column's pedestal.

<sup>25</sup> Reproduced in Cat. André Breton. *La beauté convulsive*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Apr. 25-Aug. 26, 1991, p. 107.

<sup>26</sup> Ed. NRF, Paris, Librairie Gallimard, 1924.

<sup>27</sup> "This painter, who lives in Italy, and whose latest works, to a superficial observer, might appear to make concession after concession to the most sterile form of academicism, holds us under the effect of a moving promise which renders it impossible to turn away from him indifferently." A. Breton, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1, Paris, Gallimard, 1988, p. 299.

<sup>28</sup> Coll. "Littérature", Paris, 1923.

<sup>29</sup> Letter to Eluard dated August 29th, in *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 1182.

<sup>30</sup> G. de Chirico, *Memorie della mia vita (1945-1962)*, Milano, Bompiani, 1998, p. 134.

<sup>31</sup> The account of the Ernst-Eluard-de Chirico relationship is provided by Paolo Baldacci, op.cit., 1994, p. 228.

## 1923

Between July and August Breton works on *Clair de terre*<sup>28</sup>, poems written between 1920 and 1923, preceded by *Cinq rêves*, which is dedicated to de Chirico. He asks de Chirico to do illustrations. He writes to Eluard: "Yes, de Chirico answered, he will send me the three or four drawings I have asked for".<sup>29</sup> In the end, this does not occur, and it is Picasso who participates with an engraving.

On the occasion of the Biennale Romana II, Paul Eluard goes to Rome with Gala to see de Chirico, and purchases several works from the new period.<sup>30</sup> Among other works, he buys the *Autoritratto con piante di alloro* (1923), *Paesaggio romano* (1920), and *Il Trovatore* (1923); de Chirico paints their portraits. Max Ernst, who is close to the couple (particularly Gala), seems to have pushed for the trip to Rome.<sup>31</sup> The letters that follow testify to Max Ernst's strong interest in de Chirico's pictorial experimentation. The conversion of the most significant representative of the ex-dadaists and his friends the Eluards who are the very representatives of Surrealism when in the 1925 "trial" occurs due to de Chirico's pictorial experimentation and his new period. The painting that marks the beginning

of the his First Metaphysics, *Enigme d'un après-midi d'automne*, amply described in the fragmentary manuscripts in Eluard's possession and which are now at the Musée Picasso in Paris, was exhibited at the Rome Biennale. The Eluard couple saw *Enigme d'un après-midi d'automne* there and purchased *L'énigme de l'oracle* (1910) according to Soby. The copy of *Enigme* by Max Ernst was done at this time, when the artist was a frequent visitor to the Eluards' house in Eaubonne, which was decorated by Ernst.<sup>32</sup> In January de Chirico had produced a very detailed recipe for paint, explaining how to make colors, mix them, conserve them, and to paint and polish. The recipe is now at the Musée Picasso with the other papers donated by Eluard to Picasso. It is dedicated to Gala: "Écrit pour Madame Eluard et très respectueusement dédiée"<sup>33</sup> ["written for Madame Eluard and very respectfully dedicated (to her)"]. In addition, the letter now acquired from Eluard's collection contains a recipe for Ernst which is conclusive about the fact that this "technical" transformation is shared and advanced by Eluard and Ernst; de Chirico encourages this transformation, oblivious to the consequences. Soby reports Eluard's testimony that the copy was made in 1924.<sup>34</sup>

At the end of October Breton buys *L'étonnante matinée* (1250 fr.) and *Le mauvais génie d'un roi* (400 fr.).<sup>35</sup>

## 1924

Breton's book *Les pas perdus*<sup>36</sup> appears on February 5; it is a collection of previously published texts including the one on de Chirico. On March 24, so the story goes, Eluard secretly departs for the Antilles, Panama, Oceania, Indochina, and Ceylon. This secretiveness casts shadows on the mythic voyage and return "à la de Chirico". Indeed, there are drawings by de Chirico dedicated to the return of Eluard and Gala. On June 4, de Chirico writes them the letter from Florence proposing the sale of the painting that appeared at the XIV Biennale in Venice, *Les duels à mort*. He sends his greetings to his friends Ernst and Breton, and mentions the sale of the *Muse Inquietanti*. Instead, the previous letter dated March 10, famous for being made public by the surrealists during the dispute with de Chirico, was supposedly sent to Gala and included a reference to a replica of the *Muse*. But it is actually addressed to Madame Breton (see below). It is to Breton that de Chirico offers a copy of the work. It was first made to believe that the letter was first sent to Gala and then to Eluard's mother. At least, it is as such in the Saint Denis Museum. This clarification about the true addressee of the letter annuls the imposing body of literature surrounding *Le Muse Inquietanti* painted by de Chirico for Gala.

On August 23, de Chirico is in Vichy, France to take the waters, and probably in Paris as well to do the sets for Pirandello's *Giara*, as performed by the Ballets Suédois directed by Rolf de Maré.

Upon Eluard's "return", October 3, the surrealist team is together again, along with the presence of Aragon. On October 11th, the Bureau de recherches surréalistes opens at the Hotel de Berulle at 15 Rue de Grenelle. A daily log is kept

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 237.

<sup>33</sup> In Giorgio de Chirico, *Il meccanismo del pensiero*, edited by Maurizio Fagiolo, Turin, Einaudi, 1985, p. 245-246.

<sup>34</sup> see Baldacci, op.cit., 1994 p. 228.

<sup>35</sup> Letter to Breton's wife, Simone, Cat. André Breton, *La beauté convulsive* 1991, p. 114.

<sup>36</sup> Ed. NRF, Librairie, Paris, Gallimard.

by two members of the group. On October 12, Simone Breton notes the painting *Le rêve de Tobie* on the wall. On October 1, Breton publishes the *Manifeste du Surréalisme* with *Poisson soluble*. (see the fish and mercury in de Chirico's painting).<sup>37</sup>

On November 2, de Chirico arrives in Paris and a very intense relationship begins with Breton (at the beginning of the year, de Chirico had sent him his monograph from "Valori Plastici" with a dedication). In his letters to Simone, Breton expresses his fascination for de Chirico. On November 7, he speaks of a lunch with de Chirico and Aragon and a visit to the Théâtre Moderne that afternoon, on the 8<sup>th</sup> a visit by de Chirico to his house on Rue Fontaine, and on the 11<sup>th</sup> another gathering: "De Chirico, Masson, Ernst, Aragon, Morise, Boiffard, and Vitrac were all there. Corrive has gone. De Chirico may stay in Paris to look after his show at Rosenberg's. I see him, and each day I get to know him a little better. He can't stand Gala, and says so at every opportunity. And contrary to what I thought, I'm surprised to learn that he has great reservations about Eluard and does not like his poetry (never an interesting image and how small and sentimental it is, though still quite pure); he finds that his behaviour as a man leaves even more to be desired (why doesn't he get a divorce? he says to himself, he can't love her, it's impossible. And he's a madman, the opposite of the rest of you and of Aragon. I don't like madmen. And then his total lack of curiosity...). He has a very particular, rare kind of sense of humor. He doesn't mind Guillaume because he is like a ghost, his Napoleon III [the surrealists speak of *Le revenant* in this context. Editor's note]; there is something very good about him. He avoids discussing his technical experimentation with me, but I know he discusses it with Aragon and Morise. It is altogether infinitely more pleasant than I can tell you. Last night we played a game where we placed notes on women in a catalogue.[...] Sunday night I read to de Chirico at length from Lautréamont. [...]"<sup>38</sup>

On December 18, he takes de Chirico to Doucet's. On November 4<sup>th</sup> Louis Aragon writes in the log book at the Bureau: "De Chirico proposed some dreams for the R.S."<sup>39</sup> On December 1, the first number of "La Révolution Surréaliste" appears. The poetic subject matter (the dream) common to de Chirico and Breton is exalted in this period. The fish image embodies the understood value system shared by the two. On the back cover of the magazine there is a trio of photos taken by Man Ray at 15 Rue de Grenelle, containing coded messages: Breton has de Chirico's *Le rêve de Tobie* – which apparently belongs to Eluard – above his head. And de Chirico has what seems to be a book by Breton on his. Eluard and Vitrac are standing next to him. In the photo on the right, de Chirico is lit by a lamp (the enlightened one, the Buddha). The group is gathered around Robert Desnos. *Le rêve de Tobie* is literally connected to Breton's thoughts in the sense of the *poisson soluble* (soluble fish – the symbolic and esoteric quality of fish and of soluble matter) and even more so on the dream level.<sup>40</sup> On the inside cover there is a fish with the word SURREALISME written across its body. The three *rêves* in the magazine are by de Chirico, Breton, and René Gauthier. The first is by de Chirico: this

<sup>37</sup> Kra, Paris, ed. Du Sagittaire.

<sup>38</sup> Cat. André Breton. *La beauté convulsive*, op.cit., p. 173.

<sup>39</sup> Paule Thévenin, *Les énigmes du Cerveau de l'enfant*. Cat. André Breton. *La beauté convulsive*, op.cit., p. 105.

<sup>40</sup> V.J. de Sanna, *Analisi della forma*. III, Cat. Giorgio de Chirico. *Metafisica del tempo*, Centro Cultural Borges, Buenos Aires, 4 Apr.-12 June 2000, p. 51.

is the consecration of de Chirico's relationship with Breton, and of the group's descent from Apollinaire. The *Portrait of Apollinaire* includes an image of a fish in the foreground. *Le rêve de Tobie* is the definitive painting on the dream for the surrealists. The fact that there is no information about the painting before the show at Guillaume's gallery in 1922 allows us to hypothesize that it was created around the period of the new "Littérature" series; its ownership is attributed by Simone Breton to Eluard. The first issue of "La Révolution Surréaliste," directed by Pierre Naville and Benjamin Péret, contains the introduction by J.-A. Boiffard, Roger Vitrac, and Paul Eluard devoted to dreams as a space of freedom, an echo of the *Manifesto*. Two drawings by de Chirico appear in the issue: *L'apparition du cheval* and *Furies s'apprêtant à poursuivre un assassin par un clair après-midi d'automne*. Both drawings belong to the "new" sublime-Romantic phase of the artist that the surrealists would soon demonize.<sup>41</sup>

Significant for the political future of the group is a photograph of Germaine Berton in the center and the photos of the surrealists around her, with de Chirico – as always – in the centre and Picasso on the lower right. "This woman, admirable in every way," an anarchist, had killed Plateau, the leader of a far-right group called "Camelot du roi." The identification of dreams with death as well as the discovery of shadows reveals the absolute intellectual influence that de Chirico has on the group; the origins of this can be found in the de Chirico's first Metaphysics. There is an inquest into suicide, as well as a text by Louis Aragon on shadows (*L'ombre de l'inventeur* – The Shadow of the Inventor) and another by Philippe Soupault (*L'ombre de l'ombre* – The Shadow's Shadow). Pierre Naville, co-director of the magazine with Benjamin Péret, makes reference to the presence of de Chirico in Paris: "De Chirico has been ill, and he left suddenly last night. But he finds life in Paris to be admirable, the only possible life".<sup>42</sup> De Chirico goes to Vichy (perhaps to Paris) in August and to Paris in November to prepare the sets and costumes for Pirandello's *La Giara* by the Ballets Suédois directed by Rolf de Maré. Léonce Rosenberg is constantly present. The gallery owner, who is preparing a show for 1925, writes to Fernand Léger on November 12: "De Chirico, who I saw last Monday, told me that the dress rehearsal of the Ballets Suédois is to take place on 19<sup>th</sup> rather than the 20<sup>th</sup> [of November]. Isn't this an error on his part? Can I count on a seat in your loge?".<sup>43</sup> Paul Husson writes: "Le décor de de Chirico dans *La Jarre* est digne de l'artiste qui transpose, avec tant d'amour, les pierres et les ciels. Ce blanc, presque irréel de la pierre, comme transfiguré dans l'humain. Et ce profond ciel bleu ourlé par les nuages. Les costumes harmonisés avec le décor sont taches heureuses dans l'ensemble et chantent suivant l'éclairement du jour et de la nuit".<sup>44</sup> By the time Rosenberg begins to act as de Chirico's representative, the artist's new style has conquered Parisian tastes. It is the symmetrical nature of the full light and the pictorial matter in relation to the "shadow" and the metaphysical night that intrigues Breton. De Chirico returns to Italy profoundly disillusioned by the way in which his older works are treated in Guillaume's gallery. On December 18<sup>th</sup> he writes to Pierre Roy from Rome: "I

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> P. Naville, *Le temps du surréel*, Paris, 1977. Two postcards were sent by de Chirico from Paris to Francesco Trombadori dated August 23, and November 12, 1924. In M. Fabiolo, *G. de Chirico. Le rêve de Tobie, un interno ferrarese e le origini del Surrealismo*, Rome, De Luca, 1980, p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> L. Rosenberg to F. Léger, Paris 11/12/1924. Archives MNAM CCI, Paris.

<sup>44</sup> "De Chirico's sets in *La Jarre* are worthy of an artist who lovingly transposes the stones and the sky. This almost unreal white of the stones becomes almost transformed into something human. And the deep blue sky edged with clouds: the costumes – joyful patches of color in the ensemble – are harmonized with the décor and change according to the day or night lighting." P. Husson, *La création du monde...* "Montparnasse", issue no. 37, Paris, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1924.

stopped by Guillaume's before leaving town. He wasn't there. It pained me to see that my paintings were treated like rags".<sup>45</sup> On January 29<sup>th</sup> 1925 he writes to Guillaume to complain about what he has seen: his early paintings in a state of abandon and in bad conditions, treated like "lunch-meat that has gone off".<sup>46</sup> The paintings for the Rosenberg show are handled by Castelfranco, who personally sends them to Paris.

## 1925

In a famous photograph by Man Ray, taken sometime in 1924, Breton appears with a painting from his collection, *L'énigme d'une journée*. Breton lying beneath the painting with a shocked look on his face, his head fusing with an arch. His body and the painting fuse together; in Breton's psychoanalytic code, the arch symbolizes the feminine aspect of the painting, as opposed to the towers and other vertical elements. In March, Ungaretti writes to Paulhan after having seen the "R.S." and updates him on de Chirico's work: "I saw the recent works. He's gone back to using mannequins. The background is a sky, like the ones used by photographers at fairs, very dark gray; in the foreground he uses very bright colours. The mise-en-scène he uses for his brother's *Niobe* is in the same style; it is melancholy itself. You'll see all of this in Paris in May. He is irregular and quite summary. He thinks only of success. And it's a shame, because his lyrical power and imagination need not resort to shortcuts. People are full of prejudice. When in the neighbourhood – you know we now live nearby – people cross his mother's path, they make the sign of the cross. She's famous! People are full of manias, and they render the people around them superstitious as well. You should see them!"<sup>47</sup>

In issue no. 3 of "R.S.", conceived by Artaud (April 15), de Chirico's influence on the group reaches its high point. A double mechanism goes into action in de Chirico's work: the reciprocity and reversibility of the word-image<sup>48</sup> and the syntax of the rupture of logic. De Chirico's texts on logic and metaphysics from his early period, which are now at the Musée Picasso in Paris – the *Eluard-Picasso Manuscripts* were available to those who visited the Bureau at 15 Rue Grenelle which opened October 11, 1924. The same was true for the texts in Jean Paulhan's possession. Artaud writes that the Surrealist revolution's goal was the "rupture and disqualification of logic," and a "spontaneous reclassification of things according to a deeper and more subtle order". He borrows at length from the *Eluard-Picasso Manuscripts* and Paulhan texts, including *Que pourrait être la peinture de l'avenir*. In these, De Chirico predicts the future state of art, exploring the borders between image, dream, and reality, which are the obsession of the group. Moreover, in "Valori Plastici" (1918-22)<sup>49</sup> he repeats his theories on the rupture of logic and madness which become the basis of the surrealists' work.<sup>50</sup> Michel Leiris supplies a *Glossaire* which reconfigures the relationships between words and thoughts. This becomes a founding text of Surrealism, and has an immediate effect on the work of René Magritte, for whom the "revelation" of *Le chant d'amour* (1914) penetrates the first issues of the magazine.

<sup>45</sup> In Baldacci 1994, p. 231.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>47</sup> Rome, Via Malta 16, March 1925. In *Correspondance J. Paulhan-G. Ungaretti*, op.cit., p. 48. In May Ungaretti informs Paulhan that the ballet by Savinio was the greatest flop of the season.

<sup>48</sup> see de Sanna, op.cit., 2000, pp. 26-30.

<sup>49</sup> G. de Chirico, *Sull'arte metafisica*, "Valori Plastici", n. 4-5, Rome, Apr-May, 1919, pp. 15-18. Taken up again in Giorgio de Chirico-Isabella Far, *Commedia dell'Arte Moderna* (1945), edited by J. de Sanna, Milan, Abscondita, 2002, pp. 26-30.

<sup>50</sup> see G. de Chirico, *Il meccanismo del pensiero*, edited by Maurizio Fagiolo, Turin, Einaudi, 1985, pp. 5-39.

Another fundamental element which the Surrealists deduce from de Chirico's "Metaphysics" is an Eastern concept. Surrealism sees itself as a life revolution, not a change in artistic style. It is meant to lead to the liberation of the spirit from the restrictions of rationalism (logic) and from material ties (the flesh); these notions draw from de Chirico's eastern convictions, perceived through Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. The third issue of "R.S." includes Artaud's *Lettre aux écoles du Bouddha*; it is an echo of the "enlightened" de Chirico on the cover of the first issue and precedes Lessing's *L'Europe et l'Asie* in the same issue. But Artaud's mysticism has a limit. The moment of truth, which greatly impacts the de Chirico-Breton relationship, comes in the fourth issue, dated July 15, 1925. Breton becomes the director of the magazine.

The editorial purpose is clear: revolution and identification with society as a starting point for revolutionary action. In February, Breton sells *Perspective avec jeux* and *Le retour*<sup>51</sup> with some difficulty to Doucet. De Chirico declares both paintings to be fakes. On February 10, Breton writes to Simone, saying that all of the paintings proposed by De Chirico for the magazine are very ugly.<sup>52</sup> In April, after the publication of the third issue of the "R.S.", he decides to close the Bureau and to take over the direction of the magazine. At the same time, his relationship with Picasso solidifies. Issue no. 4 comes out on July 15; it contains the first section of an essay from *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* which constitutes the textual manifestation of his war against de Chirico.<sup>53</sup> *La révolution la nuit*, the work which made Ernst the official heir of de Chirico is reproduced in this issue. Also appearing is Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* which had been sold to Doucet. Picasso's revolutionary power is applauded. Mirò conquers ground.

Despite the initial anarchy, it becomes clear that the leaders of the Surrealist movement intend to enter the international theatre of Communism. In the years between 1924-27, first Breton, then Aragon, Eluard, and finally Péret join the Communist Party. This was no easy task; one needed to be accepted by the party, and Aragon for example had problems with "Clarté" – a para-Communist newspaper – because of his anarchist writings. Breton continues to direct the magazine until the final issue, no. 12, dated December 15, 1929. Issue 4 includes a review by Max Morise of de Chirico's May show at Léonce Rosenberg. The exhibition *Oeuvres récentes de Giorgio de Chirico* (May 6-30) shows only paintings of the "new style". For the first time, de Chirico is openly criticized, even if politely so, for the "changes" apparent in his new style.<sup>54</sup> It is the moment of the sacrifice: de Chirico undergoes the ritualistic patricide. The recovered correspondence confirms the impossibility of closure towards de Chirico's new style on Breton's behalf and there is a drawing up of the Surrealist forces. The period of transition between the "metaphysical night" phase and the neo-metaphysical "enlightenment" is not only followed closely by Breton, but is also revealed by clues in the first cover of the magazine (the light over de Chirico's head). The efforts of the surrealist group relative to its acceptance by the Party

<sup>51</sup> *Le retour* is also titled the copy of *Le revenant* II.

<sup>52</sup> Cat. André Breton, *La beauté convulsive*, op.cit. p. 176.

<sup>53</sup> "La Révolution Surréaliste", no. 4, Paris, July 15, 1925, pp. 26-30.

<sup>54</sup> M. Morise, *À propos de l'exposition de Chirico*, *Ibidem*, pp. 31-32.



have a price in terms of the varied formations of the international Dadaist movements and the concept of "total revolution" at the origin of the surrealist period. The alliance with "Clarté" marks a unification in the direction of dialectical materialism. The summer of 1925 is a crucial moment for Breton. He reads Trotsky's *Lenin*, published that same year,<sup>55</sup> and adheres to Marxism-Leninism. On July 2, there are violent incidents at the Surrealist banquet in honour of Saint-Pol-Roux.

The press attacks the subversive activities of the Surrealists. At the end of July, Breton and Eluard travel to Brussels and come into contact with Paul Nougé and Camille Goemans, with the purpose of forming an ideological alliance with the Belgian group "Correspondance." They make a joint declaration: "Revolution first and always." Issue number 5 of the magazine "R.S."<sup>56</sup> follows suit with the magazines "Clarté", "Philosophes," and "Correspondance". The natural question of the status of intellectuals is firmly posed.<sup>57</sup> The dilemma of members of the bourgeoisie faced with Marxist moralism imposes certain choices. On October 4, Masson voices his doubts about the compatibility of Surrealism and Bolshevism.<sup>58</sup> A Committee is formed to decide artistic-revolutionary policy. Eluard gives his support, along with Ernst, Masson, Leiris, Tual, Noll, and Péret. This fundamental choice strikes at the heart of the group's relationship to art, and from the moment that de Chirico takes up the position we know, it is he that is affected most directly, although he is not the only one. On October 19, the Committee prohibits Surrealists from visiting the Paul Klee exhibit at the Vivian-Raspail gallery. Issue 5 of the "R.S." appears on October 15. It contains de Chirico's poems from 1911-13. Breton's text is accompanied by a reproduction of *J'irai... le chien de verre*, a painting owned by Breton. November 13 is an important date for the art-revolution dilemma, in this case in favour of art, or more properly, the possibility of Surrealist art. The first show of *La peinture surréaliste* is held at the Galerie Pierre,<sup>59</sup> presented by Breton and Desnos. De Chirico's *J'irai... le chien de verre*, *Le Duo ou les deux mannequins de la tour rose* and *Le Revenant* are included. The first bears an apocryphal title. *Le Revenant* purchased by Doucet has been declared as a fake by de Chirico, who thinks this painting to be a copy of the work executed in 1917 and passed to Breton.<sup>60</sup> De Chirico's last letter to Breton (dated August 3rd) is bitter: "I regret only that you and your friends insist on recognizing only my work from before the war. You speak of me as a painter who in his earliest youth had a few moments of inspiration and then nothing. It is not so, my friend, it is not so, I assure you. But in any case, in these matters discussion is futile".<sup>61</sup>

## 1926

In issue 6 of "R.S.", dedicated to a new chapter of *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* de Chirico's *Oreste e Elettra* is defaced.<sup>62</sup> The painting *Paesaggio romano* (1920) appears with the title *Le sarcophage*. On March 26, the Galerie Surréaliste opens; it is run by Breton, who acquires paintings at major auctions. The permanent col-

<sup>55</sup> Paris, ed. Librairie du Travail, Paris, 1925.

<sup>56</sup> "La Révolution Surréaliste", no. 5 Paris, October 15, 1925.

<sup>57</sup> Pierre Naville, *La révolution et les intellectuels: que peuvent faire les surréalistes?* (1926), Paris, Gallimard, 1928.

<sup>58</sup> Cat. André Breton, *La beauté convulsive*, op.cit. p. 176.

<sup>59</sup> November 14-25.

<sup>60</sup> see the analogy with the painting *Piazza d'Italia*, here analyzed by Paolo Picozza, on p. 337.

<sup>61</sup> This letter is also in the Museum of Modern Art Archives, J.T. Soby papers.

<sup>62</sup> "La Révolution Surréaliste" no. 6, Paris, March 1, 1926, pp. 30-32.

lection includes works by Masson, Miró, Ernst, de Chirico, Picasso, and Picabia. On April 24, de Chirico writes to Savinio about the relationships with galleries that are opening up for him and he warns: "Don't get mixed up with the surrealists. They are idiotic and hostile."<sup>63</sup> On May 18, Breton and Aragon officially protest the collaboration of Ernst and Miró with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. They are redeemed in a piece by Eluard in the following issue. On June 4, a de Chirico show presented by Albert C. Barnes opens at the Paul Guillaume gallery. The text by the American millionaire – Guillaume's backer – announces a new philosophy of art concerning American and English formalist thought. In "Les Feuilles libres," Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes describes de Chirico's new period, the metaphysics of light: "Today... this very day: the night has fallen away and the sun is shining. Giorgio de Chirico sings in the Neapolitan style, so loudly that you awake. Slumber is gone, the day is here... The metaphysical eye has rendered the soul; after this anguished rain the sun shines..."<sup>64</sup>

The list of galleries dealing with de Chirico continues to grow: Georges Bernheim, Barreiro, Van Leer. Guillaume, who is looking to keep up among the new dealers, is busy at work on his new period and continues to use titles liberally, thereby creating dangerous precedents. An example: *Vendredi Saint*, coming out of the frontispiece of Cocteau's *Essai de critique indirecte*.<sup>65</sup> Guillaume gave this paintings to Cocteau as a gift. I am speaking of a painting that has been declared a fake. Why de Chirico suffered fakes like this for a while and later unmasked them? We have not found the reason, but there is a reason. De Chirico struggles with what will become one of the principal problems of Surrealism: titles. A letter sent to Guillaume, on December 5, 1927, makes a claim for what he considers a moral issue: "Quant à la question des titres, je vous serai bien obligé de ne pas trop continuer, pour mes toiles actuelles, le genre de titres d'avant la guerre; par exemple vous avez intitulé un tableau de moi *Le printemps du destin*; or la toile je l'ai appelée *Paysage dans la chambre* et c'est justement ce titre qui explique l'atmosphère métaphysique du tableau; je trouve qu'il y a déjà assez de confusion et de malentendus à propos du contenu poétique de ma peinture pour ne pas l'augmenter avec des titres qui souvent, je trouve, ne se lient pas trop avec elle".<sup>66</sup> On June 15, the 7<sup>th</sup> issue of "R.S." appears; it includes the section of the essay about *Surréalisme et la peinture* that accuses de Chirico of being a "forger of himself".<sup>67</sup> It shows *L'angoissant voyage* and *Le départ du poète*. Breton is angry with "the preface that he asked that ignoble cretin Albert C. Barnes to write for his new show at the Paul Guillaume gallery. That in itself is enough to dishonor him".<sup>68</sup> The title of the work *L'énigme de la fatalité* becomes *L'angoissant voyage*. After the show is finished, Ribemont Dessaignes disassociates himself from Breton just as Vitrac does. On September 30<sup>th</sup> *Légitime défense*<sup>69</sup> appears, delving into the position of independence-dependence of the movement *vis-à-vis* the French Communist Party. Freud's *La science des rêves* (The Interpretation of Dreams) is published.<sup>70</sup> In November Soupault and Artaud are thrown out of the Surrealist group around the time of the break between Stalin and Trotsky. It is significant that Mar-

<sup>63</sup> Cat. Savinio - *Gli anni di Parigi - Dipinti 1927-1932*, (Palazzo Forti, Verona), Milan, Electa, 1990, p. 338.

<sup>64</sup> G. Ribemont-Dessaignes, *Giorgio de Chirico*, "Les feuilles libres," no. 8, year VII, no. 43, Paris, May-June 1926, p. 41-42.

<sup>65</sup> J. Cocteau, *Essai de critique indirecte*, Paris, ed. B. Grasset, 1932.

<sup>66</sup> "Regarding the issue of titles, I would ask you to refrain from giving titles like the ones from before the war to my current canvases; for example you entitle one of my works *Le printemps du destin*; I had called it *Paysage dans la chambre* and this title explains the metaphysical atmosphere in the painting; I find that there is already enough confusion and misconception surrounding the poetic content of my work so that it would be better not to increase the confusion with titles that often, I find, are not closely linked to the content." Letter to P. Guillaume, Paris, December 5, 1927. In Cat. *La pittura metafisica*, edited by Giuliano Briganti and Ester Coen, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 1979, p. 200.

<sup>67</sup> "La Révolution Surréaliste" no. 7, June 15, 1926, pp. 3-6.

<sup>68</sup> A. Breton, "La Révolution Surréaliste" no. 7, June 15, 1926, p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> Ed. Surréalistes.

<sup>70</sup> Translation by I. Meyerson, Paris, ed. F. Alcan, 1926.

cel Duchamp – partner of Katherine Dreier and Man Ray in the Société Anonyme – is chosen the “new” de Chirico for the International Exhibition of Modern Art in New York in November.<sup>71</sup> The painting which is included in the catalogue, *Après-midi d'été* (1925) represents the new metaphysical interiors. De Chirico declares this painting as a fake. It reflects the new style of the artist and it is painted apparently as a fake by forger Oscar Dominguez, who was not yet at work on de Chirico's paintings. The text in the catalogue is even more explicit: the new, seated *Mannequins* are judged to be de Chirico's most interesting work. Duchamp is de Chirico's most astute critic.

Léonce Rosenberg suffers visibly from de Chirico's “infidelity.” On November 6, he challenges the artist: “Je suis heureux de pouvoir vous dire que vos derniers tableaux ont beaucoup plu malgré l'imprécision de la ‘Famille des mannequins’.” Comme j'agis loyalement à votre égard, je ne vous fais pas l'injure de supposer que vous n'agirez pas de même avec moi et qu'au contraire, come convenu, vous n'allez pas vendre et ne vendrez pas de tableaux de vous sans me les montrer au préalable”.<sup>72</sup> On November 6, he writes to his confidante Fernand Léger that he has given de Chirico an ultimatum: “Se voyant mis en présence de l'éventualité de voir sa situation dépendre uniquement de P. Guillaume, il m'a déclaré que, même a prix inférieur, il préférerait rester avec moi”.<sup>73</sup>

## 1927

Oscar Dominguez, a famous forger of de Chirico paintings, arrives in Paris. Breton joins the P.C.F. (Parti Communiste Français), which assigns him to a cell of employees from the gas company. First he has to retract *Légitime défense*. The 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> issue of “R.S.” appears on October 1. It contains the final portion of *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Derain, Ernst, Man, Masson).<sup>74</sup> It includes the first images of a Katchina doll bought by Breton with the help of Eluard. De Chirico declares this painting as false. It reminds in a way Max Ernst with his colors and the outlines. Also included in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> edition is Breton's description of the future project “Le salon particulier”, including *Le divan dans la forêt (Le rêve)* by Le Douanier Rousseau. At this time de Chirico is publicizing his *Mobili nella valle* (on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1926 he delivers *Intérieur forestal* to Léonce Rosenberg and on May 21, 1927, he delivers *Meubles dans une vallée*) and the October issue of “Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne” includes a text by de Chirico entitled *Statues, Meubles, Généraux*. The false title of his painting *Le rêve transformé* appears in this same publication, forcing de Chirico to write to the newspapers: “Messieurs, j'ai recours à votre obligeance pour vous prier de faire savoir que l'interprétation poétique de mes toiles reproduites dans différents numéros d'une revue littéraire est arbitraire et abusive. En particulier ma nature-morte (*Tête de Jupiter, avec bananes et ananas*) que le dernier numéro de la revue en question donne comme s'intitulant *Le rêve renversé*, n'a jamais reçu de moi de titre aussi saugrenu et je me demande à quelle fin on débaptise des tableaux qu'il appartient à moi seul de dénommer”.

<sup>71</sup> *The Société Anonyme* Brooklyn Museum, New York, Nov. 1926-Jan. 1927.

<sup>72</sup> “I am happy to tell you that your last canvases were highly appreciated despite the imprecision of the ‘Famille des mannequins.’ As I act loyally in your regard, I will not insult you by supposing that you will not do the same in my regard, and that you will not, as agreed, sell works by yourself without showing them to me beforehand.” Archives M.N.A.M.-CCI, Paris.

<sup>73</sup> “Seeing himself faced with the possibility of depending solely on P. Guillaume, he declared that, even at a lower price, he preferred to stay with me.” Archives M.N.A.M.-CCI, Paris.

<sup>74</sup> “La Révolution Surréaliste” no. 9-10, Paris, October 1, 1927, pp. 36-40.

The letter is reprinted in the book *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* with the corresponding comments: "serpent", "dead", "mud mouth," etc.<sup>75</sup> In May, Ungaretti informs Paulhan that a friend, Fernando Vignanelli, is planning to sell a painting entitled *Silence hermétique* (*Hermetic Melancholy*). At the end of June he tells him that he is about to give Vignanelli Eluard's address (Eluard was promptly suggested by Paulhan as a buyer).<sup>76</sup> After this exhibition at Galerie des Quatre Chemins (on december 10) Jean Cocteau is turned of surrealist group. On December 12, an interview with de Chirico is published in "Comoedia"; four days later it is reprinted in "Le Arti Plastiche," the official publication of the Fascist artists' union. De Chirico harshly criticizes the regime's attitude toward art: "As a painter and as a modern spirit, I feel more in harmony with France than with Italy. I reproach Italy for its incomprehension of the modern movement. . . I love what is new and advanced. And to my taste, I don't esteem current Italian painting."<sup>77</sup>

## 1928

In January, Ungaretti communicates the effects of de Chirico's comments on Italian art to Paulhan: "Following de Chirico's interview in 'Comoedia', some painters asked that his Italian citizenship be revoked. I am quite sure that the Boss [Benito Mussolini. Editor's note] did not give any credence to these absurd requests. I disagree with de Chirico on only one point: how can one deny the Italians' talent? No-one is more talented. Up to now, this talent has been suffocated. But things cannot change all of a sudden. And to what does de Chirico owe his own talent, if not to his Italian blood?"<sup>78</sup> On February 11, the book *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* appears. Promotion of the book in "R.S." is carried out using two de Chiricos: *Le rêve transformé* (strange!) and *Nostalgie de l'infini*. On February 12, Paul Eluard's collection of poems *Défense de savoir. Avec un frontispice de Giorgio de Chirico* comes out, published by the Editions Surréalistes. The "frontispiece" is a redoing of de Chirico's drawing *Le poète et le philosophe* (*Il filosofo e il poeta*) from 1916. Had de Chirico redone the drawing for Eluard during the war? Or had someone else done so, as the drawing suggests? The books coincide with the inauguration on February 15 of the exhibition *Oeuvres anciennes de Giorgio de Chirico* at the Galerie Surréaliste.<sup>79</sup> The exhibit is in direct competition with the one being held at Rosenberg's gallery L'Effort Moderne, of recent works. Breton loans his works *Le cerveau de l'enfant, J'irai . . . le chien de verre* and *Le mauvais génie d'un roi* for the Surrealists' show. The preface by Aragon is a manuscript covered in splotches, a "bad copy" of the text. Title: *Le feuilletton change d'auteur. Préface Pamphlet*. The text emphasizes the concept of expropriation and constitutes the official laying out of the ideology of the false: PROPRIÉTÉ À VENDRE. Oui, tant que cette idée a cours. Je me suis fait de la propriété une certaine conception expérimentale dont les dégâts ont leur part. Cependant jamais, si ce n'est que dans l'amour, l'idée de propriété ne m'a paru plus dépourvue de fondement que dans le domaine de la pensée. Il y a encore

<sup>75</sup> "Dear Sirs, I take recourse in your consideration to ask that you make known that the poetic interpretation of my paintings reproduced in several issues of a literary journal is arbitrary and incorrect. In particular my still-life (*Tête de Jupiter, avec bananes et ananas*) which appeared in the last issue of the journal in question under the title *Le rêve renversé*, did not receive this preposterous title from me and I ask to what end people are baptizing works which are mine alone to name." A. Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, Florence, edited by E. Capriolo, Marchi, 1966, p. 18.

<sup>76</sup> Correspondence J. Paulhan-G. Ungaretti, op.cit., pp. 109 and 111. The painting does not appear to have been bought in the end.

<sup>77</sup> In de Chirico 1985, p. 281-282.

<sup>78</sup> Correspondence J. Paulhan-G. Ungaretti, op.cit., p. 133.

<sup>79</sup> Febr.-15-March 1 1928.

<sup>80</sup> "PROPERTY FOR SALE. Yes, while this idea still has currency. I have formed an experimental idea of property in which disgust plays a significant part... In no other realm, except love, does the idea of property seem more baseless than in that of ideas. There are still men around who claim ownership of whatever has passed through their little heads. Philosophizers,... For example, Giorgio de Chirico [...] Our painter recently complained because a magazine had published a reproduction of one of his paintings with an apocryphal title. Let's talk about titles. And in particular about de Chirico's titles. Of which some were dictated by Apollinaire, and others written by Paul Guillaume (often quite remarkable, these). [...] Out of de Chirico's painting a mythology is born and the man, de Chirico, dies. That's justice. If this gentleman – he is a gentleman – now comes back to tell us that this is not what it was all about, why should we give a damn, my dear? The impersonality of genius. Just look at the recent work of this painter who was the theatre – and what a theatre! – of everything great in this world, the reflection of the unknowable of an epoch, and you will see clearly how he has lost his rights over the works of his previous visions. And besides, isn't the law on my side? As the owner of the most beautiful de Chirico ever known, or of a Raphael that would bring a madman to paroxysms of pleasure, don't I have a right to correct them? You can rest assured; I will do so. [...] Therefore, I change the titles of his works." Cat. *Oeuvres anciennes de Georges de Chirico*, Galerie Surréaliste, Paris, Febr. 15<sup>th</sup>-March 1 1928.

<sup>81</sup> G. Ribemont-Dessaignes, *Giorgio de Chirico*, "Documents" no. 6, Paris, 1930.

<sup>82</sup> *Nadia* is published on May 25, ed. Gallimard.

des hommes qui courent les rues très fiers se réclamant de ce qui leur a passé par la caboche. Philosistes, certophes. Exemple: Giorgio de Chirico. [...] Notre peintre protesta récemment parce qu'une revue publiait en reproduction un de ses tableaux avec un titre apocryphe. Il y aurait à parler des titres. Et particulièrement des titres chiriquiens. Les uns dictés par Apollinaire, les autres écrits par Paul Guillaume (ces derniers souvent remarquables). [...] De la peinture de Chirico naît une mythologie et meurt de Chirico même. C'est justice. Si ce Monsieur, car c'est un Monsieur, vient nous dire aujourd'hui que ce n'est pas de cela qu'il s'agissait, que voulez-vous, mon cher, que à nous foute? Impersonnalité du génie. Il n'y a qu'à voir les dernières productions d'un peintre qui fut le théâtre, et quel théâtre, de tout ce qui se passait de grand au monde, le reflet de l'inconnaissable d'une époque, pour apercevoir sainement le peu de droits du fabricant sur ses visions antérieures. D'ailleurs, n'ai-je pour moi, charmante décision, la législation courante? Possesseur du plus beau de Chirico connu, ou Raphaël pour flatter les maniaques, n'ai-je pas toute licence de le corriger? Croyez que je n'y manque guère. [...] Le Sphinx dévore celui qui lui a ouvert la cage [...] Je change donc, deux points le titre de ses tableaux".<sup>80</sup>

Removal of the titles is part and parcel of a strategy of intellectual expropriation, but it is more than that. The fact that the titles given by an art dealer are praised highly can not be a simple intellectual game. In the exhibit of *Oeuvres anciennes*, many of the titles are changed. The painting *Le fidèle serviteur* is on sale for 2 francs. And a curiosity: the painting *Joies et énigmes d'une heure étrange* bears the title *Le pessimisme ancien* (a painting that belonged to Paul Guillaume until 1935). The same painting illustrates the article by George Ribemont-Dessaignes, a dissident Surrealist, in Georges Bataille's magazine "Documents", with the title *Souvenir d'Italie, 1913. A.M. Paul Guillaume*.<sup>81</sup> In the window of the gallery, Breton and Aragon create an installation entitled *Ci-git De Chirico* (Here lies de Chirico), with the leaning Tower of Pisa, a sewing machine, and doll furniture. The décor mocks the *Mobili nella valle* of 1927; the doll is an obvious counterfeit of "manichino". The dolls could be a reference to the painting *Le Printemps* reproduced in *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture* (1965 Gallimard ed.).

De Chirico declares *Le printemps* to be a fake. The painting reminds Max Ernst with his colors and outlines. The two positions are clear: de Chirico affirms the right to an idea as part of the patrimony of the artist who reserves the right to return to, and update, that idea, for example the *Piazza d'Italia*, to any epoch. On the other hand, this property, following an ideological precept typical of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, becomes the object of expropriation.

This does not stop de Chirico from affirming the existence of a "physiological" principle in art before and after: its ownership and the reproducible nature of the invention. On March 15, issue no. 11 of "R.S." comes out under financial difficulty. An extract of *Nadja*, Breton's new novel, is illustrated with a painting by de Chirico *Les plaisirs du poète*.<sup>82</sup> In the same issue there is also an obituary *Ci-git Giorgio de Chirico* by Aragon and Breton, with the Leaning Tower of Pisa .

The review of the show in the Galerie Surréaliste provided by Raymond Queneau invents the contents of all the paintings. For instance, *Le rêve transformé* becomes "Un parapluie projette son ombre sur un divan. Il y a un dirigeable dans le ciel et des crayons sur la table".<sup>83</sup> From March 10-20, the same exhibit is shown in Brussels, at the Galerie Le Centaure. Another act of censorship is enacted by the Surrealists, who make every effort to be noticed. At the same time, and in collaboration with the Galerie Surréaliste, the Galerie Le Centaure repeats the *Oeuvres anciennes* show just as the Galerie L'Epoque is putting on the show from the Effort Moderne gallery. An identical situation existed in Paris. The Galerie de l'Epoque, which is owned by P.G. Van Hecke, is curated by E.L.T. Mesens, a surrealist and a friend and protector of Magritte. The surrealists immediately make a proclamation entitled *Avis*, released and publicized as a manifesto, it is signed by Breton, Aragon, Goemans, and Nougé. He denounces the exhibit, calling it a "commercial" venture. Jérôme André reconstructs the events and observes that the Parisians act in this way because they are irritated that the Belgians haven't attacked de Chirico as much as the Parisian group had in Paris.<sup>84</sup> They threaten to "oppose violently" the two galleries: as if both galleries weren't linked to the Surrealists.

André concludes that the people of Brussels didn't show enough interest in Parisian tensions. At the same time, strange *Metaphysical Interiors* begin to circulate in Brussels, of the type later attributed to de Chirico's "official" Surrealist forger, Oscar Dominguez. An example: a *Metaphysical Interior* from the L'Epoque Gallery belonging to Van Hecke reproduced in the magazine "Variétés" on May 1928. De Chirico declares it to be a fake. The magazine also belongs to Van Hecke and in January of 1929 it displays Magritte and de Chirico side by side as if they were messengers of a new form of representation. Around the same time, the fake painting in question reappears in another magazine in Anvers (Belgium), "Selection", issue dedicated to de Chirico. In this issue also appears the 1924 version of *Le Muse inquietanti* as if is the first version of 1917-1918.<sup>85</sup> This goes beyond the strategic positions of the Parisians. Perhaps another kind of "control" concerned them. In the past in Brussels there had been news of the falsification of early de Chiricos by artists close to the group, under the auspices of E.L.T. Mesens, a protector of René Magritte. The surrealist strategy is directed at one city, Paris, which pays tribute to the triumphs of Giorgio de Chirico, the most acclaimed and highest paid artist in the city, not only for his old works but also and especially for the new ones. The year 1927 sees the publication of Roger Vitrac's monograph (by the "NRF", Librairie Gallimard) as well as a monograph by Boris Ternoletz, (published in Milan by Scheiwiller and distributed at the Guillaume and Effort Moderne galleries). In 1928, a monograph by Waldemar George is published by Gualteri di San Lazzaro (a collaborator of Scheiwiller) for the Editions Chroniques du Jour. Jean Cocteau also publishes his *Le mystère laïc. Essai d'étude indirecte (Giorgio de Chirico)* with the Editions des Quatre Chemins. Waldemar Georges ac-

<sup>83</sup> "An umbrella casts a shadow across a divan. There is a dirigible in the sky and some pencils on the table." R. Queneau. *A propos de l'exposition Giorgio de Chirico à la Galerie Surréaliste*. "La Révolution Surréaliste", no. 11, Paris, March 25, 1928, unnumbered page.

<sup>84</sup> J. André, *La Belgique et Giorgio de Chirico*, Cat. Giorgio de Chirico. *Les dix dernières années. 1968-1978*, curated by Laurent Busine, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Charleroi, Feb. 4-May 13, 2001, p. 199-200.

<sup>85</sup> "Selection," Cahier no. 9, Dec. 1929.



cuses the Surrealists of Communist propaganda and counterfeiting.<sup>86</sup> His book sells well at Rosenberg's gallery; Rosenberg acquires copies for himself and for Alfred Flechteim in Berlin.<sup>87</sup>

In 1928 Leonce Rosenberg commissions de Chirico to do the Hall de Gladiateurs, the main hall in his new home. Eluard writes on June 9th: "Our de Chirico will go to auction on June 9".<sup>88</sup>

#### *To recapitulate:*

When Breton takes over direction of the magazine, with issue no. 4 he must confront the famous article by Naville, appearing in no. 3 of "Beaux Arts", which attacks traditional artistic means: "artists, dirty your canvases, no surrealist pictures, but life, spectacle, etc.". In issue no. 4, de Chirico's show at Rosenberg's, a high point for "painting", is panned. With their involvement in the party, their relationship continues to get worse. The diary of this tormented period is published serially in *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*.

Not only is De Chirico under fire. In the 7<sup>th</sup> issue of "R.S.", Aragon and Breton publish *Proteste*, an attack on Ernst and Mirò's collaboration with the Ballets Russes "whose goal has always been the domestication, for the consumption of the international aristocracy, of dreams and intellectual revolts". The Surrealist's effort on this point is well-known; the group was divided between a traditional anarchist wing with little effect on the social order and those engaged in the Party and direct social action. At the beginning of 1926 Pierre Naville's book *La révolution des intellectuels: que peuvent faire les surréalistes?* appears. Its publication is noted in the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of "R.S." (December 1 1926; later published by Gallimard in 1928). The book is a challenge to the Surrealists: "The bourgeoisie is not touched by the moral scandals of the Surrealists; the movement must decide between Marxist line – direct social action – or staying in the negative anarchic vein". For a moment (*Légitime défense*, no. 8, December 1, 1926) Breton tries to defend his autonomy while professing himself to be Marxist. The following year, when he enters the party, he is forced to recant his statements in *Légitime défense*. And he makes no mention of it in the issue in the October 1 (1927) issue of "R.S." *Au grand jour*, published by the Editions Surréalistes in 1927, is made up of five letters by Aragon, Breton, Eluard, Peret, and Pierre Unik to the Belgians Nougé, Goemans, etc., announcing their allegiance to the French Communist Party. The purges begin. The Surrealists must declare which side they are on: whether they are for art – a bourgeois pleasure – or for revolution. Breton's infamous "excommunications" fall upon Artaud, Soupault, Cocteau, and Vitrac, among others. Georges Bataille is in danger and makes his exit with Ribemont-Dessaignes, becoming an "errant" Surrealist with his own magazine, "Documents" (1929), which opens its arms to de Chirico. The "faithful" are Aragon, Eluard, Goemans, and, among the artists: Magritte, Masson, and Picasso (the favorite). In order to enter the Party, Breton must submit to a harangue by members of the "Gas" cell, as an

<sup>86</sup> Baldacci 1994, p. 236.

<sup>87</sup> Bill of sale at Gualtieri di San Lazzaro: 665 Francs, dated September 21<sup>st</sup> 1928. Archives M.N.A.M. CCI.

<sup>88</sup> Arosa, June 7 1928. In P. Eluard, *Lettres à Gala (1924-1948)*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984.

“undesirable intellectual”, “infected” by his contact with Italian intellectuals close to the Regime like Massimo Bontempelli and others brought into the circle of the N.R.F.<sup>89</sup> by de Chirico and Nino Frank, Bontempelli’s deputy in Paris. Breton will describe this in the 2nd *Manifesto* (issue no. 12, December 15 1929; second edition in 1930) as well as in the 1952 interview.<sup>90</sup> Breton decries the toughness of the Communist cell, especially because while he is doing what he can to be accepted, Trotsky, the favourite, is expelled from the party and sent into exile. Therefore the rise to a political role has its price in intellectual independence. The second manifesto marks the end of the first Surrealist period. The magazine has ceased operations for over a year, and returns with the manifesto affirming that it exists only as an integral part of a revolutionary movement. “Life” has won out over “art”.

As an intellectual, de Chirico does not support any of the party’s ideological choices, while he accepts to appear above the head of Breton the anarchist. In the same year (1927) while in Paris, de Chirico officially distances himself from the Italian Fascist Party with a celebrated interview in “Comoedia” in which he comments on the provincialist quality of the “Fascist” painters of “Novecento” and elsewhere. Faced with two orthodoxies, one on the right and the other on the left, he declares his independence as an artist in the limelight. The games begin. At this point the Surrealists make their move which is meant to be a checkmate: a personality switch. The living de Chirico is expropriated from his present self and substituted with his former self. The principle of expropriation of bourgeois property is applied to intellectual property. The Surrealists invent titles and paintings by de Chirico. The volume *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* is conceived and presented as a book on de Chirico and written against de Chirico. The foundation of its theory is the reality beyond reality of the mind and of dreams on the one hand, and the relationship between things and words on the other. The game is different now: Picasso is the new idol. He is used as a lightning rod to protect the group against ideological attacks from the left: “For fifteen years Picasso has been the reflector... If Surrealism wants to impose a line of action on itself, it must go where Picasso has gone and will go in the future.”<sup>91</sup> De Chirico is “dead”; page after page speaks of his death in 1917 and his decomposed corpse. Breton describes his work with the artist: “It took me five years to give up on de Chirico, to admit that he had lost all understanding of what he was doing.”<sup>92</sup> The trial is on: he is an “Italian slave.” The Roman subjects (*Gladiators*, etc.) are denounced as Fascist: “Italy, Fascism: one of his paintings is so deplorable that it could be entitled: *Legionario romano contempla i paesi conquistati* (Roman legionnaire contemplates conquered lands).”<sup>93</sup> Judgement is handed down: “an amoral person.” Breton is actually performing a typical act of self-criticism. De Chirico is the scapegoat onto whom a personal conflict is transferred; Picasso is the guarantor. Breton’s fever is so strong that he adds other illustrious deceased to his coffin: Matisse and Derain. When one thinks of Apollinaire’s admiration for Matisse and de Chirico, and Breton’s devotion for Apollinaire, it is clear that he is the one sub-

<sup>89</sup> Correspondance J. Paulban-G. Ungaretti, op.cit., p. 122.

<sup>90</sup> Broadcasting interview with André Parinaud, march-june 1952. Ed. Point du Jour, Paris, Gallimard, 1952.

<sup>91</sup> A. Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris, Gallimard, 1928), op.cit., p. 7.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16.

mitting to the Inquisition's auto-da-fé. Breton cites de Chirico's manuscripts, the *Manoscritti Eluard-Picasso*, to demonstrate the loss of genius. Apart from passionate ideology, the event marks one of the darkest hours of the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. De Chirico is a target of the left and of the right: he is marked by the Fascists as an unworthy Italian and by the Communist surrealists as a Fascist.

### 1929

Bataille, Desnos, Leiris, Limbour, and Vitrac are thrown out of the Surrealist group. Bataille immediately begins to publish his own magazine, which is sympathetic to de Chirico, "Documents". In July, Eluard, who is moving to a new house, must acquire new furniture. He writes to Gala: "In the end, all in all, it will cost us some small object and an important de Chirico. It's worth it, we'll get more use out of it. I've bought so many things! Oh well. But there are good deals to be made. Tomorrow, I hope to find an elderly American lady who doesn't know what she's doing..."<sup>94</sup> Eluard writes that he has "bought so many things" in Holland with his mother that June. Mrs. Eluard has acquired "an early de Chirico, very beautiful, for 15.000 francs. A deal!"<sup>95</sup> The magazine "Bifur", sympathetic to the Communists (edited by Ribemont-Dessaignes; James Joyce, Nino Frank, and Bruno Barilli are on the editorial board) publishes part of de Chirico's literary masterpiece, the metaphysical novel *Hebdômeros*, in July.<sup>96</sup> Bruno Barilli is a friend of de Chirico's; in June, Ungaretti writes: "[These are] the same individuals who have made de Chirico's life impossible, while I alone have defended him. This defense, at a time when politics and art are combined... radicalized the evil, bringing a solidarity which no-one could have suspected. When, at the time of the interview in 'Comoedia', someone pushed for revoking de Chirico's citizenship, I alone defended him. And this same person I allude to now accuses me of scant Fascism — and I have devoted my life to Fascism — in a letter to the director of 'Tevere' in reaction to my defense."<sup>97</sup> In December, "Bifur" (ed. Du Carrefour) publishes the novel *Hebdômeros*, which is greatly admired by the Surrealists. Ungaretti is critical of the book: "It doesn't have that softness that poetry requires in order to dance, run, float, and ride a cloud in the sky."<sup>98</sup> These are his Italian friends. Breton publishes the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Surrealist Manifesto* in the last issue of "R.S." on December 15. It is shown with *La guerre* by de Chirico, while *La politique* illustrates *Introduction à 1930* by Aragon.<sup>99</sup> The new dominant Surrealists are René Char, Luis Buñuel, René Magritte, and Salvador Dalí.

### 1930

At the Congress of revolutionary writers in Kharkov (November 6-11), Aragon and Sadoul sign a document of self-criticism condemning the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Surrealist Manifesto*; once they are back in Paris, they recant.

### 1931

De Chirico is in serious financial straits. On February 19, he writes to Rosenberg asking for help — he is selling his apartment and his furniture — and offers him 3 paint-

<sup>94</sup> P. Eluard, *Lettres à Gala* (1924-1948), op.cit., p. 85.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>96</sup> No. 2, Paris, July 25.

<sup>97</sup> *Correspondance J. Paulhan-G. Ungaretti*, op.cit., p. 184.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 186.

<sup>99</sup> "La Révolution Surréaliste" no.12, Paris, Dec. 15, 1929, pp. 1-17.

ings: *Les Canards* and two still lifes with fruit.<sup>100</sup> On October 3, Rosenberg writes to Max Ernst: "Malgré son infidélité proverbiale, tant vis-à-vis de son art que vis-à-vis de tous ses défenseurs, j'ai fait acheter directement chez ce peintre, cette année, d'une façon tout à fait désintéressée, comme vous le pensez bien, pour environ 80,000 francs de peinture récente par divers membres de ma famille, de goût très conservateurs".<sup>101</sup> This letter follows a total attack in a letter dated February 23, which accuses the artist of changing buyers and styles with maddening facility. Earlier, Picabia wrote to Rosenberg: "Paul Guillaume is here, and has spoken to me about de Chirico in anxious terms. He says: 'I've been compromised'".<sup>102</sup>

### 1932

"Compromised" is the word used by Waldemar Georges, who had stood against Breton in the de Chirico controversy, and had later been integrated into the cause of the Italians who were "disgusted" with the artist. George writes *Vie et mort de de Chirico* in "L'amour de l'art".<sup>103</sup> Waldemar George who collaborates with Italian powers hostile to de Chirico, is now an intimate of Alberto Savinio.

### 1933

The magazine "Le Surréalisme de la Révolution" does not publish an issue for over a year due to lack of funds. Eluard, Breton's treasurer, signs a contract with the printer René Laporte. In order to raise funds (6.000 Francs) he offers to sell a de Chirico to the Viscount Charles de Noailles. On May 15, in the 6<sup>th</sup> issue of "Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution," de Chirico's painting *L'énigme d'une journée* (which belongs to Breton) is the object of a questionnaire. To Eluard's five questions by Eluard, Gala, Dalí, himself, and Roger Caillois, among others, respond. The one concerning de Chirico is entitled: *Sur le possibilités irrationnelles de pénétration et d'orientation dans un tableau*.<sup>104</sup> It is illustrated with a drawing of *L'énigme d'une journée*: false. Eluard refers on it quietly to Gala as a "copying by stroke".<sup>105</sup> On July 3, all of the Surrealists are kicked out of the A.E.A.R.

### 1934

September, the Spanish painter Oscar Dominguez invites Breton and Eluard to the Canary Islands for the screening of Buñuel and Dalí's *L'âge d'or*. Dominguez was close to both Breton and Eluard.<sup>106</sup> Man Ray regularly inserts a photograph of de Chirico in his photomontage *L'échiquier surréaliste* (The Surrealist Chessboard).

### 1935

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, with an the invitation from the Czech Surrealists, Breton goes to Prague with Eluard to participate in the Czech Surrealist exhibit at the "Artist's Circle." In the April issue of the magazine "L'Europe Centrale," there is an announcement of a de Chirico show; de Chirico writes to Carrà saying that he has stayed in Prague for a month.<sup>107</sup> Immediately afterwards, a significant number of paintings declared false by de Chirico come out of Prague. This is a real mystery in the relation-

<sup>100</sup> Archives M.N.A.M.-CCI.

<sup>101</sup> "Despite his proverbial infidelity, both towards his art and towards his defenders, this year I – with complete disinterest (as you can see) – encouraged members of my family – with very... conservative taste – to buy recent works in the amount of 80,000 francs." October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1931, Archives M.N.A.M.-CCI, Paris.

<sup>102</sup> August 11 1931, Archives M.N.A.M.-CCI.

<sup>103</sup> "L'amour de l'art", no. 4, Paris, April 1932.

<sup>104</sup> "Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution", no. 6, Paris, May 15, 1933, pp. 13-16.

<sup>105</sup> P. Eluard, *Lettres à Gala (1924-1948)*, op.cit., p. 208.

<sup>106</sup> V. Wieland Schmied, *Die Strategie der Fälscher in De Chirico un sein Schatten*, 1989. Dominguez's fakes appear in P. Baldacci, *Betraying the Muse*, op.cit. 1994, pp. 237-240.

<sup>107</sup> cfr. M. Fagiolo in G. de Chirico, *Il meccanismo del pensiero*, op.cit. p. 473.

ship between de Chirico and Breton and Eluard. The April show coincides with the Surrealist celebrations, and de Chirico is in Prague. The Prague fakes are not in the same style as the fakes produced by Dominguez. On April 27, at the invitation of Dominguez, Breton travels to Tenerife in the Canary Islands. His trips to the island become more frequent.

On June 20 at the *Congress for the Defense of Writers* organized under the direction of Moscow to denounce Fascism, Breton is not allowed to speak, following an argument with Ilya Ehrenburg who had attacked Surrealism. His speech is read by Eluard. Breton takes an official stand against the Franco-Soviet pact and against Stalin. It is known that he is experiencing financial difficulties; he sells several paintings and texts to Alfred Barr for the MOMA. Breton asks Pierre Matisse, who is preparing a de Chirico exhibit, to pay him a fee of 15,000 Francs for *L'énigme d'une journée*, and 12,000 for *Le cerveau de l'enfant*, but does not sell them outright. In late July Pierre Matisse is in Paris; Eluard proposes: *Le Duo* (25,000 fr.), *Potrait de l'artiste* (which belongs to Gala, 6,000 fr.), *Le départ du poète* (10,000 fr.), *Le torse aux bananes* (9,000 fr.; it is sold to Roland Penrose with the title *L'incertitude du poète* in 1938), *Le grand intérieur métaphysique* (belonging to Gala, 10,000 fr.), and *Petit intérieur métaphysique avec les objets de pêche* (4,000 fr.). In September, Eluard writes to Gala, who is in New York: "I am about to see Matisse again. I am not enthusiastic about being separated for a long time from the de Chiricos. If war breaks out we'll never see them again. And they are among the few things that are marketable these days".<sup>108</sup> He asks the price of her pencil drawing *Napoléon III (Le révenant)*, "the one in the bedroom," and that of her "very green, very beautiful" *Intérieur métaphysique*.<sup>109</sup>

At the end of October de Chirico is in Paris again. Gualtieri di San Lazzaro recreates the atmosphere of the meeting between the artist and Breton which he has witnessed: " 'One of these days we will settle our accounts,' de Chirico shouted, without letting go of Silvio's hand. 'Let's settle them right now,' answered the other, turning back, disdainful and Olympic. And with one blow, he knocked the unfortunate painter to the ground, under a tree." Five or six times the painter stood up, only to be knocked down again by Breton.<sup>110</sup>

### 1936

April. First break between Breton and Eluard. After the second Surrealist exhibition in London at the Burlington Galleries (organized by Herbert Read with an introduction by Breton), Roland Penrose buys a substantial part of Eluard's collection. Breton asks to purchase a drawing by Picasso which he is extremely attached to, "which will practically save his life".<sup>111</sup> He still holds on to "his" de Chiricos. At the end of the year he openly sides with Trotsky.

### 1937

In February, in financial trouble, Breton agrees to direct the Gradiva gallery, as Freud's short story. He begs Picasso to help him with some paintings.<sup>112</sup> The fol-

<sup>108</sup> Letter to Gala, Paris, August 1935. In P. Eluard, *Lettres à Gala (1924-1948)*, Gallimard, Paris 1984, p. 259.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 158.

<sup>110</sup> G. di San Lazzaro, *Parigi era viva (1949)*, Milan, Mondadori, 1966, pp. 148-9.

<sup>111</sup> July 6, 1936, Penrose Archives.

<sup>112</sup> Musée Picasso Archives.

lowing year he quits. Breton launches the equivalent of de Chirico-Savinio in the invention of the Metaphysic. Galleries such as Milione, Milano, in Italy, support his line of thought.

### 1938

On February 17th, Breton and Eluard organize the large Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme at the Galerie des Beaux-Arts. In March, Breton's essay *Accomplissement onirique et genèse d'un tableau animé* is published in "Cahiers. G.L.M."; it describes the creation of a painting by Dominguez which he has witnessed.<sup>113</sup> The essay is accompanied by a reproduction of de Chirico's *La pureté d'un rêve*. Breton superimposes the two painters as figures in a game of which he is the author. In November, Eluard tells Gala in a letter that his association with Breton has definitively come to an end. The final insult is a report in "Cahiers. G.L.M." in which Breton forbids any mention of Eluard.<sup>114</sup> The sequence of events shows that the most durable relationship is that between Breton and Dominguez, even though Eluard also has a relationship with Dominguez and does not make it secret that he owns false de Chiricos painted by Dominguez.<sup>115</sup>

### 1939

With *L'Anthologie de l'humour noir*, Breton declares that de Chirico e Savinio are ex-aequo inventors, "indiscernables" from the Metaphysics period.<sup>116</sup> The Italian magazine of the regime "Prospettive" by Curzio Malaparte, with which Savinio collaborates, publishes a monographic issue on Surrealism.

### 1942

"VVV" the magazine co-directed by Breton and David Hare publishes Robert Motherwell's ideas about de Chirico which "corrects" Breton's own position about de Chirico's "early period".<sup>117</sup> The catalogue *First papers of Surrealism*, New York, edited by Marcel Duchamp<sup>118</sup> reports the drawing by Max Ernst copying the *Portrait de Guillaume Apollinaire*. The drawing, in the collection of Roland Penrose, appears as a work by de Chirico, together with a portrait of de Chirico as a sculpture.

### 1946

June. The Galerie Allard (in Paris) opens a show on de Chirico. Twenty forgeries by Oscar Dominguez are included in the show. De Chirico creates a scandal in the papers.<sup>119</sup> One of these forgeries, a *Trovatore*, which appears to have belonged to Eluard, is exhibited at the show of metaphysical art at the Venice Biennale in 1948. The jury of the Biennale is made up of Carlo Carrà, Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, and by Roberto Longhi, a "historic" enemy of de Chirico in the twenties and beyond.

The story continues.

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<sup>113</sup> Cahiers. "G.L.M.", issue no. 7, Paris, March 1938, pp. 52-53.

<sup>114</sup> P. Eluard, *Lettres à Gala* (1924-1948), op.cit., p. 292.

<sup>115</sup> Baldacci, 1994, p. 292.

<sup>116</sup> A. Breton *L'Anthologie de l'humour noir*, Paris, ed. du Sagittaire, 1939, p. 98.

<sup>117</sup> R. Motherwell, *Notes on Mondrian and De Chirico*, "VVV" no. 1, New York, June 1942.

<sup>118</sup> *First papers of Surrealism*, edited by Marcel Duchamp, Whitelaw Reid Mansion (Madison Avenue) New York, oct. 14-nov. 7 1942.

<sup>119</sup> Schmied 1989, p. 71.