



G. de Chirico, Set-design sketch for *The Daughter of Iorio*, Act III: "A large country, yard; in the farther end an oak, venerable with age, beyond the fields, bounded by mountains, furrowed by torrents; on the left, the house of Lazaro, the door open, the porch littered with agricultural implements; on the right, the haystack, the mill, and the straw stack", pencil and watercolor on paper, 32,5x50,5 cm, pastoral tragedy in three acts by Gabriele D'Annunzio

GIORGIO DE CHIRICO: THE LESSON OF THE GREEKS FOR A NEW STAGING OF *THE DAUGHTER OF IORIO*

Roberta Di Nicola

“The young hero that has overcome everything, a free spirit,
without dogma – certainly this is better than all the stupidity
of modern life and of life in the past”

G. de Chirico, letter to E. Gartz (1911)¹

1. Recovering the Classics and Dissenting with the Moderns

In 1914, Giorgio de Chirico was at odds with the French press, especially «Paris-Midi», which, “with the exception of Mr. Apollinaire”, had criticized his Metaphysical painting, exhibited the year before at the Salon des Indépendants, comparing it to “theatrical scenery”.² In the eyes of his contemporaries, the figurative relationship between de Chirico’s “Piazze d’Italia” and established contemporary theatre must have been obvious. Such affinities derived from an undisputed common knowledge of literary sources and, in de Chirico’s case, especially of philosophical ones. The critics have found aesthetic analogies between de Chirico’s painting and Gabriele D’Annunzio’s theatrical conceptions, so much so that Maurizio Calvesi details some of those analogies in the following terms: “[...] the themes of infinity, of solitude, of silence, of the struggle with time, of mystery and enigma, of deserted streets, of silent squares above which the equestrian monument hovers like a shadow [...] can all be identified one by one in D’Annunzio. [...] This does not imply a direct filiation, but attests to the diffusion of such themes also and especially in Italian culture”.³

Still, despite standard cultural formation of his time, the genuineness of the Metaphysical innovation in de Chirico’s subsequent works and their distinctiveness from scenographic illustration were not questioned. “Such allegation [...] – concludes Calvesi – was eventually dropped over time as de Chirico filled the space of his paintings with indecipherable things and mannequins”.⁴

In 1911, the two de Chirico brothers, Giorgio and Andrea (the latter not yet known by the pseudonym Alberto Savinio⁵) had moved with their mother to Paris at the very same time as did

¹ G. De Chirico, letter to E. Gartz, 5 January 1911, in *Letters by Giorgio de Chirico, Gemma de Chirico and Alberto de Chirico to Fritz Gartz, 1908-1911*, in «Metafisica» n. 7/8 (2008), p. 565 (trans. K. Robinson).

² M. Calvesi, *La Metafisica schiarita: Da de Chirico a Carrà, da Morandi a Savinio*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1982, p. 82.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 81. [To avoid repetition, we shall refer to D’Annunzio also with his nickname “Vate” (“inspired poet”); Translator’s note].

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 82.

⁵ In Paris, when we decided to ‘diversify’, it was me [Giorgio de Chirico] who found him the pseudonym by which he later became known: Alberto Savinio. I would have done better to keep Savinio for myself and leave de Chirico to him, if I think about how my last name is being distorted abroad. In France, for example, they say ‘Sciricò’, M. Savinio, *Con Savinio: Ricordi e lettere*, edited by A[ngelica] Savinio, Sellerio, Palermo 1987, p. 37.

Gabriele D'Annunzio, who was “more inclined than ever to ride the wave of success and admiration unparalleled in the Parisian salons and cultural circles”.⁶ We can infer that, as protagonists of the same Parisian cultural scene, in a general atmosphere of dissent, especially towards the painter's revolutionary art, de Chirico and D'Annunzio must have been familiar about each other's poetics. The misunderstandings about Giorgio de Chirico's painting were joined by those about his brother Alberto Savinio's music and avant-garde plays. Maria Morino, Savinio's wife, recalls that especially during those years in Paris her Betti⁷ “was happy to work, say and do what he felt and wanted. His great freedom of thought enabled him to follow his own path and adopt a work style without distraction or lapse, until the very last day of his life”.⁸ In 1925, Morino returned together with her sister Jone to Italy from the tour with Luigi Pirandello's theater company.⁹ Although they both enjoyed the “paternal” benevolence of the Sicilian writer, an undisputed world-famous intellectual, she could not but notice the general dislike for Savinio's art: “At that time, in Milan [...], many intellectuals frequented the Corso Hotel [...] Some of them had expressed themselves unfavorably about Savinio's art, which they considered ‘negative’. It was then that I began to realize how his bold and innovative ideas were opposed”.¹⁰ Alberto Savinio himself later responded to his critics deploying arguments¹¹ that above all touched upon the D'Annunzio's excess of *aestheticism*.

To put it better – wrote Savinio – aestheticism is the worst part of a culture: it is its ephemeral, degenerate, rotten part. Its throw out, its waste, its smudge. Even better, aestheticism is the “pearl”, the “disease” of a culture. As such [...] aestheticism, the “corrupted” form of culture, almost always succeeds in being more and more accepted, more welcome, more “popular” than the healthy, clean, serious forms of culture itself. In art, what is *faisandé* is in high esteem.¹²

6 L. Lijoi, «*La mort parfumée*»: Alberto Savinio tra D'Annunzio e dannunzianesimo, in *L'Italianistica oggi: ricerca e didattica*. Atti del XIX Congresso dell'ADI-Associazione degli Italianisti (Rome, 9-12 September 2015) edited by B. Alfonzetti, T. Cancro, V. Di Iasio, E. Pietrobon, ADI, Rome 2017, p. 1. Another very successful tragedy by D'Annunzio, entitled *Le chèvrefeuille*, was composed in 1913 in French and debuted at the Porte Saint-Martin theater in Paris on 14 December of that same year. See G. D'Annunzio, *La figlia di Iorio*, edited by M. M. Cappellini, under the patronage of Fondazione Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, Mondadori, Milan 2009, pp. CLXXIV-CLXXV.

⁷ This was his nickname in the family, see M. Savinio, *Con Savinio*, cit., p. 36. De Chirico wrote in his memoirs that the diminutives for his name and that of his brother were “Giorgino and Betty [sic]”, see G. De Chirico, *The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico*, Da Capo Press, New York 1994, p. 92.

⁸ M. Savinio, *Con Savinio*, cit., p. 15

⁹ The famous Morino sisters, Maria and Jone, also worked for Eleonora Duse's company, after long years of silence by the actress in the mid-1920s. Maria Morino recounts: “Then one day – a memorable day – we received a telegram message from Eleonora Duse calling us to Vienna where the recently formed Company was staying. [...] Duse had with her very good actors [...] and wanted us, the two Morino sisters, as young actresses”, see *ibidem*, p. 20.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 33-34.

¹¹ To that, Savinio replied: “To present to such a cultivated public works by artists who have distinguished themselves for their common vulgarity and sloppiness, poses a very serious threat, if not even a crime of lese national idiocy. How can ever be possible that people accustomed to complacency in the ugliness that Italian painting has produced for so many years [...] are able to look with a clear and intelligent eye at the works of some artists, who, making their way through the aforementioned ugliness, try to reconnect with the tradition of great painting, and while nourishing themselves on ancient teachings bring forward [...] new experiences and a new and broader culture”, A. Savinio, *La nascita di Venere: Scritti sull'arte*, edited by G. Montesano and V. Trione, with nine drawings by the author, Adelphi, Milan 2007, p. 119.

¹² A. Savinio, *Estetismo*, in «La Stampa», Turin 8 April 1936, quoted in L. Lijoi, «*La mort parfumée*», cit., pp. 2-3 and accessible on www.archiviolaStampa.it (last access 19 September 2020).

Arguably, it was the anguish conjured up by Metaphysical art, rather than by the “less sophisticated” plays by D’Annunzio’s, that compelled the individual to a reappraisal of the sense of pain and pleasure present in the anti-dogmatic dimension of existence. Metaphysical Art aroused a strong feeling somewhat connected to that intimate fear that forces individuals and their intellect to question themselves for an in-depth investigation of their limits. The radical revival of classical themes in Metaphysical Art synthesized the idea that contemporary thought was reconsidering man and his existence in the tragic dimension of the philosophical *nonsense* revealed in the recovery of “Greek wisdom” by late XIX century philosophers.

It is precisely with D’Annunzio that in the early years of the XX century Giorgio de Chirico seemed to have shared some common ideas, influenced by ancient Greek literature (fig. 1).¹³ Their commonality of ideas concerned, in particular, the secular conception of the values of life and death according to “ancient Greek wisdom”, a permanent feature in de Chirico’s poetics as well as in the Vate’s idea of theater. In 1900, while in Florence, D’Annunzio wrote the preface to his friend Angelo Conti’s *La beata riva* (fig. 2). For its aesthetic importance, resting on the revival of themes related to those “ancient ideals” that modern culture seemed to have lost, D’Annunzio saw it as “a first essay into a general aesthetics that relies on the ancient Greek examples and the most genuine specimens of the Italian Quattrocento and the Renaissance”.¹⁴ Moreover, the subtitle of Conti’s work *Trattato dell’oblio* [A Treatise on Oblivion]

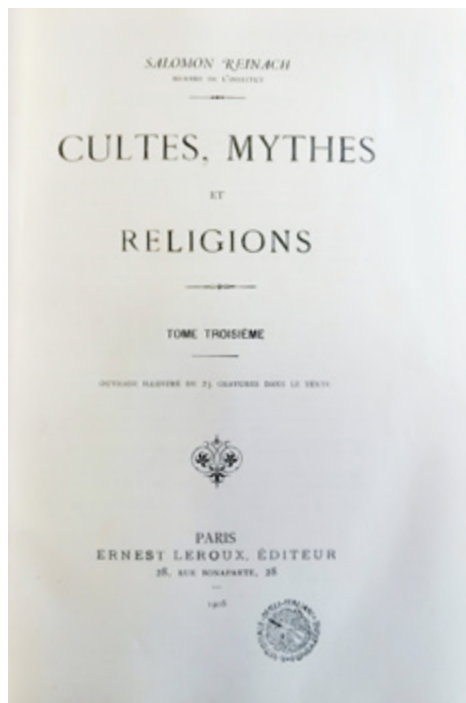


fig. 1 S. Reinach, *Cultes, mythes et religion*, Éditions E. Leroux, Paris 1908. Work owned by Gabriele D’Annunzio and kept in the Archives of the Fondazione Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, Gardone Riviera

¹³ In this regard, it is interesting to note that the two great artists shared common readings on antiquity, perhaps also because of some personal life experiences that had led them to approach classical spirituality directly (de Chirico was born in Greece and D’Annunzio visited it at the end of the XIX century). Moreover, D’Annunzio possessed the volumes of the work of S. Reinach, *Cultes, mythes et religions*, Éditions E. Leroux, Paris 1908, now in the Archives of the Fondazione Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, Gardone Riviera. In the third tome, the paragraph entitled “La mort du gran Pan” was highlighted by D’Annunzio. In 1910, while in Florence de Chirico consulted the same edition of Reinach’s work along with other books on Greece: “[...] de Chirico borrowed from the B.N.C.F. an edition of 1908 (in 3 volumes) – Salomon Reinach, *Cultes, mythes et religions*, II ed., Éditions E. Leroux, Paris 1908 – between 10 and 30 November 1910. This is the first title the artist requested to borrow instead of consulting it on site, as he had done exclusively for the previous six months or so”, V. Noel-Johnson, *La formazione di de Chirico a Firenze (1910-1911): La scoperta dei registri della B.N.C.F.*, in «Metafisica» n. 11/13 (2014), p. 192.

¹⁴ A. Conti, *La beata riva: Trattato dell’oblio. Preceduta da un ragionamento di Gabriele D’Annunzio*, Fratelli Treves Editore, Milan 1900, pp. XXVI-XXVII. A. Conti, *La beata riva: Trattato dell’oblio. Preceduta da un ragionamento di Gabriele D’Annunzio*, Fratelli Treves Editore, Milan 1900, pp. XXVI-XXVII. D’Annunzio’s copy is now kept in the Archivio D’Annunzio. He highlighted and annotated several passages of this work, especially those sections dealing with the topic of the essence of nature.

contained a clear reference to the late XIX century philosophical legacy, especially Schopenhauer, with which D'Annunzio had engaged several times. It seems that the question of the atheistic truth of being, coupled with a critique to traditional metaphysics to which the poet refers, will greatly resonate in de Chirico's own aesthetics a few years later. In the light of the revival of Greek wisdom's main themes, both the painter and the poet heartily agreed that the knowledge of human existence is grounded on nonsense. They both showed, although differently, the large hiatus between Greek wisdom and the established conception of truth at the beginning of the century.

Back then – in the Hellenic age – the more the intellect was synthetic, the more it is today solely engaged in analysis. The activity of the intellect, which the Greeks almost exclusively devoted to art, today is busy dividing and subdividing the great trunk of human knowledge into a thousand branches. We are thus very far from the times when poetry was considered the peak of human spirit. Today, poetry, and art in general, is considered a pastime, an amusing artifice.¹⁵

In the preface to Conti's work, D'Annunzio contrasts the exacting scientific rigor of reason's dominance over nature (a mindset already present at the end of XIX century) with the core values

of ancient Greek wisdom. The Vate then revisited the concept of "tragic" starting from the one's awareness of death, which the modern individual self-deceivingly tries to escape. Man is mortal, there is nothing else after life. Earthly pain loses its meaning as it is a tragic element of life itself. The *unbridled* desire for absolute truth was the error that D'Annunzio attributed, not by chance, to previous generations, who deluded themselves into understanding the mysteries of human existence, which is nothing but mystery. He writes: "Leave to truth its veils for the sake of decency; respect the modesty with which venerable nature hides behind the specious fabric of its enigmas; get accustomed to balance with agile elegance its slender rope of probabilities stretched out over the abyss".¹⁶

The writing of *La beata riva* revealed that the innovative idea of the recovery of classical Greek culture, which, starting with Friedrich Nietzsche, culminated in *The Birth of Tragedy*, was widely circulating. Also, since Conti's work summarized *The*



fig. 2 A. Conti, *La beata riva: Trattato dell'oblio*, with a preface by Gabriele D'Annunzio, Fratelli Treves Editore, Milan 1900. Work owned by Gabriele D'Annunzio and kept in the Archives of the Fondazione Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, Gardone Riviera

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 175.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. XXXIV-XXXV.

Birth of Tragedy, D'Annunzio had the chance to familiarize with the most significant parts of the Nietzschean text as early as 1900, that is, before the Italian translation was released. The essay of the German philosopher proves to be an essential source for the Vate's conception of theater as well as for de Chirico's Metaphysical painting. De Chirico read *The Birth of Tragedy* in Florence only ten years later, in the 1901¹⁷ French translation, that is, in the same edition found in D'Annunzio's private library (fig. 3),¹⁸ a copy he probably owned since the last days of his stay at the Capponcina (1897-1910).¹⁹ A recovery of tragic themes can be found in the poet's personal literary interpretations and in de Chirico's artistic-philosophical ones. As fate would have it, they worked together in the 1934 staging of D'Annunzio's pastoral tragedy *The Daughter of Iorio*.

Luigi Pirandello too joined in this revival, as

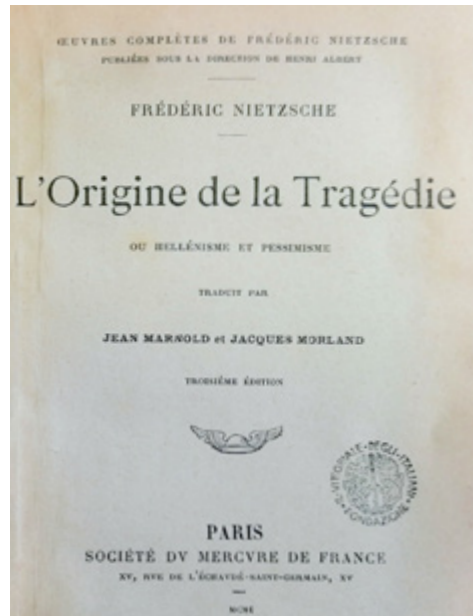


fig. 3 F. Nietzsche, *L'origine de la tragédie, ou Hellénisme et pessimisme*, edited by J. Morland and J. Marnold, 3rd edition, Mercure de France, Paris 1901. Work owned by Gabriele D'Annunzio and kept in the Archives of the Fondazione Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, Gardone Riviera

¹⁷ See V. Noel-Johnson, *La formazione di de Chirico a Firenze*, cit., p. 184.

¹⁸ D'Annunzio owned a French translation of the *Geburt der Tragödie*, published with the title *L'origine de la tragédie, ou Hellénisme et pessimisme*, edited by J. Morland and J. Marnold, 3rd edition, Mercure de France, Paris 1901. D'Annunzio's proven knowledge and admiration for the philosopher dates back to a 1893 article entitled *Il Caso Wagner*, in which we read: "Federico Nietzsche! 'Who is this?' will ask many of my readers, who are not yet acquainted with the fame of this German philosopher who so violently assails contemporary bourgeois doctrines and ever-renewed Christianity. He is one of the most original spirits that have appeared at the end of this century, and one of the most daring. The results of his intellectual speculation are contained in bizarre books, written in a harsh and effective style, where paradoxes alternate with sarcasm and flaming invectives with exact formulas. The most significant of his books are: *Così parlò Zarathustra*, *Genealogia della Morale*, *Di là dal Bene e dal Male*, *Crepuscolo dei Falsi Iddii*, *La Gaia Scienza*, in G. D'Annunzio, *Scritti giornalistici*, edited by A. Andreoli, 2 vols., Mondadori, Milan 2003, II, p. 234. *The Birth of Tragedy* is not mentioned in this article, probably because the French translation from German was published in 1901 and the Italian one only in 1907. The scholar Guy Tosi has shown that in April 1892 D'Annunzio had read an article by Jean de Nèthy, entitled *Nietzsche-Zarathustra* in the *Revue Blanche*" (see G. Tosi, *D'Annunzio découvre Nietzsche*, *«Italianistica»*, n. 2 [1973], pp. 481-513). Tosi also identified D'Annunzio's ultimate Nietzschean source in the anthology entitled *À travers l'œuvre de Frédéric Nietzsche. Extraits de tous ses ouvrages*, edited by Paul Lauterbach and Adrien Wagnon and published in Paris in 1893 (the same year as D'Annunzio's *Il Caso Wagner*). This anthology preceded all the Italian as well as the French translations of any single work by Nietzsche, see *D'Annunzio and French culture. Saggi e Studi (1942-1987)*, edited by M. Rasera, 2 tomes, Carabba, Lanciano 2013, II, pp. 1037-1039.

¹⁹ In recalling his relationship with D'Annunzio, Antonio Bruers wrote: "It was 1929. Seven years had passed since he – D'Annunzio – had landed in Gardone; his political preoccupations were yielding to his literary passion and he felt a more and more pressing need of his study books. The books had been rescued from the Capponcina disaster; on the other hand, he had made some great purchases while in France. During the war, a part of the books remained in Italy kept by his friends; those bought in France, instead, had remained in Arcachon. He gathered them back in Gardone, adding them to the vast bookshop once belonged to the illustrious historian Henry Thode, the owner of the building later bought by D'Annunzio and renamed 'Vittoriale degli Italiani'", in *Carteggio D'Annunzio-Bruers*, edited by M. Menna and R. Castagnola, with an essay by L. Lattarulo, Carabba, Lanciano 2011, p. 42. The historian Henry Thode married Richard Wagner's stepdaughter, Daniela von Bülow, daughter of Cosima Liszt, Wagner's second wife and friend of Nietzsche. Today, in the collection of works owned by Thode at the Vittoriale it is still possible to see a picture of Cosima. Bruers (Bologna 1887-Rome 1954) was a scholar of philosophy, literature, spiritualistic doctrines and occultism to the point of being nicknamed "Antonio Occulto" by D'Annunzio (*ibidem*, p. 7). Bruers was a friend to the Vate, as well as his librarian and archivist at the Vittoriale degli Italiani.

he directed the play and chose Giorgio de Chirico as set designer.²⁰ As director, Pirandello concluded the inaugural speech at the Volta Conference for Dramatic Theater in 1934 with these words: “when dealing with the themes proposed [...] we shall always aim to keep alive the cult and defend the fate of what the Greeks considered the supreme and most mature expression of art: Theater”.²¹ D’Annunzio’s inspiration for *The Daughter of Iorio* did not come from literature, but from the folklore of the poet’s birthplace, that is Abruzzo, as his painter friend Francesco Paolo Michetti had depicted it. The play was completed in little more than a month in the summer of 1903, and reached a degree of theatricality perhaps higher than the Vate’s earlier plays.²² *The Daughter of Iorio* triumphantly premiered at the Teatro Lirico in Milan on 2 March 1904 (Ruggero Ruggeri played the character of Aligi and Teresa Franchini that of Mila).²³ Its staging was unprecedented in Italian theater. In summer 1895, D’Annunzio had traveled to Greece, an experience that struck his soul so deeply that his “itinerary”, like a pilgrimage, was compared to Charles Dielhs’ spiritual voyage narrated in the book *Excursions Archéologiques en Grèce*, published in Paris in 1890.²⁴ As can be inferred from his travel notebooks, D’Annunzio apparently “found” ancient Greece in Abruzzo, a land that was both his native land and the ideal theatrical setting for his pastoral drama. The subtle play of roles revealed by the tragic characters’ most unconscious actions unveiled the author’s two faces: the great worldly inspired poet (the “Vate”) and the nostalgic Abruzzo native. D’Annunzio himself, who made his life a perennial aesthetic *mise-en-scène*, was lured to the stage, putting on and off the Pirandellian masks that symbolized a multifarious existence, while paradoxically failing to make friends with the Sicilian playwright.

2. Anti-scenographer as Anti-dogma. De Chirico and the Volta Conference, 1934

Critics opposed de Chirico’s aesthetic rigor especially when he worked as set designer (1924-1971). It happened for the first time in 1924 with the scenery and costumes of *La giara*,²⁵ and then in 1933 with the staging of *The Puritans* in Florence. In 1934,²⁶ the scenes of the pastoral tragedy

²⁰ Their collaboration began in Paris in 1924 for the staging of *La giara*, with music by Alfredo Casella.

²¹ See www.studiodilugipirandello.it/collezione-digitale/convegno-volta-per-il-teatro-drammatico-1934/ (last access 18 September 2020).

²² “Among the first to whom D’Annunzio had communicated the completion of the tragedy was, it was seen, the painter Francesco Paolo Michetti [...]. D’Annunzio therefore acknowledged an explicit and precise inspirational function to Michetti’s painting”, M.M. Cappellini, in G. D’Annunzio, *La figlia di Iorio*, cit., pp. XV-XVI. Moreover, “those *Usi e Costumi* – De Nino –, those *Fiabe abruzzesi* – Finamore –, constitutes the ethnographic material which inform *The Daughter of Iorio* [...] On this basis, «L’Italo» had already carefully identified some of D’Annunzio’s literary debts [...]”. *Ibidem*, p. XXXVI.

²³ “*The editio princeps of La figlia di Iorio* was published in 1904 in Milan by Fratelli Treves. The play then appeared in the the *Opera Omnia* edited by the ‘Istituto nazionale per la pubblicazione di tutte le opere di Gabriele D’Annunzio’, printed in the officine veronesi Arnoldo Mondadori in Milan”, *Ibidem*, p. CCV.

²⁴ “The Taccuini yield a suggestive picture of ancient Greece. It is an archetypal rediscovery that takes place in the summer of 1895”, C. Santoli, *Il paesaggio della Grecia nei Taccuini*, in «Archivio D’Annunzio» n. 3 (2016), p. 51.

²⁵ Comedy by Luigi Pirandello, I Balletti Svedesi, Paris, 1924, with music by Alfredo Casella, cfr. M. Ursino, *De Chirico scenografo (1924-1971)*, lecture held at the conference *De Chirico e la Musica*, Museo nazionale degli strumenti musicali, Rome, on 25 February 2016 (online at <http://news-art.it/news/de-chirico-scenografo--un-nuovo-contributo-su.html>, last access 18 September 2020).

²⁶ De Chirico executed 27 sketches: “27 watercolors in pencil on paper glued on cardboard to which are added 3 sketches in pencil on paper detailing the plans of the scenes of the three acts, nearly all signed and with autograph annotations by the artist”, V. Terraroli, *Giorgio de Chirico and La Figlia di Iorio*, in *La Figlia di Iorio by Giorgio de Chirico*, catalogue of the exhibition, edited by E. Ledda (Museo del Vittoriale degli Italiani, Gardone Riviera, 17 December 1989-31 March 1990), Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, Gardone Riviera 1989, p. XX.

The Daughter of Iorio prompted another misunderstanding. De Chirico was reproached for not getting “the Italian and earthly spirit of the drama, rejecting its Mediterranean joyous sensuality in a metaphysical vein, by means of foggy colors and operetta costumes”.²⁷ The “cognitive” expectations connected to early XX century aesthetic canons, also in light of the specific historical-political conjuncture, did not prevent de Chirico’s Metaphysical painting from achieving some reputation, especially abroad. De Chirico thought that not complying with the prevailing aesthetic trends of his homeland, which aimed at pleasing the conformist audience without offending their sensibility, was not his business, thereby declining that virtuous and gratuitous “invitation” to doing “the right thing”. One must also take into account that the contemporary audience’s sensibility was partially influenced by the propaganda.

About *The Daughter of Iorio*, Antonio Bruers wrote: “[de Chirico] should not forget [...] that this tragedy has its own mystical setting that must not be disturbed by the intention of doing strange things for the sake of doing new things. [...] I’m sure that the vast majority of future spectators will agree with me in begging Pirandello to stay vigilant on the harmonic balance between scenes and costumes”.²⁸

At any rate, de Chirico, in disregard of the aesthetic categories of the 1930s rising bourgeoisie, struck a pose as an *anti-scenographer*, showing himself indifferent to the aesthetic judgment prevailing at his time. A judgment that was not considering the reality about which it pretended to be concerned: in fact, by opposing its own “truth” to the essence of reality, it was ignoring it. With its Metaphysical aesthetics, De Chirico’s poetics – removed from what is *definitely grasped, understood, and solved*, and unable to convey a unique, comprehensible, shared vision of reality – remarked that the *subject* to be dismissed from the contemporary cultural *scene* was the “awareness about reality”.

On 20 September 1934 began the rehearsals for the pastoral tragedy *The Daughter of Iorio*. Strongly advocated by the Volta Conference for Dramatic Theater of the Royal Academy of Italy, the play was put up, not unlike the previous ones, by the Volta Foundation, and took place from 8 to 14 October.²⁹ De Chirico, summoned at the very last moment by Luigi Pirandello,³⁰ contributed to creating the costumes and set design for the 11 October staging at Teatro Argentina in Rome. His revolutionary and controversial scenery for Vincenzo Bellini’s opera *The Puritans* in Florence in 1933³¹ still aroused considerable perplexity among the organizers. In particular, in a letter dated

²⁷ “Some praised the tragic bareness of the scenery, others judged it a skillful modernization or an ‘annoying oddity’ way too ordinary. The foreigners in the audience had no comparisons to make, but remained lukewarm...”, M. Pieri, 1934. *Il giuoco delle parti dietro le quinte de La Figlia di Iorio*, in «Archivio D’Annunzio», n. 4 (2017), p. 33.

²⁸ I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta sul teatro drammatico. Roma 1934: Un evento culturale nell’età dei totalitarismi*, Titivillus, Corrazzano 2014, p. 249.

²⁹ For a complete overview of the history of the Volta Conference for Dramatic Theater, see the study cited in the previous footnote.

³⁰ Telegraph letter from Pirandello to de Chirico (Castiglioncello/Livorno 1934), which reads: “Dear De Chirico, I thought of you for something very important and urgent. I sincerely hope that you will say yes. [...] Would you like to be the set designer? I am making you this offer, which I think will not be unpleasant to you, with the greatest cordiality [...] so that we can discuss about the tone to give to the staging, which I think should be in the style of any of your other well-known compositions. I have high hopes that this specimen of Italian Scenography, offered to the appreciation of the best connoisseurs in the world, will be featuring the name and work of Giorgio de Chirico”, Fondo d’Amico, Carteggio Volta, held in the Archivio Museo Biblioteca dell’Attore di Genova, hereinafter abbreviated as MBA SdA. DC. The letter is also published in I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta*, cit., p. 248.

³¹ For the first edition of Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.

5 September 1934 Bruers pleaded with Silvio D'Amico, the Conference chief organizer, and asked him to intercede with the director Pirandello in these terms:

I see that H.E. entrusted the scenery to our common friend de Chirico. Here I am not speaking as an official of the Academy, God forbid!, but as a scholar of D'Annunzio and, above all, as a simple spectator. I dare to pray H.E. to arrange things in such a way that de Chirico could do something new, but without indulging to something weird, like the staging of the *Puritans* in Florence, where he made the color white predominate in historical scenes of a romantic character in an improbable way: white furniture that looked like that of a clinic, characters and masses dressed in white, who looked as if they were coming out collapsed piles of mill bags, warriors with white wooden swords that aroused hilarity.³²

In Italy, in the early years of the XX century, only few understood the advent of de Chirico's Metaphysical aesthetics, destined to become a timeless poetic accomplishment. By that time, de Chirico had already sensed how to represent *dramatic individuality*, and widely promoted it in his personal poetic aesthetics. Working on the very terminology – metaphysics –, he overturned its original meaning and its classical rooting, seeking for “self-transcendence” also beyond the boundaries of painting.

In the self-celebration of the *monomachos* (“he who fights alone”) also used for the theater, de Chirico exalted the philosophical legacy of “Nietzschean antidogmatism”, of which he was tremendously proud. Uninterested in legitimizing his art with consolatory or irenic purposes, in creating theatrical scenery, and especially that for *The Daughter of Iorio*, the artist worked according to his unique and genuine poetic inspiration. Inevitably, he did so by recovering the tradition of the Greek sense of tragic, to which was so intimately attached. The drama of existence that his scenery conjured up, seemingly *misunderstood* as “operetta” or *repudiated* in favor of Metaphysics avant-garde symbolism, escaped the understanding of the public at large. In a letter dated 20 October, d'Amico wrote: “The scenery and especially the costumes for *The Daughter of Iorio* have provoked considerable criticism, which was expected, given that the imbeciles are the vast majority [...] But I shall return to this matter, for I relish at the idea of comparing the scenery and costumes by Michetti with his [de Chiricos].”³³ Perhaps, D'Annunzio's tragedy included the tragedy of hu-

³² Quoted in I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta*, pp. 248-49 (see also Archivio Accademia dei Lincei, Reale Accademia d'Italia, “Teatro”, Tit. VIII, Busta 23, Fasc. 46/23). Marta Abba also expressed concern about the scenery, warning Pirandello to control de Chirico's excesses. In a letter dated 4 September 1934, the actress wrote to Pirandello: “Dear Maestro, I am waiting for you the day after tomorrow, so says your telegram arrived this morning. De Chirico will be with you tomorrow and this letter is about him rather than anything else. It will be good that you should insist and make him immediately understand that you do not intend to drop that fabled and poetic atmosphere of *La Figlia di Iorio*. Once over this obstacle, I am sure that summoning De Chirico will reveal to be a brilliant idea. Cele [Abba's sister] told me that, although you greatly admired the scenes he had made for Florence, you felt that the public had reason to disapprove of the fact that they did not blend with the play, for they remained a thing of its own, magnificent but discordant. We should be careful, lest mayhem break loose at the Argentina theater. You, after all, I'm sure you'll be able to point him in the right direction at once”, *Caro Maestro: Lettere a Luigi Pirandello (1926-1936)*, edited by P. Frassica, Mursia, Milan 1994, p. 266.

³³ From MBA SdA. DC., but see also I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta*, cit., pp. 248-49. De Chirico kept up a correspondence with Silvio d'Amico. Three unpublished letters (kept at MBA SdA. DC.) are here transcribed and reprinted (see Appendix). In the letter of 6 October 1934, de Chirico wrote: “Dear d'Amico [...] I thank you for what you say about my scenery and costumes”.

man condition to be revisited in a Metaphysical vein.³⁴ That de-humanized, mystical-religious aura would then serve as the basis for the whole interpretation.

Only reading of this kind could dogmatically detach itself from the thorny, existential questions that the men and the intellectuals of the time were called to formulate, and pursue new inquiries. The seeming simplicity of the folk-inspired tradition of an archaic and pastoral Abruzzo – the setting of D'Annunzio's play – hid a mystical and philosophical world, reunited with the Greek world. It would have been impossible for de Chirico to imagine the staging of the drama separated from his profound, visceral Metaphysical conception. In this light, de Chirico's infidelity to the Naturalist theater to which the public was used was predictable. In 1904, D'Annunzio's meticulous rendering of pastoral Abruzzo had been refashioned by Francesco Paolo Michetti, whose production was extremely faithful to the text. In 1934, when summoned provide an aesthetic interpretation of one of the most important and well-known tragedies of the time, on the account of an automatism of pure and unconditional thought, de Chirico could not but corroborate, in a Metaphysical vein, the ancient Greeks' idea of tragedy as a *rite*. The task of the original Greek tragedy was to *re-educate* the act of thinking, embracing within itself an *untainted thought*, for it is the only example of tragedy that knows how to reject "scientific/rational" knowledge, without resisting "spiritual feeling".³⁵

Luigi Pirandello accepted the appointment as artistic director of D'Annunzio's play, but with few reservations.³⁶ The former also had the opportunity to retract what he had said against the latter in 1931, on the occasion of the commemoration of Giovanni Verga, when he juxtaposed Verga's "style of things" against D'Annunzio's "style of words".³⁷ Thus began a formal correspondence between Pirandello and the Vate, followed and mediated by Antonio Bruers who did his best to silence the past differences of thought and to handle the fragile relationship between the two intellectuals.

On 31 August 1934, Pirandello and Marconi signed and approved a letter written by Anton-Bruers for "Commander" D'Annunzio:³⁸

Commander,
the Conferenza Volta per il Teatro Drammatico, sponsored by the Reale Accademia d'Italia, to which the foremost Italian and foreign playwrights and experts have been invited, will be held in Rome from 8-14 October.

You are among our most valuable guests, and although we do not dare hope in your personal partic-

³⁴ On the other hand, as a reader of Angelo Conti, D'Annunzio also shared the idea that poetry could only take the form of drama, "otherwise speaking on stage and to the masses would have no purpose and no meaning", A. Conti, *La beata riva*, cit., p. 176.

³⁵ This referred to the idea of not making the mistake of "what one knows". The equilibrium that the Greeks possessed and that the modern world seems to have lost, lies in the free expression of feelings. De Chirico knew that a real form of knowledge cannot be that of absolute knowledge typical, for example, of scientific knowledge.

³⁶ These included the casting of the main roles: Marta Abba as Mila di Codra, Ruggero Ruggeri as Aligi and Teresa Franchini as Candia della Leonessa. "Pirandello (...) used the show to his advantage, to bring Marta Abba to the fore", I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta*, cit., p. 238. Moreover, a few weeks after the performance, having learned of the Administration's decision to pay before the performance only half of the agreed upon amount, and the rest the following day, Pirandello sent a threatening letter, stating that "when the curtain will be raised on the first act of LA FIGLIA DI IORIO, no less than 110,000 lire – of the 120,000 we agreed upon – must have been already paid. Otherwise, the curtain will not be raised". The letter, sent from Castiglioncello, (Livorno) on 5 September 1934, by Bruers and kept in the Accademia dei Lincei Archives, Tit. VIII, Envelope 24, File 46/31, is quoted in I. Fried, *ibidem*, p. 241.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 237.

³⁸ Accademia dei Lincei Archives, Tit. VIII, Envelope 24, File 46/31, quoted in I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta*, cit. p. 244.

ipation in the event, we do not doubt that you will appreciate our intentions, and allow the Conference organizers to consider you present on that occasion.

We are also pleased to confirm what was verbally communicated to you, namely, that having the Office of the President of the Conference decided to produce an exceptional performance at the Teatro Argentina, the work chosen in honor of the participants is *La figlia di Iorio*, with Marta Abba and Ruggero Ruggeri cast in the main roles... The costumes and the staging will be brand new. We hope that the performance will be entirely worthy of your masterpiece and will be the expression of the best that the Italian Theatre can offer today. We are sure that you will appreciate the homage paid to your work, and confide that, if you consider it appropriate, you will offer us suggestions and advice.

Please accept, Commander, my utmost devotion.

President of the Reale Accademia
Guglielmo Marconi

President of Conferenza Volta
Luigi Pirandello

D'Annunzio replied on 9 September 1934: besides being happy for the “sudden brotherly gesture” and self-assured of his bravura (“I say that no one will be able to find the right tone for my play and teach it to the actors like you will do”), he made a suggestion between the lines: “I also think you will want to reduce the staging to a few essential elements, to a powerful simplicity tuned with the naked forces of scenic contrast”.³⁹ The letter ended with an invitation to the Sicilian playwright to the Vittoriale for an interview to discuss technical details: in fact, their encounter never took place, for D'Annunzio himself canceled it following Pirandello's favorable answer. The latter, in turn, replied to the Vate that he could no longer meet him on other dates because of the amount of work that awaited him for his production of *The Daughter of Iorio*.⁴⁰

Rome, 18-IX-1934
via Antonio Bosio 15

My Dear Commander,

I intended to have the pleasure of thanking you in person for your letter and your most welcome gift, but Antonio Bruers informed me of your indisposition on the very day when I could visit you, owing to the hard work I am putting in the staging of your *Daughter of Iorio* and in the forthcoming Volta Conference. I am delighted that what you tell me about your wonderful work agrees with my interpretation. I too see *The Daughter of Iorio* as a great song to be sung with a folkish tone, powerful ardor and genuine feeling. I shall do everything so that the actors under my guidance will beware of that overabundant literary fineness they have at times gloated about. In the meantime, I have obtained sketches of set designs and costumes from the painter Giorgio de Chirico: in this sense, they are perfect. Since there is now no time to discuss in person before the performance, please let me

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 245, but see also http://www.lincci-celebrazioni.it/volta/i4dannun_piran.html

⁴⁰ See http://www.lincci-celebrazioni.it/volta/i4dannun_piran.html, also published in I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta*, cit., p. 246.

know by letter if you have any advice and suggestion for me, and I shall be very grateful.
 I embrace you with the joy that I shall be offered the opportunity to give you proof of artistic brotherhood.
 Luigi Pirandello.

The correspondence between the two was aimed at their reconciliation and, albeit feigned, it benefited the Conference's propaganda. As the date of the performance was approaching, the admiration they pretended to have for one another as it appeared from their correspondence was, in fact, sarcastic.⁴¹ Since its foundation, one of the goals of the Accademia had been "the spreading of the Italian 'genius' abroad".⁴² The union of two eminent personalities such as Pirandello and D'Annunzio conferred enormous prestige to the Accademia Reale. In turn, the Fascist cultural climate of 1934 aimed at demonstrating the excellence of Italian theater and the collaboration between the two great men of letters summarized the grandeur of the Italian people.⁴³ Also, the Fascist Party and the "cultural promoters" of the Conference presumably shared a common goal: that of showing how prestigious the Italian theater was on the international scene.⁴⁴ On the account of the crisis that had hit the theater in the 1920s,⁴⁵ in offering their "collaboration", the intellectuals participating in the Conference drew attention on the financial issues, hoping for state subsidies for the stabilization of the Italian theater workers.⁴⁶ In addition, for the cultural promoters, and in particular for Silvio d'Amico, the main organizer of the conference as "assistant" to President Pirandello, putting *La Figlia di Iorio* on stage meant first and foremost the renewal of the traditional autonomy the "teatro di compagnia" in the light of European theatrical direction.⁴⁷ However, the conference remained "functional to the regime's propaganda",⁴⁸ despite fact that still in the early 1930s, the organizers exercised a certain degree of tolerance exercised towards "compromise solutions" – which also entailed a certain freedom and artistic autonomy – "that the subsequent tightening up of the Fascist hierarchy will eventually suppress".⁴⁹

⁴¹ See G. Giudice, *Luigi Pirandello*, UTET, Turin 1963, p. 457, quoted in I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta*, cit., p. 246.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁴³ It is no coincidence that in 1934 the Academy supported Pirandello's nomination for the Nobel Prize. For Pirandello, this award represented on the one hand a new success for the Fascist regime and on the other "a relief for the continuous financial problems that afflicted him. [...] After the happy moments, he felt very lonely when Marta Abba refused to join him for the award ceremony", see *ibidem*, p. 63.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁴⁵ New expressive forms of entertainment and cultural dissemination such as cinema and radio had reduced the theater industry revenue. To be intellectually compromised with the regime also meant to receive support. Maria Savinio, an actress of Pirandello's company, told about the crisis of those years: "Meanwhile, things had changed in the theater business: the revenues could not cover the considerable expenses. Luigi Pirandello paid many debts from his own pocket", M. Morino, *Con Savinio*, cit., p. 32.

⁴⁶ "It was hoped that by drawing the Duce's attention, perhaps even flattering his vanity, it would be possible to secure funding for the establishment of permanent theaters [...] and other institutions. [...] The requests were motivated on the basis that theater is a mission, something essential for a community and, as such, financial aid was to be understood as unconditional", I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta*, cit., pp. 22-23. In a letter dated 21 June 1934, Marta Abba also wrote to her Maestro, Pirandello, to make sure to get a raise for her role in *The Daughter of Iorio*: "I beg you to cast Cele as one of the three sisters, Splendore for example, and let me have a raise", M. Abba, *Caro Maestro*, cit., p. 262. Pirandello's answer (on 5 August 1934), was clear: "(...) as for Cele, be assured she will be cast as Splendore", L. Pirandello, *Lettere a Marta Abba*, edited by B. Ortolani, Mondadori, Milan 1995, p. 1140.

⁴⁷ I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta*, cit., p. 12.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*. "The preparations for the Conference and its sessions took place under the constant control exercised on the one hand by the scientific and political officials of the Academy of Italy and on the other by Mussolini who followed directly and indirectly [...] the unfolding of the event itself", *ibidem*, p. 20.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

With a letter from Ciano to Marpicati dated 5 September, the Duce approved and confirmed the date of 10 October for the “extraordinary rehearsal” of *The Daughter of Iorio*.⁵⁰ In 1934, when summoned to create the scenery for D’Annunzio’s pastoral tragedy, commissioned from the Duce, de Chirico refrained from discussing the political issues revolving around the Volta Conference. Rather, he had to engage with Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* and especially with its mythological references to the lyrical monuments of ancient Greek poetry. Once again, the German philosopher was interrupting into de Chirico’s intellectual life, so much so to imbue with new, Greek-originated metaphysical value the costumes and scenery of *The Daughter of Iorio*. The Conference political agenda did not matter to de Chirico who, focused on his role, must have put D’Annunzio’s tragedy under the critical lenses of the philologist and philosopher Nietzsche. In view of a possible exchange of opinions, he made himself available only to his friend Pirandello to whom he wrote on 2 September 1934: “[...] I can come to Castiglioncello at once [...] In this way I shall be able to talk to you and we can come to a thorough agreement. I would execute all the sketches and have them delivered to you” (fig. 4).⁵¹ For his part, Pirandello immediately showed appreciation for the work of the Maestro, to the extent that much so that in the aforementioned letter addressed to D’Annunzio before the staging of the play, he wrote: “In the meantime, I have obtained from the painter Giorgio de Chirico sketches of set designs and costumes: in this sense, they are perfect”.⁵²

3. Aligi and Mila, *Figurini* for Apollo and Dionysius, Lazzaro di Roio, the Nietzschean Anti-Christ

From the very beginning, D’Annunzio conceived *The Daughter of Iorio*, destined to become an eventful performance, as a synthesis between poetry and Greek-inspired “mythical” stage-direction – a much sought after desire. The Vate wrote that “drama can only be a rite or a message”.⁵³ The aesthetics imbuing the sketches that de Chirico dedicated to him seems to reveal the dramaturgic pain of the *initiatory* and *ultra-subjective* dimension of the hero’s action inscribed within a divinely preordained plan, if we accept that “in the Greek tragedy, when facing Fate and the gods, the individual is free and enslaved at the same time, for he can choose among alternatives that have already been decided, the course of which he can accelerate or propitiate”.⁵⁴ Presumably, as creator of the scenery, de Chirico had first to appraise how much the symbolic and timeless plot of D’Annunzio’s drama had retained of the late XIX century revival of ancient Greek tragedy. Secondly, he had to modernize the only possible expression for the *tragic* end: the Nietzschean nihilist epilogue. As with painting, de Chirico *metaphysically dressed* the play’s set design, which, precisely through that Greek-Nietzschean philosophical legacy, seems to have appropriated the idea of theater of the Attic tragedy, which owes its perfection to the balance between the Dionysian and Apolline worlds, a

⁵⁰ Letter published *ibidem*, p.236.

⁵¹ The original letter is kept at MBA SdA. DC (see the Appendix). It was also published in I. Fried, *Il Convegno Volta*, cit., in the section with the illustrations.

⁵² The sketches executed by de Chirico and sent to Pirandello were found among D’Annunzio’s correspondence and are now on display at Museo D’Annunzio Segreto.

⁵³ Cf. G. D’Annunzio, *La Rinascente della tragedia*, in «La Tribuna», Rome 2 August 1897.

⁵⁴ Eschilo, Sofocle, Euripide, *Tutte le tragedie*, edited by A. Tonelli, Bompiani, Milan 2011, p. 21.

recurring feature in his works. In this light, de Chirico's task did acquire a more *spiritual* value, because he had to produce a tragedy endowed with profound philosophical significance, so dear to him and imbued with classical values – not unlike the ancient Dionysian cult, distinctive of the Attic tragedy as well as of de Chirico's native land. Concerning the staging of D'Annunzio's work, the artist's suggestion to modernize the *myth* with the intent of recovering the aesthetic asceticism of the ancestral Greek drama, would have preserved the remarkable fascination and dynamic tension of a language both untranslatable⁵⁵ and epic: "Heroes are characters situated between the human and the extra-human, between otherness understood in the divine sense and otherness that is not of divine rank. Heroes are ambiguous because, on the one hand, they belong to a dimension that predates the definitive institution of the ordained world and, on the other hand, their actions contribute to laying the foundations for that very order".⁵⁶

In the artist's sketches for the tragic characters it is thus possible to find a mythical-mystical meaning rather than a mythical-anthropological one,⁵⁷ certainly present albeit not exhaustive. Therefore, to modernize the drama of human existence in *The Daughter of Iorio* through the *Greek myth* and in the light of a re-enactment of the Nietzschean ideals, it was necessary to delve into the meaning of pagan *spirituality*. A reappraisal of the themes concerning the "demonization" of the gods⁵⁸ would also have enabled de Chirico to provide an aesthetic interpretation of D'Annunzio's tragic heroes with due critical detachment devoid of self-righteous dogmatism. The connected, well-known polemic on religion, which de Chirico had already observed in Nietzsche, was the same expressed by the German poet Heine, to the extent that the philosopher saw him as his "spiritual" predecessor: "I was given the most exalted conception of the lyric poet by *Heinrich Heine*. I seek in vain across all the realms of millennia for a music that is as sweet and passionate. He possessed that divine malice without which I am incapable of conceiving perfection – I measure the value of people and races according to how necessary it is for them to conceive of god and satyr as inseparable".⁵⁹ De Chirico, who was familiar with Heine and most likely also with his essay *The Gods in Exile*,⁶⁰ acknowledged the importance of the poet's spirituality, the claim to earthly joys, but also the overall meaning of existence in Nietzsche's philosophy – all elements shaped in the famed tension between the two contrasting spiritual worlds, Dionysian and Apolline, a theory entirely embraced by de Chirico's Metaphysics. Thus, behind the surface of the Abruzzese folk-inspired

⁵⁵ That "reasoned delirium [...] expressed into an artistic form mixing together words, song, music, dance, and action", *ibidem*, p. 1244. The synthesis between the human and the divine is a key feature of all Greek tragedies, for which see p. 39.

⁵⁶ A. Alessandri, *Mito e Memoria: Filottete nell'immaginario occidentale*, Editori Riuniti, Rome 2009, p. 72.

⁵⁷ A thesis first put forward by Emilio Mariano and subsequently by Anna Meda.

⁵⁸ In addition, since the ancient tragedy "deals mainly with people that are dying", the recurring theme of death had the Greeks exorcise it. More than any other people, the ancient Greeks made death an integral part of life: "It is attested that in broad terms the ancient Greek civilization of the archaic and classical period devoted particular attention to the mortal nature of man", C. R. Beye, *La tragedia greca. Guida storica e critica*, Laterza, Bari 1988, p. XVI. Christianity opposed immortality to this "naturalistic vision" of the human condition. In ancient Greece the public and civic nature of the Attic tragedy gave drama a certain empathic quality so that the audience could engage with and also see themselves in the role-models that they were presented. In the same way, D'Annunzio's play could put to the test the empathy of the Italian people in the 1930s.

⁵⁹ F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. D. Large, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, p. 25 (Nietzsche's emphasis).

⁶⁰ R. Dottori, *Giorgio de Chirico: Immagini metafisiche*, La nave di Teseo, Milan 2018, p. 472.

figurini (sketches) ancient mythical *daemons* appear, revealing the irony of fate that characterizes them in the complex mythical world where they belong. So how can we fail to see at work in this conception Heine's *Elemental Spirits*, where the poet attributes to the people's belief that "in the ancient temples still live the old Greek deities that, with the victory of Christ, have lost all their power"? Heine also adds:

The most wonderful legends are now based on that popular belief, and from it the modern poets have derived the motifs of their most beautiful poems. The action is usually set in Italy, and the hero is a German knight who, because he is young and inexperienced or because of his slim figure, is enticed by beautiful fiends [...] There he goes, in the beautiful autumn days, strolling down with his dreams [...] Suddenly, he finds himself in front of a marble statue [...] It may be the goddess of beauty [...] The young man's heart is gripped by the old spell.⁶¹

Giorgio de Chirico's *figurini* seemed to be the bearers of values different from those expressed by the Abruzzese folk costumes that the Vate had in mind. As in an *unmasking* game of (the gods') vital impulses, de Chirico's characters – *re-dressed* with mythological allusion to the ancient tragic heroes, as in the works by Aeschylus and Sophocles, and also with Heine's evocative thought – could fit in the cult of Dionysius. In his *Diana*, Heine devotes special attention to Dionysus, as "act of faith in the mankind of the future against the prevailing pessimism of the present time".⁶² In the light of Nietzsche's Dionysian, we could connect that act of faith to de Chirico's conception of a language that, applied to the staging of *The Daughter of Iorio*, was capable to convey that sense of the tragic to his own time. De Chirico, whose Metaphysical painting had already envisioned a new way of getting to know reality, through the notion of enigma engaged himself with "what it could teach us". In doing so, in matter of theater he could be likened to Savinio's *magò moderno*. Savinio knew that for Heraclitus "nature loves to hide" and that those who "are familiar with the secret of *physis*' irony have to hide the numinous under the most trivial appearance".⁶³ In D'Annunzio's tragedy, de Chirico would skillfully unveil the issue of how *acting* on that *physis*' irony by his personal take on the costume sketches. Nietzsche's influence from the very first pages of *The Daughter of Iorio* was obvious to de Chirico, who understood these elements as advent, destiny, religious spirituality and myth, combined with the heroic allusions to tragedy and the pagan cults of the gods of ancient Greece. Nietzsche wrote: "The *tragic myth* can only be understood as the transformation of Dionysiac wisdom into images by means of Apolline artistry; it leads the world of appearances to its limits where it negates itself and seeks to flee back into the womb of the one, true reality".⁶⁴

⁶¹ H. Heine, *Elementargesiter*, in *Heinrich Heines Über Deutschland, Essays und Pamphlete. Ausgewählte Werke IV*, edited by J. K. Sommermeyer, Orlando Syrg, Berlin 2019, pp.183-184 (trans. by Francesco Caruso).

⁶² From Lia Secchi's introduction to the Italian edition of H. Heine's *The Gods in Exile (Gli dei in esilio)*, Adelphi, Milan 1978, p.XVI).

⁶³ G. Montesano, *Sotto il segno di Anadioménon*, introductory essay to A. Savinio, *La nascita di Venere*, cit., p.18.

⁶⁴ F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, edited by R. Geuss and R. Speirs, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 105 (Nietzsche's emphasis).

The Vate's tragedy, as a timeless, primitive and archaic play, would appear to be nothing but the tragedy of the exaltation of the Dionysian impulses that wake up "at the approach of spring [...]" when "subjectivity vanishes to the point of complete self-forgetting".⁶⁵ Moreover, the ecstatic condition,⁶⁶ which for Nietzsche laid the foundations of classical tragedy, was evident to de Chirico's eyes from the very first lines of the pastoral play. The supreme goal of tragedy, which in D'Annunzio's play was to be achieved through the actions of Aligi and Mila, for the Greeks was the actions carried out by Apollo and Dionysus.⁶⁷ For de Chirico, in their descent into the "underworld", the heroic deeds of Aligi e Mila would have revealed the initiatory wisdom of the Greek dramaturgy in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The clash and spiritual tension between D'Annunzio's characters, whose "actions exceed what is moderate and licit"⁶⁸ would evoke the ecstasy of Dionysian symbolic forces, recalling the original vision of pain and violence of the Dionysian ritual and in particular the suffering of Dionysus Zagreus. As Nietzsche clearly states: "It is a matter of indisputable historical record that the only subject-matter of Greek tragedy, in its earliest form, was the sufferings of Dionysos, and that for a long time the only hero present on the stage was, accordingly, Dionysos [...]. In truth, however, this hero is the suffering Dionysos of the Mysteries, the god who experiences the sufferings of individuation in his own person, of whom wonderful myths recount that he was torn to pieces by the Titans when he was a boy and is now venerated in this condition as Zagreus" (figs. 4, 5).⁶⁹

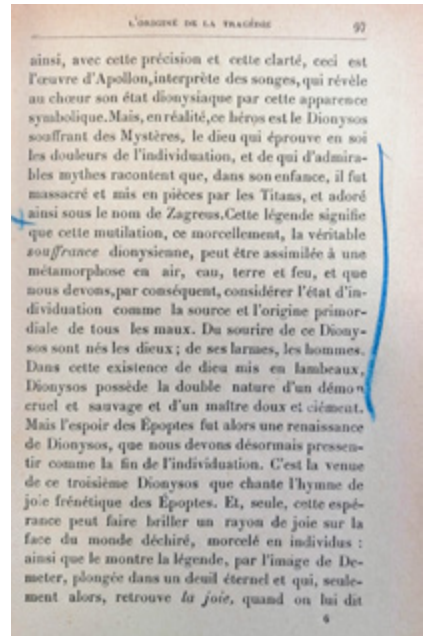


fig. 4 F. Nietzsche, *L'origine de la tragédie, ou Hellénisme et pessimisme*, edited by J. Morland and J. Marnold, 3rd edition, Mercure de France, Paris 1901, p. 97, highlighted and annotated by G. D'Annunzio

⁶⁵ F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 59 *passim* [trans. slightly modified. Translator's note]. Those impulses find their ultimate expression in the demolition of subjectivity, on the account of an harmonic, primeval union between man and nature, which for Nietzsche amounted to "the dissolution of the principle of individuation".

⁶⁶ Ecstatic as in the extasis of symbolic forms, in connection with Dionysius, on which is based Nietzsche's conception of "value", the salient quality of which is in the action as an event.

⁶⁷ Connected to the Aristotelian meaning of *kátharsis* is the purification of the soul through the binary nature of Dionysius: in himself he celebrates life and its transcendence through Orphic contemplation.

⁶⁸ Eschilo, Sofocle, Euripide, *Tutte le tragedie*, cit., p. 43.

⁶⁹ . Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, pp. 51-52 *passim*. "This version of the myth, handed down in the Orphic tradition, has a preponderant function in *The Birth of Tragedy*. According to Nietzsche, behind the masks of the tragic characters on the scene hides the figure of Dionysius Zagreus, and the play staging possibly alluded to his sufferings, which, on the other hand, were the subject of the mystical performances linked to his cult. This is the so-called 'mystical' interpretation of Greek tragedy, read as a ritual of revelation to which the initiates have access", G. Ugolini, *D'Annunzio e il Dionisiaco*, in *Italianisch-Zeitschrift für italienische Sprache und Literatur*, n. 36 (2014), p. 44, (<https://periodicals.narr.de/index.php/italienisch/article/download/956/934>). As we can see in the copy of the French edition of Nietzsche's essay,

For de Chirico, the reference to the classical Dionysian festive rituals must have been evident from the very first pages of *The Daughter of Iorio*, with its (dithyrambic) Chorus and the setting on St. John's Day.⁷⁰

Act.I, Scene 1: the three sisters, Splendore, Favetta and Ornella.

Their gay, fresh tones are like the chanting of morning songs.

Splendore — What's your will, our own Vienda?

Favetta — What's your will, our dear new sister?

Ornella [*singing*] — Only of green shall be my arraying. Only of green for Santo Giovanni, for mid the green meadows he came to seek me, Oili, Oili, Oila!

And then:

Ornella — And to-morrow will be San Giovanni, dear, my brother [...] Up the Plaia hill shall I hie me [...] to behold once again the head severed, on the platter all gleaming and golden, where again the blood runs, flows and babbles.

The singsongs of Roio's three sisters, Splendore, Favetta and Ornella, who, as in the chorus of the Satyrs, recall the initiation rites, are intoned for the "investiture" of their future sister-in-law, Vienda. Nietzsche wrote: Nietzsche wrote: "the tragedy begins with [the chorus], and [...] the Dionysiac wisdom of tragedy speaks out of it"⁷¹ [...] in these St John's and St Vitus' dancers we recognize the Bacchic choruses of the Greeks, with their pre-history in Asia Minor, extending to Babylon and the orgiastic Sacaea".⁷²

In D'Annunzio's tragedy, perhaps it was the character of Aligi (Act I, Scene II) that revealed to de Chirico that Orphic, Dionysian tradition for which Dionysus is objectified in the play (that is, as Mila appears):

Act I, Scene II – (Aligi speaks of his dream as an omen of misfortune, reassured however by the words of St. John and Christ who told him that he would not die of "death accursed").

Aligi — I lay down and meseemed of Jesus I dreamed.

He came to me saying: "Be not fearful".

San Giovanni said to me: "Rest in safety

Without holy candles thou shall not die".

cited above (n. 18), kept in the Archives of the Fondazione Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, Gabriele D'Annunzio highlighted several parts of the text, also in correspondence with the passage on the myth of Dionysius Zagreus. Ugolini (p. 44) specifies that "D'Annunzio was one of the first to grasp that artistic movement. I believe that the most revealing moment of this reception can be identified in the first book the *Laudi, Maia* (1903), with the reference to Zagreus reborn after being torn apart (XXI, vv. 64-76)".

⁷⁰ In the folklore tradition, St. John's Day is associated with festivities where magico-religious rituals are performed. Quotations from the English version of *La figlia di Iorio* are taken from *The Daughter of Iorio: A Pastoral Tragedy by Gabriele D'Annunzio*, trans. C. Porter, P. Isola and A. Henry, Little, Brown and Co., Boston 1916.

⁷¹ F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 39 *passim* [Nietzsche here in fact refers to the chorus of the Satyrs. Translator's note].

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 17.

Said he: "Thou shalt not die the death accursed".

Thus, the specific *oneiric impulse* connected to the way in which the Apolline manifests itself, according to what Nietzsche calls "Apolline appearances", hides behind the elements of foreboding and prophecy: "This is the Apolline dream-state in which the day-world becomes shrouded, and a new, clearer, more comprehensible, more affecting world, but one which at the same time is more shadow-like, is born anew and presents itself, constantly changing, to our gaze".⁷³ That of Aligi is then a bad omen, made clear through the element of the dream, which in the dimension of the Greek-Nietzschean revival of myth becomes the highest satisfaction of the original desire for Apolline "semblance".⁷⁴

De Chirico would have been able to seize the occasion to interpret the staging of Dionysius' suffering – which come to life through the dimension of Aligi's dream and omen – but especially to express some of the central themes of his poetics. Aligi encompasses many of the characteristics of the god Apollo that Nietzsche illustrates in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and for de Chirico it is possible to see in them the embodiment of the Apolline.

As the god of all image-making energies, Apollo is also the god of prophecy. According to the etymological root of his name, he is "the luminous one", the god of light; as such, he also governs the lovely semblance produced by the inner world of fantasy. [...] One might even describe Apollo as the magnificent divine image of the *principium individuationis*, whose gestures and gaze speak to us of all the intense pleasure, wisdom and beauty of "semblance".⁷⁵

De Chirico sketches the costume for Aligi's character using two very rich and contrasting shades: black and yellow (fig. 6).⁷⁶ The color black would signify the irrational dream-state, the darkness of the unconscious oneiric dimension.⁷⁷ The color yellow, apparent in the hints of sunlight painted

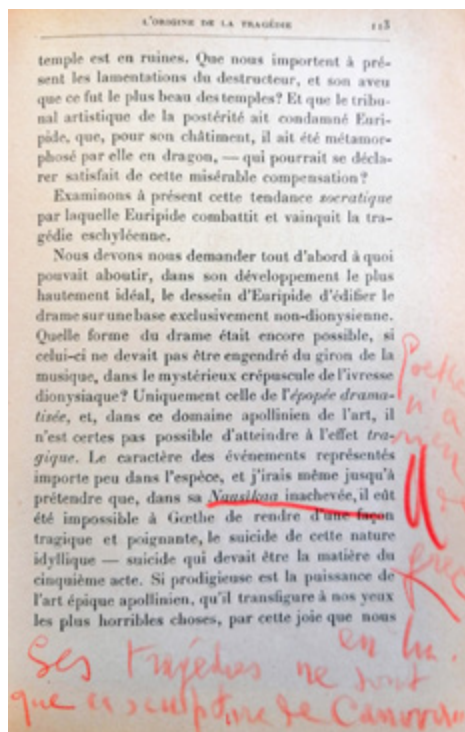


fig. 5 F. Nietzsche, *L'origine de la tragédie, ou Hellénisme et pessimisme*, edited by J. Morland and J. Marnold, 3rd edition, Mercure de France, Paris 1901, p. 113, highlighted and annotated by G. D'Annunzio

⁷³ *Ibidem*, pp. 45-46.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

⁷⁵ F. Nietzsche, *ibidem*, pp. 16-17 *passim*.

⁷⁶ Cf. *La Figlia di Iorio di Giorgio de Chirico*, catalogue of the exhibition, edited by E. Ledda (Museo del Vittoriale degli Italiani, Gardone Riviera, 17 December 1989-31 March 1990), Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, Gardone Riviera 1989.

⁷⁷ As if to recall, with a rationality overwhelmed by the darkness of the unconscious, the decline of contemporary man.



fig. 6 G. de Chirico, *Sketch drawing for Aligi*, pencil and watercolor on cardboard, 32x23,5 cm.

It bears the following annotations signature by "G. de Chirico" (lower right); "Aligi" (bottom center); "hat (backside)" (upper right); "same motif for the backside / applied cloth" (middle right); "same motif for the backside / applied cloth" (lower right)

in the middle of Aligi's waistcoat, is the "luminous", the light that confers "presence", just like Apollo, the god of "representation". Moreover, that apex of representative accuracy that for Nietzsche is reached in sculpture, can ideally be connected to the episode of the mute Angel that Aligi carves in the stump:

Act II, Scene I:

Aligi — Mila, Mila, let a miracle now absolve us!
And may the mute patron angel grant us protection
'T is for him that I work, but not with my chisel,
Ah! for him I so work with my soul in my fingers
[...]

Finally, in the green decorative motifs in both sketches for Aligi and Mila costumes, de Chirico seems to bring attention back to an original brotherhood that recalls "the complex relationship between Apolline and Dionysian in the tragedy [...] bond of brotherhood between the two deities: Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo, but ultimately Apollo speaks the language of Dionysus. With this the supreme goal of art in general is achieved".⁷⁸

Mila di Codra thus comes to embody the interpretation of the Dionysian: "the tormentor of spirits, the exciter of passions, the generator and destroyer of existences; he is the personification of change, upheaval and dissolution".⁷⁹ The *figurino* of the character would recall Heine's "god Bacchus",⁸⁰ forced to hide disguised as a monk, after being exiled by the advent of Christianity: "Once, about the time of the autumnal equinox, around midnight [a fisherman] heard a knocking at the window [...] and saw three monks".⁸¹ In D'Annunzio's play, the memory of the strong sense of corruption for the evil deeds on the account of which the "God-fearing" people accuse the character of Mila, is revealed in Mila's misfortune of having made Aligi, Vienda's betrothed bridegroom, fall in love with herself. In Heine, the mere presence of the demon would be threatening the whole of Christianity.

⁷⁸ Cf. *La Figlia di Iorio di Giorgio de Chirico*, cit., p. 220.

⁷⁹ A. Conti, *La beata riva*, cit., p. 164.

⁸⁰ H. Heine, *Die Götter im Exil*, in *Heinrich Heines Über Deutschland*, cit., p. 213.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 214.

In the plot of *The Daughter of Iorio*, the voice of the *unknown woman*, Mila di Codra, breaks into the “inviolable hearth” of the bride and the groom (Ali-gi and Vienda), and her presence alone arouses fear and forewarns witchcraft to the bystanders.

Act I, Scene IV:

The voice of the unknown woman:

— Help! Help! For Jesus’ sake, our Saviour.
People of God, oh People of God, save ye me!
[...]

Candia

— Lo, I am the mother of these three innocent maidens, also of this youth, the bridegroom.
We were in peace in our home here, in peace and in rest with God’s favor, and blessing with home rites the marriage.

[...]

It is best for you to go now. Go thou with God, knowing surely He will help you, if you trust Him.

For the sketch of the character of Mila (fig. 7), contrarily to what he had done for most of the other *figurini* in the tragedy, de Chirico did not create a mannequin figure, but a woman-like shape. With remarkable sensitivity, de Chirico hinted at her grace and unpretentious femininity by adding delicate hand movements. The woman is moving, wears a black dress and is wrapped in a light cloak. Long flames fed from below seem to surround her, faithfully mirroring the plot of the play: at the end of the tragedy, Mila dies throwing herself on the flames of a stake destined to Ali-gi, a stake that seems to allude to the fire of an ancient Greek hero. In the light of a more “nostalgic” interpretation, the sin of de Chirico Mila is just like that of Aeschylus’ Prometheus: namely, the *immoderate devotion to one’s own ethos*. Mila stole the fire and invoked it on the account of a strong feeling of individuation that she would never have accepted to repudiate: “In the tragedy, the Dionysian takes the form of excess [...] the Greek heroes exceed, that is, they draw away from the world of measure [...] their existence is embodied by the eagerness to affirm their own, individualistic ‘will to live’ or ‘will to power’. The result is the lacerating fall into the very web of existence caused by other powers”.⁸²



fig. 7 G. de Chirico, *Sketch drawing for Mila*, pencil and watercolor on cardboard, 28,5x22,5 cm.

It bears the following annotations signature by “G. de Chirico” (lower right); “Mila” (bottom center); “applied / cloth will be used for/ the pink motif / The right cut on the pink motif / will be made / with a fold of the tunic. The motif / behind the fold / must be / wholly rendered” (left); “do not repeat the pink motif on the back” (upper left); “use opaque / fabric” (upper right)

⁸² Eschilo, Sofocle, Euripide, *Tutte le tragedie*, cit., p. 34.



fig. 8 G. de Chirico, *Sketch drawing for Lazaro di Roio*, pencil and watercolor on paper glued to cardboard, 30x21,5 cm. It bears the following annotations: signature by "G. de Chirico" (lower right); "black signs made / with cloth applied / to the white shirt" (upper right)



fig. 9 G. de Chirico, *Sketch drawing for Lazaro di Roio*, (detail of footwear made with collage technique)

Act III, Scene III

Iona — I give to you, just people
into your hands, Mila di Codra,
The Daughter of Jorio, that one
Who does harm to every one.
Do you perform justice upon her,
And let her ashes be scattered.
O Lord, save thy people.
Kyrie eleison.
[...]

Mila (from within the crowd)
The flame is beautiful! The flame is beautiful!

The sketch for Lazaro di Roio's costume would bring an end to the Nietzschean tragic-nihilistic circle.

De Chirico dresses Lazaro di Roio with wool capes typical of shepherds: also the overcoat and the short pants worn on what appears to be long tights are made of wool (fig. 8). In the mythical reference, de Chirico's *figurino* could represent another mythological character, namely the "god Pan", an ancient Arcadian deity, protector of shepherds and hunters. It is interesting to note that in the sketch of Lazaro's costume, next to the wool footgear, the artist cut out and applied small colored cardboard patches (fig. 9). A sort of collage that is also very visible on the bust of the figure in Vienda's costume (figs. 10, 11).

Contrary to the apparent obviousness of the archaic pastoral world, de Chirico affixed the inscription "IHS" to the central part of Lazaro's shirt, adding a specific annotation on the sketch: "black marks with cloth applied to the white shirt". He also added the symbol of the cross above the middle line of the H. This symbol clearly refers to the Latin name of Jesus, which in Christian iconography is

best known in the artistic treatment of St. Bernardino. It is interesting to note that in the upper part of the façade of the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence – in the eponymous and famous square that revealed de Chirico's first Metaphysical work *L'enigma di un pomeriggio d'autunno* (1910) – the

trigram of Christ “IHS with the Cross” can be seen in the stone tondo inside a “radiant sun” of St. Bernardino from Siena. The sun’s rays with the Saint’s trigram are often rendered with flame-like movements, the same stylistic feature de Chirico used for his Suns, like those on the easel, for example.

These considerations suggest a “Christological” reading, although filtered through Nietzsche’s philosophy.⁸³ Through the character of Lazaro, who in D’Annunzio’s tragedy is killed by his own son Aligi who defends Mila from Lazaro’s desire to possess her, de Chirico would seem to recall the Nietzschean theme of the “death of God”. In Lazaro’s death, which does not occur “by an external aggression”⁸⁴ but by the hand of “his own blood”, would take place the “suicide of Christianity”, discussed by the German philosopher in his theory of the Antichrist. In *Nietzsche and Christianity*, Karl Jaspers stated that for the German philosopher “the cause of God’s death is precisely Christianity”⁸⁵ and that “Dionysus was Jesus’ greatest opponent”⁸⁶ – statements that would be corroborated by de Chirico’s rendering of Lazaro’s *figurino* as a “crusader” in the clash between Mila and Dionysius. Jaspers added that “the death on the cross is [for Nietzsche] an expression of decadent life and an accusation made against life. In *Dionysius dismembered*, [Nietzsche] recognizes life that is continually regenerating itself and intensifies in the tragic triumph”.⁸⁷



fig. 10 G. de Chirico, *Sketch drawing for Vienda*: pencil, watercolor and collage on paper glued to cardboard, 32x23,5 cm. It bears the following annotations: “Vienda” (lower right); “same motif on the back” (upper left); “same motif on the back” (left); “small strokes of white color / applied / on the cloth” (upper right)



fig. 11 G. de Chirico, *Sketch drawing for Vienda* (detail of the corset made with collage technique)

⁸³ With no pretense of definitiveness, here we are putting forward an aesthetic interpretation that can take into account the dialectic relationship between the many intellectual stimuli to which de Chirico was exposed in those years.

⁸⁴ From G. Dolei’s introduction to the Italian edition of K. Jaspers, *Nietzsche and Christianity* [*Nietzsche e il Cristianesimo*, Marinotti, Milan 2008], p. 23.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 54.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

Parigi Domenica
2 Sett 34

Caro Pirandello,

Ho avuto oggi il suo espresso e Le ringrazio sentitamente di aver pensato a me. Le ho telegrafato subito che arriverei martedì. Però ripensandoci credo che, prima di partire, a scanso di malintesi e bene chiarire la questione del Compens. -

Per tale lavoro bisognerebbe che alla consegna dei bozzetti degli scenari e costumi io riscuotessi una somma di almeno 4000 (quattromila) lire; e poi vorrei sapere a un dipresso quale sarebbe la somma che mi toccherebbe. - In ogni modo se lei mi garantisce le 4000 lire da versarmi alla consegna del lavoro, io posso venire subito a Castiglionececco portando meco tutto il necessario per l'esecuzione dei bozzetti. Così potrei parlare con lei, ci potremmo intendere su ogni punto, eseguirei tutti i bozzetti che conseguerei a lei. - Le prego però di telegrafarmi subito se ciò va bene perché nel caso affermativo dovrei rimandare alcuni affari e lavori che ho qui in corso. - Resta inteso pure che mi verrebbe rimborsata la spesa del viaggio da Parigi a Castiglionececco e ritorno. (1)

Rinnovando i miei ringraziamenti mi
crede suo dev^{mo}

Giorgio de Chirico

9 rue Brown Séquard

Paris XV

(1) pure alla
consegna del
lavoro

fig. 12 Letter by G. de Chirico to L. Pirandello, dated 2 September 1934

APPENDIX

Letters of Giorgio de Chirico to Luigi Pirandello

1. Manuscript letter (2 September 1934)⁸⁸ (fig. 12)

Paris Sunday

2 Sept. 1934,

Dear Pirandello,

I received your express letter today and I would like to thank you very much for thinking of me. I telegraphed you at once that I'd arrive on Tuesday. But on second thought, I believe that before I leave, in order to avoid misunderstandings, we should clarify the question of my compensation. For this work, I should be paid a sum of at least 4,000 (four thousand) lire upon delivery of the sketches for the staging and the costumes; and then I would like to know approximately what would be the final amount due to me. At any rate, if you guarantee me that I shall receive 4,000 Lire upon delivery of the work, I can come at once to Castiglioncello, bringing with me all the necessary equipment for the execution of the sketches.

In this way I shall be able to talk to you and we can come to a thorough agreement. I would execute all the sketches and have them delivered to you.

I would ask you, however, to please telegraph me immediately if this is acceptable because, if so, I would need to postpone some business and work that I have here in progress. It is also understood that I would be reimbursed the travel expenses from Paris to Castiglioncello and back (I).

I renew my thanks to you, your most devout

Giorgio de Chirico

9 rue Brown Séquard Paris XV⁸⁹

(I) To be paid also upon delivery of the work.

2. Telegram message (3 September 1934) (figs. 13, 14)

PIRANDELLO CASTIGLIONCELLO LIVORNO
ARRIVING TUESDAY THANKS DE CHIRICO

⁸⁸ The originals of these letters are kept in MBA SdA. DC.

⁸⁹ This is de Chirico's Paris address, written in all the letters transcribed here.

Unpublished correspondence of Giorgio de Chirico to Silvio d'Amico

3. Postcard (6 October 1934); postmark: PARIS 102 6-11 34 B^D PASTEUR (figs. 15, 16)

Most Dear Sir Mr. Silvio d'Amico

Via Nazionale 69 (Italie) Roma⁹⁰

Paris 6 October 34

Dear d'Amico

I have gotten the clippings from the «Corriere» and the «Tribuna», and I thank you for what you say about my scenery and costumes. But I have never received the issue of «Scenario» that you say you sent me. If you happen to have photographs of the staging and costumes, please send them to me. I have no news about the 2,000 Lire. I shall write to Pirandello again. I beg you most kindly, if you see him, please remind him of that. Please, also ask Bontempelli if we can entreat the Academy to send me that money. Since the Academy, as you write to me, has examined the matter sympathetically, I find that, for once, the Academy could do something for me as well. Just think, my dear d'Amico, that since the Academy was established, while it has been distributing prizes ranging from 500 to 50,000 lire, they have never even rewarded me a prize of 50 lire! My regards to your wife, many cordial greetings to you and your children.

Yours

G. de Chirico

4. Postcard from Giorgio de Chirico (16 November 1934); postmark PARIS 102 6 XI 34 BD PASTEUR (figs. 17, 18)

Paris 16 Nov. 34 XIV

Dear d'Amico

I have received your letter, thank you. I also wrote to Pirandello to thank him and congratulate him for the Nobel Prize.

But I've not received the money yet. I know it's difficult to send money outside Italy but since we are dealing with the Academy here and the sum requested is modest, it should be quite an easy matter. Also, I have not received the magazine, or rather, the magazines that you wrote you sent me.

If your magazine is sold at some bookstore or newsstand in Paris, please let me know, so I could go and buy it.

Perhaps sending magazines outside Italy is difficult too.

Yours cordially,

G. de Chirico

⁹⁰ D'Amico's Rome address is also written in the letters nos. 4 and 5.

5. Postcard from Giorgio de Chirico to Silvio d'Amico [26 November 1934]; postmark PARIS VII 27 XI 1934 (figs. 19, 20)

Paris Monday,

Dear d'Amico,

I have received the magazines and the 2,000 lire. Thank you very much.

If you happen to have photographs of the stage (theater) with scenery and actors in costume, I would be very grateful if you can send them to me.

The press has been asking me for photographs, but indeed I need photographs of the stage itself with the actors in their costumes, and not of the sketches.

I would like to put in a good word for my young friend Guglielmo Dondi, who is a very bright fellow and very up to date on all things theatrical.

My best regards to you and your family.

Yours,

G. de Chirico



fig. 13 Telegram message by G. de Chirico to L. Pirandello, dated 3 September 1934

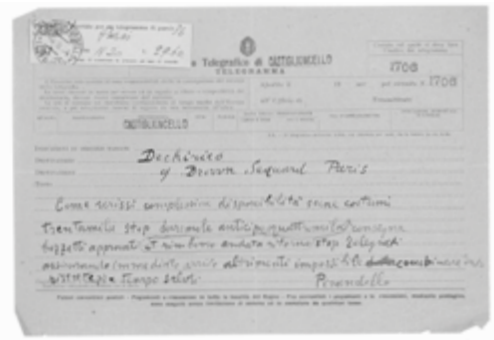
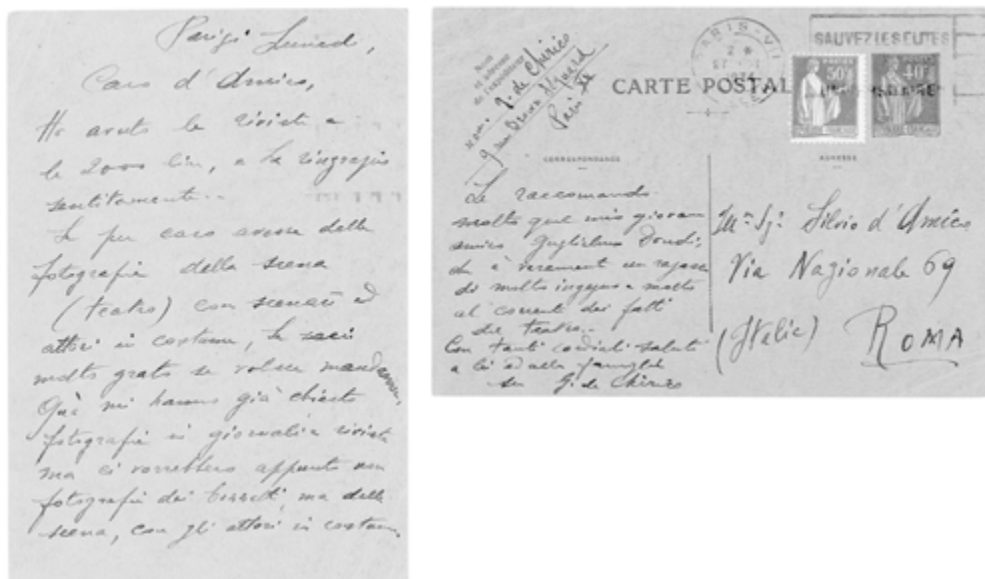


fig. 14 Telegram message by G. de Chirico to L. Pirandello, dated 4 September 1934, with autograph annotation



figs. 19-20 Postcard by G. de Chirico to S. d'Amico, dated 26 November 1934

Already in Heine's *Diana to Dionysus* comes particular attention as an "act of confidence in the humanity of the future against the prevailing pessimism of the present", the secret of physis' irony is to hide the numinous under the most trivial appearance".

In D'Annunzio's tragedy, de Chirico skillfully revealed the question of how to work on this irony of physis through his personal interpretation in the sketches dedicated to costumes. Nietzsche's influence from the very first pages of *The Daughter of Iorio* was clear to de Chirico, who understood these elements as advent, destiny, religious spirituality and myth, together with the heroic allusions of tragedy and the pagan cults of the gods of ancient Greece. Nietzsche writes: "The tragic myth can only be understood as a symbolisation of Dionysian wisdom through Apolline artistic means; it leads the world of appearance to its limits, where it denies itself and seeks anew 64 to take refuge in the womb of the one true reality".